

# John Wesley and NFS Grundtvig on the same road

## Convergence theologies

### Introduction

John Wesley (1703-1791) and Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) were two very influential theologians, Wesley in 18th century Anglican England, and Grundtvig in 19th century Lutheran Denmark. They became reformers of the Protestant concept of Christian thinking within their respective context of church and society. Wesley's theological ideas and ecclesiastical initiatives have spread internationally and influenced churches and formed new churches, schools, hospitals and universities in many countries. Grundtvig's ideas on his side have been a major power of inspiration on theological and pedagogic understanding not only in Denmark and Scandinavia, but also internationally.

Wesley's and Grundtvig's enormous publications show many similarities with other Christian theologians of their own tradition and context. But Wesley and Grundtvig also show similarities and equivalences in their thinking on central parts of their specific characteristic theology in a way that indicates some common sources of inspiration. It is not difficult to see Wesley as an Anglican theologian of his time which includes the influences of Arminianism and Puritanism, two strong theological traits within the Anglican tradition. Grundtvig as a Lutheran theologian of his time includes the marks of old Lutheran orthodoxy and German Romanticism which were well known influences within the Lutheran church of Denmark. But on several themes, which are typical for Wesley and for Grundtvig, they probably depend on other common sources. In a number of themes, we find convergent traits in the theologies of Wesley and Grundtvig.<sup>1</sup>

### Convergence theologies

The idea of convergence is used in ecumenical studies when you define the character of similarities and parallel thinking in different confessional theologies. Consensus is theologies agreeing on exactly the same meaning. Congruence is theologies having the same content and form. Convergence is theologies, where theologies from different confessional background are approaching one another or are developing and moving in the same direction. Maybe convergence theologies never merge, but they are moving towards the same focus in the horizon or behind. Convergence theologies can emerge when a common theological position reach a level of authority within the different theological tradition, and the theologies themselves adapt the new common position. It is what happens in the churches' ratification of the WCC Lima document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.<sup>2</sup>

Another way towards theological convergence is when different confessions develops in the same environmental contexts with the same challenges and gives the same answers to the same questions. Theological divergence is situations where theologies diverge from each other and are drawn in different directions.

In the ecumenical document *The Church Towards a Common Vision*<sup>3</sup> we find that the convergence perspective is used to determine the character of parallel theologies and determine the equivalent content of different theologies, and the text itself is formulated as a convergence text, including different theologies common direction and similarities. Ratification of the document will lead the confessions to theological convergence on the themes in focus.

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<sup>1</sup> Thaarup 2016, 565

<sup>2</sup> WCC paper 111

<sup>3</sup> WCC paper 214

One common historical or contextual source of inspiration could explain why two different theologies are converged. Common dependency of defined sources from the Greek Christian Antiquity can explain some of the similarities in the theological thinking, we find in Wesley and Grundtvig, but not all.

The fact that two theologies are converged doesn't mean that we are able to identify one common source of inspiration or a common theological model the two from different angels have acquired. The common source of inspiration maybe remains hidden or dark.

The common source behind Wesley's and Grundtvig's convergence theologies is ideas and thoughts we find among a group of Greek Church Fathers. Wesley and Grundtvig are not inspired of the same Church Fathers, but Church Fathers from the same tradition of Early Eastern Antiquity. Wesley's list of sources from the Eastern church is Polycarp, Ignatius, Macarius, Gregor of Nyssa, Ephraem Syrus, Clement of Alexandria and the Apostolic Constitution. Grundtvig on his side list two sources of inspiration, Irenæus and the *Leiturgikón*, two sources Grundtvig uses very much. Grundtvig translated and published Irenæus *Adversus Haereses V* with the Danish title *Om Kiødets Opstandelse og det evige Liv*, 1855,<sup>4</sup> and the liturgy book from the Old Orthodox Church, the *Leiturgikón* he found at the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen.<sup>5</sup> In addition to these two sources we know that Grundtvig from reading Eusebius' Church History learned about Irenæus and many of the patristic fathers.<sup>6</sup>

A very specific halfway or intermediate station on the way from the Early Eastern Antiquity to Wesley and Grundtvig is the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon Christian culture before the conquest of the Latin Western Christian culture following the Norman takeover in 1066.<sup>7</sup> The Celtic-Anglo-Saxon culture and theology can be identified in the writings of Bede, Cædmon, Kynewulf, the Exeter-Book, Beowulf and several other known representatives of the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon tradition.<sup>8</sup> Wesley mention the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon culture as part of "Christian Antiquity," from where he took inspiration for his reformatory work. The Celtic-Anglo-Saxon theologian and historian Bede is mentioned several times in Wesley's writings, and the Eastern Church praxis of the Christian Year and the Easter celebration, that was continued in England after the Latin Western Christian cultures take over, Wesley recognises and uses Bede as his source and argument.<sup>9</sup> Grundtvig on his side is very interested in the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon culture because the first and original Christian mission in all Scandinavia is Celtic-Anglo-Saxon, and not Latin and Rome oriented. Grundtvig's translations and use of Celtic-Anglo-Saxon sources marked strongly the central parts of his theological thinking.

In some theological themes it is possible to find that Wesley and Grundtvig directly use sources they identify by names. In other themes it is not possible to find Wesley's and Grundtvig's own references, but the thoughts and ideas connect them to specific sources or traditions represented by several of the Greek theologians. When Wesley writes that he studies Macarius, Ephraem Syrus, Bede, the Apostolic Constitution and Clement of Alexandria, we have an indication of connections. And when Grundtvig studies the writings of Irenæus, Bede, the Exeter Book and the *Leiturgikón*, we see his own indication of connections. But often we have no indicated sources, only the content of the theology they are teaching, and no suggestion

<sup>4</sup> Unpublished list *Kirkefædre i Grundtvigs værker*, Grundtvig Centeret, Vartov, shows that Grundtvig quoted *Om Kiødets Opstandelse* 65 times in three books, 69 times in 19 books, and unknown numbers in his sermons.

<sup>5</sup> Kjærgaard 227, "The preparatory work to *Sang-Værk* ... from the *Royal Librarie*'s list of loaners we find that Grundtvig on January 23, 1837 borrowed the *Leiturgikón*, with the Greek Church's Prayers and Hymnal to the whole Christian Year."

<sup>6</sup> Grundtvig's knowledge about Irenæus and Christian Antiquity via Eusebius' *Church History*, see Grundtvig *Haandbog i Middelalderens Historie*, 1836/1862, 38-50. Grundtvig's reading of Justinus Martyr, Polycarp and Ignatius we find in Grundtvig *Om Christendommens Sandhed* 1826-27, see Begtrup IV, 646-647, 693-694

<sup>7</sup> Christensen-Göransson 1, 1969, 262-281

<sup>8</sup> Grundtvig *Prospectus for Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*

<sup>9</sup> Wesley *Christian Library* Vol 3, 3-16. Vol 13, 8-11

of connection back to the sources, where we find the ideas represented. The obvious similarities of Wesley's and Grundtvig's theologies appear when they are evaluated on the background of what we found in the Eastern tradition on the same themes. Some dominant thoughts of the Eastern theologies have influenced Wesley and Grundtvig and marked their own theologies and formed their special characters.

The result of this study shows how two theological traditions, with only limited connections, can be drawn in the same direction by a third and strongly influential source. It opens for a new understanding of ecumenism.

The relation of two or more theological traditions is not only depending on the ideas and circumstances that gave the traditions their original identity and formation. Connections to a third source, new or old, influences theological traditions to develop theologies with the same characteristics. Grundtvig as a Lutheran theologian and Wesley as an Anglican theologian are examples of this.

### **The contextual situation shapes the focus on Eastern Christian tradition**

Wesley and Grundtvig stood up against the front of theological Deism and Rationalism. Wesley's showdown with the Deistic thinking in the 1700 England is parallel with Grundtvig's showdown with the 1800 Rationalistic theology in Denmark.

The absolute unacceptable for Wesley and Grundtvig is the Deistic and Rationalistic rejection of given authorities to determine theories and values. Wesley and Grundtvig look upon Deism and Rationalism as an unrestrained and unscientific fantasy about a number of themes without any organized connection. The Deistic and Rationalistic rejection of given and absolute authorities except the human rational is the reason why Wesley and Grundtvig repeat their critic with the wording "castle in the air" and "Luft-Kasteller" about the ideologies depending on no given authorities but the ideas of the philosophers.<sup>10</sup> The famous idealistic philosopher of the time Immanuel Kant is subject of this critic.<sup>11</sup> For Wesley and Grundtvig the empiric approach to reality is the only way to thru knowledge, and especially the experienced reality, we find in history.

Wesley and Grundtvig have a remarkable theology of history. In history we have a mirror and a key to understand the present time. History gives us the values and fundamental knowledge about the world and ourselves. Only history can help us to find the meaning in life.

The New Testament text have authority because of the place they have in history as collection of people's experiences with the God, they believed in, and the interpretation they gave these experiences of God's actions.

The Wesley and Grundtvig critic of the theological Deism and Rationalism caused them to go to History to find knowledge and reason to reform and renew the Christian thinking for modernity. And in History the Christian Antiquity was a special valuable resource, because in that time Christianity was not compromised with its close link to the power of the states in Europe. Wesley sees the Constantine state-church union as the main reason for the corruption of Christian institutions and officials. Grundtvig criticize again and again the Latin era and culture and how the "Romans" have spoiled so much in Europe including Christianity.

With this critic of ideologies in their own present time and their theology of History it is understandable why Wesley and Grundtvig are looking to the early Christian Antiquity and the Greek Church Fathers to find inspiration for the reformulation of what Christianity is all about.

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<sup>10</sup> Wesley Works Vol 23, 419:20-29. Grundtvig *Om Aabenbaring, Konst og Vidskab, Danne-Virke III* 1817, 203-204, 235

<sup>11</sup> Grundtvig *Om Sandhed, Storhed og Skønhed, Danne-Virke III* 1817, 19-21

### Themes inspired by Early Greek theology

In my dissertation *Kristendommens Morgenstjerne*<sup>12</sup> you can find the number of themes where we can see that Wesley and Grundtvig are inspired by different sources from the Early Greek theology. The themes are: 1) Dynamic anthropology. 2) The God, who is reaching out. 3) The Fall or Original sin. 4) What Christ has done for us. 5) Two-sided conditions of divine-human relationship. 6) Salvation understood as growth. 7) Trinity.<sup>13</sup>

In this article only two of these themes will be presented. It is “What Christ has done for us,” and “The two-sided conditions of divine-human relationship.”

### First theme: What Christ has done for us

In the first theme we shall look into Wesley’s and Grundtvig’s understanding of what Christ has done for us. How did they understand the reconciling ministry of Christ? What was the logical meaning of Christ’s dead and resurrection? In the history of Christian Thought, we find a number of “atonement hypothesis,” different understanding of the inner logical meaning of Christ’s acts of salvation.<sup>14</sup> How did Wesley and Grundtvig explain the meaning of what Christ has done?

### Wesley: Christ’s fight against corruption, dead and the Devil

In Christianity we find the assertion that God gives salvation to people because of what Christ has done for us.<sup>15</sup> But what has Christ indeed done that can be the foundation of a message on salvation? How are the story of Christ told, and what explanation is given of his deeds? Christ’s ministry for us to reconciliation of the relation between God and the world is the part of Christian Doctrine where upon the largest consequences for the rest of the theology is dependent. Other themes within the Christian teaching is directly dependent of this theme most often mentioned as the atonement theme. The wording atonement itself is an interpretation of what Christ has done for us and for our salvation.<sup>16</sup> The rational is that the relation between God and the world is broken because of the sin. Human beings and other instances of the world are not able to reestablish the good relation to God. Because of that only God’s initiative and actions can change people’s and the world’s relation to God. God’s initiative and actions for us is first of all seen in God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ and his dead and resurrection. The inner logical explanation of how God’s initiative and acts in the incarnation of Christ, his dead and resurrection, can lead to reestablishing of the good relation to God, is not clear.<sup>17</sup>

The History of Christian Thoughts shows a number of hypothesis with different motives and priorities that determine the total understanding.<sup>18</sup> Among the Greek Fathers, e.g. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, we find the metaphor of Christ, that his dead was a ransom (λυτρόν = to pay for prisoner’s liberation) for humankind to freedom from evilness and the Evil. Origen is so specific in his use of Christ as a ransom that he indicates that the ransom is paid to the Devil to buy the prisoner free from his occupation.<sup>19</sup> Wesley very often use the metaphor that Christ by his dead gives a ransom, but he never follows Origen in the understanding that the ransom is given to a Devil or that a Devil should be in power to have any authority to set

<sup>12</sup> Morningstar of Christianity

<sup>13</sup> Thaarup 2015

<sup>14</sup> Aulén 1930

<sup>15</sup> The Nicene Creed, concerning the acts of Christ: τον δι ημας τους ανθρωπους και δια την ημετεραν σωτηριαν, Faith and Order Paper No. 153, 1991, 10

<sup>16</sup> Aulén 1930. Meistad 1992, 89-91

<sup>17</sup> González 1989, 50-64

<sup>18</sup> Link Ed., 1988, 77-79. Richardson 1965

<sup>19</sup> González Vol 1, 1987, 222-225

prisoners free because of payment. Even though Wesley doesn't follow this thinking to the full concept in the indication of who the ransom is given to, then Wesley is constant in his explanation that Christ dead and resurrection is a ransom that lead to liberation, and in this act, Christ is the redeemer.<sup>20</sup> The action of Christ leads to liberation from destruction and evil powers and to restoration. The restoration is first of the relation to God, a "reconciliation" of the relation between God and the human being, created in his image, and second a restoration of the human nature that was damaged of the power of sin. Christ's redemption of human beings leads to reestablishing of the relation to God, but in a very dramatic way, where Christ's death and resurrection is the important parts, and where the adversary is the corruption, the power of Dead and the Devil. There is an adversary, Christ is fighting against and earn the victory. In Christ the triune God fights the fight against the adversary, and as the one God is triune, the adversary is triune too and have the names: Dead, corruption and the Devil. We find a fight and victory motive in Wesley's understanding of Christ's acts for us. The fight causes that Christ comes out of the fight as the triumphant after the victory over dead, corruption and the Devil, who Christ now has put in chains. The victory overshadows the fight, and resurrection takes dominion over the suffering, pain and death on the cross. The whole action of Christ is a complete action of the triune God in Wesley's theology.<sup>21</sup>

In the *Christian Library* Wesley quotes long extract of Macarius Homilies, where the atonement of Christ is explained with a typological use of the lamb in the Exodus text<sup>22</sup> and the meaning of the dove in the sacrificial act of the Temple.<sup>23</sup> It is a different version of the Eastern understanding of the atonement.<sup>24</sup> The understanding of Christ's death and resurrection is the same here compared to Irenaeus and other Eastern church fathers.<sup>25</sup> The action of God is completed, the claim of justification is broken, and Christ has by his death and resurrection caused liberation and atonement in one and the same action.<sup>26</sup>

Another hypothesis to explain, how Christ's death and resurrection can lead to reestablishing of the good relation to God and to canceling of the harmfulness of sin, is a hypothesis where justification is the main key of interpretation. From Tertullian and Cypress over Augustin to Anselm of Canterbury we find a tradition of interpretation, where the forensic aspect are dominant, and where judicial terms and principles play a major role.<sup>27</sup> In this tradition of understanding is the consequences of sin first and all that human beings are guilty to God. The guilt separates us from God. When God moreover is just, fair, and maintain the whole world on his justice, will the claim be to Christ as the savior, to perform an action that can be the foundation

<sup>20</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 12, 33-35

<sup>21</sup> Collins 207, 99-10. Link Ed. 1988, 78: "The first type of interpretation is found in the theology of the ancient church and is continued in the tradition of the Eastern church in particular. Here, the death of Jesus Christ - God and human being - is seen as destroying death's power and influence by which beings are burdened and oppressed. The death and resurrection of Jesus is a victory by which human beings are liberated from death and all the powers of darkness."

<sup>22</sup> Wesley *Notes upon OT* note to Exodus 12:3

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., notes to Numbers 6:11f and Leviticus 16:21

<sup>24</sup> Wesley *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* 1745, 11, Wesley's introduction to the Eucharist: "... the Deliverance from Egypt ... is a People saved by the Sacrifice of the Passover ... Jesus it the Truth .. Passover, when he died upon the Cross."

<sup>25</sup> Ephraim Syrus and Gregor of Nyssa about Christ's fight in Hell and victory over the Devil

<sup>26</sup> Wesley *Christian Library* Vol 1, 149-150: "It is written in the law, that the Priest shall take two Pigeons, and kill the one, but sprinkle the living one with her Blood, and let it of, that it may fly away free. This was a type and a shadow of the truth. For Christ was slain, and his blood having sprinkled us, hath made us to bear wings. He hath given us of his Holy Spirit, that we might fly without impediment into the Godhead.... The Lord spake to Moses, to take a Lamb without spot, and kill it, and with the blood of it to anoint the thresholds and the doors, that he that destroy'd the firstborn of the Egyptians, shou'd not touch them. For the Angel that was sent, beheld the sign of the blood from afar and withdrew [...] For Christ the true, and immaculate Lamb was slain, and with his blood of Christ which was shed upon the cross, might become life and redemption to the Soul."

<sup>27</sup> Aagaard 1994, 40

for human beings to get rid of the guilt and be justified. Anselm develop this forensic interpretation in his *Cur Deus Homo* include the explanation that Christ, as a human, perform his act of salvation in relation to God.<sup>28</sup> In this forensic understanding of atonement it is important to have a completed and not violated principle of justice, but the act of God is broken because God the Father and God the Christ are placed towards each other in the act of reconciliation. It is in his capacity as human being that Christ is sacrificed on the cross, and Christ's offering is received by God the Father.<sup>29</sup> Wesley found this interpretation of the act of atonement among the Moravians and the Puritan Calvinistic both in and outside the Anglican Church. The completed principle of justice is the major motive in this thinking.

The principle of justice plays an important role for Wesley in his interpretation of Christ's acts and profits. Christ's deeds are important for the reconciliation between God and the world, and Christ is the one, who leads to the reconciliation.<sup>30</sup> Wesley describes the act of Christ as a satisfaction of or a fulfillment of but indicate never that the satisfaction leads to any positive merits Christ can transfer to human beings who believe in him, and for that reason are judged positive by God the Father. Neither we find that Wesley indicates that the act of satisfaction of Christ should have a deputy role for human beings so that Christ takes on his shoulders God the Father's punishment and anger that indeed should have hit human beings.<sup>31</sup> Wesley scholars agree on the understanding that for Wesley the satisfaction, as Christ's compensation for human beings, are important, but Wesley doesn't support the ideas that Christ has collected credits to be transferred to human beings, who have no credits in relation to God, neither that Christ has atoned a punishment in place of sinful humans who have violated God's law.

Wesley turns against the understanding that God's attitude to human beings should be affected by a sacrifice. With reference to e.g. the Old Testament text about Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, Wesley holds that even though God effected Abraham to do the preparation for the sacrificial act, God was not interested in the sacrifice, but only in the attitude of Abraham.<sup>32</sup> When Abraham's attitude was tested, God didn't require any sacrifice, and he has not ever since. Likewise, Wesley turns against the understanding that the element of suffering and punishment should have any positive effect on the God-human relationship.<sup>33</sup> Christ doesn't need to atone any punishment to make God willing to forgive and show human beings his mercy. God's nature is to forgive and be merciful, and God's love overrules in many situations God's justice without no other consequences that it is God himself who breaks his justice, not human beings. When Wesley anyway often speaks about Christ's deeds as a penal, punishment, it is in the understanding that Christ takes on himself the consequences of human sinfulness, the corruption and death, regardless what kind of ending of the human life it leads to. Christ's deputy deed consists in voluntary living a human life in its fullness from birth to the grave. By the act of going into suffering and death, God in Christ challenges the corruption, the Death and the Devil. The challenge forces the evilness strongest weapons, the destruction and the emptiness. But by the resurrection of Christ, the corruption, the Dead and the Devil are totally defeated, and all their might and power are blown up from the inside. Christ takes upon himself the penalty, which is the conditions of a sinful human being's life.<sup>34</sup> It is not a God's punishment, because God

<sup>28</sup> Lindroth 1935, 1-156. See also Link Ed., 1988, 78: "A second type of interpretation is found in the Latin *West*. Here the death of Jesus is understood as an atoning event whereby the guilt incurred by human beings in God's sight because of their sin is expunged"

<sup>29</sup> Anselm 1090/1978, 114-127. Radler 1988, 44-47, 182-227

<sup>30</sup> Romans 3:25 *ιλαστηριον*, in the Danish bible translations are translated with the Luther inspired "Sonemiddel" and "sonoffer," are in Wesley's NT translated with "a propitiation," same as in 1. John 2:2

<sup>31</sup> Deschner 1960, 152-175

<sup>32</sup> Wesley *Notes Upon the OT*, note to Genesis 22:12: "He (Abraham) need to do no more, what he had done was sufficient to prove the religious regard he had to God and his authority."

<sup>33</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 4, 8:12-9:2

<sup>34</sup> Maddox 1994, 95-97

doesn't punish anyone. And it is not a punishment of the Devil, because the Devil doesn't have the power to punish.

Wesley writes about Christ's deeds for us in his death and resurrection using the fight and victory terminology and a forensic terminology too.<sup>35</sup> The fight and victory terminology we often find when Wesley explains the conditions for human being's receiving the salvation as a regeneration to new life, what again is a showdown with the sinful corruption and an individual sanctification and growth. The forensic terminology we often find when Wesley is explaining the conditions for human being's receiving of salvation as justification and a showdown of sin as guilt. Wesley holds that justification and sanctification in principle are two different things, but two things not possible to separate, like two sides of the same coin.<sup>36</sup>

The human conversion ( $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\nu\omega\iota\alpha$ ) is one of the religious experiences, either momentarily or as a process over time. Wesley's theological explanation on what conversion is all about, is that here human beings experience justification and regeneration to new life, by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

The relation between Wesley's use of a fight and victory terminology, on the one side, and a forensic terminology, on the other side, has been subject to many studies. Outler understands Wesley's thinking as a cross between a Latin-Western tradition and a Greek-Eastern tradition:

... behind this Latin tradition lay the balancing, deepening influence of Greek Catholic spirituality (with its distinctive pneumatology that Wesley embraced wholeheartedly), with roots that run from Ignatius of Antioch through Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, to Macarius, Gregory of Nyssa, Ephrem Syrus, and the great Eastern liturgies.<sup>38</sup>

In Outler's optical Wesley's theology belongs to the Western tradition, but with strong elements and excursions from the Greek-Eastern tradition. The main thinking is the redline of Western thinking. Anyway, Outler is not sure of his own assessment. When it comes to Wesley's use of the fight and victory motive Outler claims that "these metaphors ... tend to outweigh the forensic ones that had dominated Western tradition since Anselm."<sup>39</sup> Scholars like Lindström, Deschner and Collins have the same kind of assessment that the Eastern and Western theologies are strongly represented and balanced in Wesley's teaching on Christ's deed for us as basis for human justification and regeneration. Heitzenrater and Maddox have the same descriptions but with the opinion that the Eastern motive of salvation as healing and restoration dominates over the Western motive of salvation in a forensic meaning.<sup>40</sup> The discussion on finding Western and Eastern motives in Wesley's theology is new. Outler has been mentioned as the one, who maybe was the first to show Wesley's dependency of the Greek church fathers. In old Wesleyan theology the motives were presented and dealt with in the context they stood, but not with the reflection where these motives were rooted. The ecumenical theology has lifted up this perspective of Wesley's dependency of the Eastern tradition. In Grundtvig we will find that the fight and victory motive is strong too.

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<sup>35</sup> Deschner 1960, 118-126. Collins 2007, 165-173

<sup>36</sup> Lindström 1946, 83-104

<sup>37</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 1, 405:9-15: "... God, who hath bought him with' so high 'a price, in his body and in his spirit, which now are God's by redemption, as well as by creation. He feels what is 'the exceeding greatness of his power' who, as he raised up Christ from the dead, so is able to quicken us - 'dead in sin' - 'by his Spirit which dwelleth in us'. 'This is the victory which overcometh the world ...'"

<sup>38</sup> Outler in Wesley *Works* Vol 1, 36

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 80

<sup>40</sup> Maddox 1994, 22-256. Heitzenrater in Kimbrough Ed. 25-31. Meistad 1999, 9: "Den grunnleggende teologiske forankringen ligger nok mer i øst enn i vest."

### **Victory and triumph**

To Wesley the incarnation of Christ means that God not only became human in Christ's birth and life, but also that God took upon himself the figure of sinful human beings. This understanding does not mean that Christ is sinful or has a sinful nature, but that he lives on earth under the conditions and with the consequences, which are sinful human being's conditions for their lives. Incarnation in itself, when it is understood as an incarnation into sinful mankind, becomes a taking upon yourself the punishment and penalty of sinful human beings. The consequences of sin are formulated in words of guilt and punishment, which leads to corruption of nature and death. Christ's death and descent into Hades is the necessary consequence of the incarnation. Without going into dead and the descent into Hades God would not completely have taken upon sinful human figure in its fullness. When Christ's death and resurrection are the deeds where God atones the world with himself, Christ's words on the cross when he is dying, "It is finished!" becomes an answer on the completion of the incarnation and the atonement too. In both the perspective of incarnation and atonement we find Wesley's use of the fight and victory motif.<sup>41</sup> From Jesus's entrance into this world and during his total outing and actions Wesley sees his fight against evil powers and all that destroy human life in the world. The fight is about an enemy, who have three figures: corruption, Death and the Devil. The enemy is the enemy of God, but also the enemy of all mankind. Christ has the victory every time a human being by his words or deeds experiences liberty and reconciliation into the communion with God and fellow people. The final victory happens with the death and resurrection of Christ. The death of Christ, complete God's atonement, as the total union with sinful mankind, is in the first hand a victory of corruption, Death and the Devil, who's strongest weapon, the death, makes a full destruction of the life of Christ. But death is only an apparently victory, because Christ, who is Life himself, the source of Life, cannot be defeated by the death, but he himself overcomes the power of death. The apparently victory of the evil power becomes its defeat, and in the same time as Christ's defeat becomes his opportunity to show that he is the Lord of Life, and he has the victory. The outcome of Christ's death and resurrection is therefore, according to Wesley, dominated by the motif of victory and triumph over corruption, the Death and the Devil.<sup>42</sup>

Wesley sees this victory of Christ every time Christ's victory causes that the power of corruption, the Death and the Devil is broken in human beings and the world. It is in the description of human conversion, justification, regeneration and sanctification that Wesley lifts up the perspective of Christ's victory and gives his explanation for the basis of what salvation of human beings mean. Because the Christian Gospel is an offering of salvation in Christ given to human beings in every present time, and not only in the future somewhere, the victory of Christ will begin to take over in the life of human beings who are becoming Christian, and in the world, where "your Kingdom come and your will be done." The motif of victory and triumph have a strong expression when Wesley preaches on the meaning of being a Christian, and how Christianity influences world and communities. The eschatological reality, where God has defeated all evilness and will recreate all what is hurt and corrupted begins already here and now to break through. It is called realized eschatological perspective.<sup>43</sup> Collins summarizes Wesley's understanding in this way:

... the victory motif of conquering sin, death, hell, and Satan as playing out not simply at the cross, but also in the ongoing transformation of human hearts in the context of the church, as Christ comes, judges, and then finally reigns without a

<sup>41</sup> Collins 2007, 87-96. Allchin 1989, 117 on Wesley's "Christus Victor motif in speaking of the atonement."

<sup>42</sup> The two Wesleyan hymns *Our Lord is risen from the dead* and *Head of thy church triumphant*, hold clearly the fight and victory motif. Grundtvig rewrites to two hymns in Danish. See notes 66

<sup>43</sup> Williams, Collins 1960, 191-198

rival. So important is this sanctifying work in believing hearts, in which grace is underscored and in which Christ holds sway, that Wesley envisions no eschatological fulfillment apart from it. In other words, it is precisely as Christ subdues all things to himself and utterly casts out all sin that everlasting righteousness is brought in - a righteousness that is not only the desire of the church but also the very perfection of the kingly role.<sup>44</sup>

Wesley describes Christ's victory over the powers of evil as a victory in this world. Hence follows that the victory over the power of the Devil and evilness primary is linked to the cross and the resurrection of Christ and not to a fight in the future on the other side of death and grave. Wesley insisted that Christ's deeds are in this historical world, likewise the battle scene of evilness is in this world. It is also because of his understanding of Hades and Hell. Wesley follows the Apostles' Creed that Christ, after his death and burial, is descended to the place, where the dead people are, *descendit ad inferna*.<sup>45</sup>

The incarnation of Christ means that Christ becomes human, he takes upon himself the sinful human figure, and he lives his life as sinful people do, all the way to death and into the innermost of death. The place, where the dead people are during the time to the morning of the resurrection is Hades, corresponding to the Apostles' Creed's "inferna." Christ comes to Hades, "... Hades where the souls of wicked men reside."<sup>46</sup> Wesley follows, however the understanding that Hades is a land of the dead, where the dead souls reside until the morning of resurrection, where the souls are to be united with their resurrection bodies and then continue into the new and recreated world.<sup>47</sup> Hades is like an antechamber or forecourt to Hell and Paradise, and it is not identical with Hell.<sup>48</sup> In Wesley we find the idea that Christ descends into Hades, to the land of the dead and the antechamber to Hell, where the dead souls reside.<sup>49</sup>

In his sermon on the bible text on the rich man and Lazarus, Wesley lifts up the question of the rich man that if someone is returning from the land of the dead the testimony of them will have a great impact on people when they decide how to live their lives. Wesley writes that the answer to this question is Christ himself, because he is the one, who has returned from the land of the dead in his resurrection.<sup>50</sup>

Christ's fight and victory over death and the power of the Devil is concentrated on the cross, in the Hades and in the following resurrection. Wesley's conviction that Christ doesn't reside in Hell is also stimulated by the word of Jesus to his fellow inmate on the cross, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise,"<sup>51</sup> and the word of Peter in his Pentecostal preaching, Acts 2:27, where it is said in connection with David's prophecy about Christ's death, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption."<sup>52</sup> Christ is a ransom that leads to liberation, and Christ defeats the power of death, and it leads to freedom

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<sup>44</sup> Collins 2007, 113

<sup>45</sup> According to *Common Prayer Book*, Art. Rel. III, 685

<sup>46</sup> Wesley Works Vol 4, 8:13-14

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 8:8-9:15

<sup>48</sup> Collins 207, 319, Antechamber of Heaven. Antechamber of Hell.

<sup>49</sup> Wesley Works Vol 4, 189:27-30: "... by Christ descending into hell ... his body remained in the grave, his soul remained in Hades, which is the receptacle of separate spirits, from death to the resurrection."

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 5-18. Sermon 115 *Dives and Lazarus* Luke 16:31 (16:19-31)

<sup>51</sup> Luke 23:43

<sup>52</sup> Wesley *Notes upon NT*, Acts 2:27

for the prisoners.<sup>53</sup> Even though Wesley not to the full content follows the Eastern drama-cultically pictorial interpretation of the atoning deeds of Christ, his wordings and formulations have clear marks of this thinking.<sup>54</sup>

‘Tis done! the precious Ransom’s paid;  
Receive my soul, he cries:  
See where he bows his sacred Head!  
He bows his Head and dies.

But soon he’ll break Death’s envious  
Chain And in full Glory shine;  
O Lamb of God was ever pain,  
Was ever Love like thine!<sup>55</sup>

You cannot totally renounce Wesley’s understanding that Christ’s descending into Hades also mean that Christ is preaching salvation for the dead persons in the land of death.<sup>56</sup> That Christ shall not stay, “not leave my soul,” in Hades, is not the same as he has not visited Hades. Grundtvig draw the same line for his understanding of Christ in the land of the dead, as Wesley does, by stating several times that Christ was a guest in Hell.<sup>57</sup>

Christ do not belong to Hell, and even though he was there and fought a battle, it was in the capacity as a guest, on his way from before to after. However, Wesley suggests Christ’s descent into Hades and his preaching there to those, who are there, e.g. in the hymn *Jesu, thy blood and righteousness* rewritten in Danish into *O Krist, dit blods, din retfærds magt*,<sup>58</sup> where the last verses say:

Thou God of power, thou God of love,  
Let the whole world thy mercy prove!  
Now let thy word o’er all prevail!  
Now take the spoils of death and hell.<sup>59</sup>

O let the dead now hear thy voice;  
Now bid thy banished ones rejoice;  
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,  
Jesu, thy blood and righteousness.<sup>60</sup>

Snart til de døde når din røst,  
dem byder vende hjem med lyst,  
med smykke og i kroningsdragt:  
O, Krist, dit blods, din retfærds magt.<sup>61</sup>

Christ’s preaching to the dead we find as a theme in Wesley’s writings, but not very often.

<sup>53</sup> Wesley Notes upon NT gives the interpretation to 1 Peter 3:18-20 that Christ “By which Spirit he preached - Through the ministry of Noah. *To the spirits in prison* - The unholy men before the Flood, who were then reserved by the justice of God, as in a prison, till He executed the sentence upon them all; and are now also reserved to the judgment of the great day.” Wesley opens for a *second chance* to conversion after death. It is a little opening. In other writings Wesley is more restrictive to the possibility to conversion after death, a second chance for salvation, because the opportunity to postpone conversion to God will prevent people’s willingness to consider the Christian Gospel here and now, see also Wesley *Works* Vol 4, 16:19-17:29

<sup>54</sup> Aulén 1930, 78ff

<sup>55</sup> Wesley *Collections of Psalms and Hymns* Charles-Town, 1737, 46-47, No VIII

<sup>56</sup> The Gospel of Peter 10:42: ”Did you preach for those, who are sleeping?” Then the answer was given from the cross: ‘Yes!’ Giversen 2002, III, 405

<sup>57</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2, no 243 verse 20, 474: ”Guds Søn haver Helvede gjæstet!” Grundtvig *Kong Harald og Ansgar* 1865, 45: ”... en Giæst, Kommet fra de Dødes Rige,”

<sup>58</sup> Salmer & Sange 2006, nr. 457, 612-613

<sup>59</sup> Surely, Wesley knew Isaac Watts (1674-1748) *I sing my Saviour’s Wondrous death*, where the first verse says “He conquered when he fell: And shook the gates of hell,” in Grundtvig’s rewriting: “Han faldt ei seierløs, At Helved skjælv og giøs!” in his rewritten Watts’ hymn: *Syng høit, min Sjæl, om Jesu Død!* Source: Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 1.2 No 250, 480-481. In Noack *Grundtvig-Studier* 1989, 154 you find the analysis about how Grundtvig is depending on Isaac Watts *I sing my Saviour’s Wondrous death* in his own *Syng høit, min Sjæl, om Jesu Død!* Likevise Grundtvig’s use of *Hosanna to the Prince of Light* in his *Halleluja for Lysets Drot*, Source: Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1989, 1.2 No 254, 483-484. See also Kjærgaard 203, 222, 272-273

<sup>60</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 7, No 183, 309:37-311:44.

<sup>61</sup> Salmer & Sange 2006, nr. 457, 612-613. Danish text Poul Helweg-Larsen (1877-1958)

The effect of Christ's own fight and victory are often formulated in figuratively language about prisoners' liberation, victory over evilness, corruption, death and the Devil, and further more in the triumph over all the powers of evil. Often in the focus on the triumphant and victorious aspect it is mentioned who Christ is fighting against and what the battle is all about.<sup>62</sup> The dying Lord is fighting a battle for us, and during this battle he wins the victory for us. That is the reason why God is worthy all praises for what he in his mercy has done to all human beings.<sup>63</sup> The victory means that people can look back at their former state as prisoners and slaves. From the turning point of victory, they are set free from pain and have left death and Hell behind themselves, likewise grief and suffering.<sup>64</sup> The death is swallowed by life itself. It is a result of Christ's descent and ascends. Thus, it is for all people to whom the victory of Christ is a new paradigm for life and a foretaste of the coming Paradise.

The fight and victory motif is found in many sermons and hymns. One of the hymns, Wesley's *Head of thy church triumphant*,<sup>65</sup> Grundtvig had known in 1836, where he did his rewriting of the same in Danish *Seier-Kirkens Høvding bold*.<sup>66</sup>

Head of thy church triumphant,  
We joyfully adore thee;  
Till thou appear,  
Thy members here  
Shall sing like those in glory.  
We lift our hearts and voices  
With blest anticipation,  
And cry aloud,  
And give to God  
The praise of our salvation.

Seier-Kirkens Høvding bold!  
Til vi Dig mon skue,  
Vi med dem i Ærens Hjem  
Sjunge under Bue,  
Løfte paa de Glades Viis  
Hænderne som Vinger,  
Løfte Stemmen til din Priis,  
Som i Sky det klinger!

The triumphant church is not only the church, which are in "Glory," in another world, but the church here and now, because the Lord of the church offers his salvation.

The name we still acknowledge  
That burst our bonds in sunder,  
And lourly sing  
Our conquering King,  
In songs of joy and wonder.  
In every day's deliverance  
Our Jesus we discover;  
'Tis he, 'tis he  
That smote the sea,  
And led us safely over!

Skiøndt vi er i Trængsels Ovn,  
Gaae igjennem Ilden,  
Uforbrændt, med Engel sendt,  
Love vi Livs-Kilden:  
Som de Tre i Babels Land,  
Fire med den fine,  
Sjunge om vor Frelsermand  
Vi med Engle-Mine!

<sup>62</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 7, 140, No 49 v. 1: "Blessing, honour, thanks, and praise, Pay we, gracious God, to thee; Thou in thine abundant grace, Givest us the victory; True and faithful to thy word, Thou hast glorified thy Son; Jesus Christ, our dying Lord, He for us the fight hath won."

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 141, No 49 v. 2: "Lo, the prisoner is released, Lightened of his fleshly load; Where the weary are at rest, He is gathered into God! Lo, the pain of life is past, All his warfare now is o'er, Death and hell behind are cast, Grief and suffering are no more!"

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 141, No 49 v. 3: "Yes, the Christian's course is run, Ended is the glorious strife; Fought the fight, the work is done, Death is swallowed up of life; Borne by angels on their wings, Far from earth the spirit flies, Finds his God, and sits, and sings, Triumphing in paradise." See also Wesley in *A collection of Hymns* London 1876, No 729, 666: "he rules o'er earth and heaven; the keys of earth and hell are to our Jesus given."

<sup>65</sup> Wesley *Hymnals* (1745) 1847, No 275, 239-240

<sup>66</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2 nr. 365, 630-631

While in affliction's furnace,  
And passing through the fire,  
Thy love we praise  
Which knows our days  
And ever brings us nigher.  
We clap our hands exulting  
In thine almighty favour;  
The love divine  
Which made us thine  
Shall keep us thine forever.

Giennem Ild og giennem Vand  
Gaaer for Dig med Glæde,  
Afgrunds Bredd, naar Du er med,  
Trøstig vi betræde;  
Ogsaa i det røde Hav  
Jævn er Giennem-Gangen,  
Over *Pharaoners* Grav  
Toner *Moses-Sangen!*

Christ Jesus, the Lord of the Church is named the victorious King,<sup>67</sup> and this wording alludes the text where Jesus walking the waves while the disciples are in the boat, and the waves are a parallel picture of the creation out of chaos, and here again God has the victory over the powers of destruction and corruption. In Grundtvig's rewriting in second verse he doesn't follow Wesley but explains what is behind by using the story about Daniel and his friends, who came into the burning stove and were finally saved. We find in Wesley's third verse the saving through fire motif, but Grundtvig chooses to use the saving through the ocean, the death, where the Egyptians were destroyed after the exodus from the slavery.

By faith we see the glory  
To which thou shalt restore us;  
The cross despise  
For that high prize  
Which thou hast set before us.  
And if thou count us worthy,  
We each, as dying Stephen,  
Shall see thee stand  
At God's right hand  
To take us up to heaven.

Veien over Stok og Steen  
Gaaer i øde Egne,  
Men om end vi skulde see  
Stene paa os regne,  
Skiønne var dog Stephans Kaar,  
Og derpaa vi stole,  
Da vi see Dig, hvor Du staaer,  
Over alle Sole!

The cross is lifted up in the last verse as a sign of the high price Christ had to pay to open the opportunity for the restauration of human beings, the renewal, the regeneration, so that people, like the first martyr Stephen, can be connected across boundaries of what is here and now and what is the world to come, from where God is coming to us.

One final Wesleyan example where we find an Eastern Greek terminology is the hymn *Our Lord is risen from the dead*, a hymn Grundtvig has rewritten in Danish in 1837 and published with the title *Vor Frelser opstod fra de Døde*.

Our Lord is risen from the dead!  
Our Jesus is gone up on high!  
The powers of hell are captive led,  
Dragged to the portals of the sky;

Vor Frelser opstod fra de Døde,  
Vor Herre til Himmels opfoer,  
Fordærvelsens Hjem er lagt øde,  
Gienfødt er den frugtbare Jord!

There his triumphal chariot waits,  
And angels chant the solemn lay:  
Lift up your heads, ye heavenly gates;  
Ye everlasting doors, give way!

Triumphen, o, hvor den er fager!  
Hvor det er et lysteligt Syn:  
Paa Solstraale-Karmen Han ager,  
Guds Engle Ham følge som Lyn!

<sup>67</sup> "den sezrende Konge"

Loose all your bars of massy light,  
And wide unfold the' ethereal scene;  
He claims these mansions as his right;  
Receive the King of Glory in!

Who is this King of glory? Who?  
The Lord that all our foes o'ercame;  
The world, sin, death, and hell o'erthrew;  
And Jesus is the Conqueror's name.

Lo! his triumphal chariot waits,  
And angels chant the solemn lay:  
Lift up your heads, ye heavenly gates,  
Ye everlasting doors, give way!

Who is this King of Glory? Who?  
The Lord, of glorious power possest;  
The King of saints, and angels too,  
God over all, forever blest!<sup>68</sup>

In the wesleyan hymn Christ is "the Conquerer," who drags forward in triumph after having "sin, death, and hell o'erthrew." He is followed by the liberated prisoners, because "the powers of hell are captive led," and he who is on his way from below and up there is "the Lord of glorious power." It is typical for Wesley to describe the death and resurrection of Christ as the fighting, victorious and triumphant Christ.

Grundtvig, in his rewritten hymn uses the word that "the King of glory,"<sup>70</sup> who "is Jesus, the son of man,"<sup>71</sup> have "destroyed the home of corruption"<sup>72</sup> and is dragging forward holding "the loots from the land-of-death."<sup>73</sup> That is the reason why the "Triumphant ... is beautiful,"<sup>74</sup> and "Reborn is the fruitful Earth!"<sup>75</sup> Typical for Grundtvig Christ is the one who have conquered death, destroyed evilness and wins all the prisoners as a loot, he is able to offer freedom afterwards.

One of Wesley's most widespread Easter hymns *Christ, the Lord, is risen today* speaks about the redemption of Christ, "triumphs" and "victory." In the same time, he mocks Hell, death and the grave because they have lost:

Love's redeeming work is done;  
Fought the fight, the battle won:  
... Christ hath burst the gates of hell:  
Death in vain forbids his rise,  
... Where, O death, is now thy sting?  
... Where's thy victory, boasting grave?  
... Christ hath opened Paradise!<sup>76</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Wesley *Hymns* 1876, no 557. See Wesley *Hymns* 1761, No 92, 85-86 and Wesley *Hymns* 1765, no 92, 81-82

<sup>69</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1.2 1982, No 255, 484-485. See that Grundtvig in note on page 484 refers to Wesley.

<sup>70</sup> Herligeds-Konge

<sup>71</sup> Er Jesus, er Menneskens Søn

<sup>72</sup> Lagt Fordærvelsens Hjem øde

<sup>73</sup> Byttet fra Dødninge-Land

<sup>74</sup> Triumphen ... fager

<sup>75</sup> Gienfødt er den frugtbare Jord!

<sup>76</sup> Wesley *Hymns* 1876, No 716, verse 3-4-5, 652-653. Rewritten in Danish by P.H. Lange, *Salmer & Sange* nr 168, 236-237, and by Ivan Chetwynd, *MU Sange* nr. 146

I skyhøie Toner de sjunge:  
Opspringer, I Porte, paa Stand!  
Thi her ager Herligeds-Konge,  
Med Byttet fra Dødninge-Land!

Hvem er vel den Herligeds Konge,  
Som iler til Faderens Favn?  
Det Himmel og Jorden udsjunge,  
Sig bøier hvert Knæ i Hans Navn!

Hans Navn skal de Diende lære,  
Og Oldinger prise i Bøn,  
Thi Herren til Faderens Ære  
Er Jesus, er Menneskens Søn!<sup>69</sup>

The hymns are presented here to show how Wesley and Grundtvig uses the fight and victor motif in their description of what God has done for us. Likewise, they are examples of how Wesley and Grundtvig are inspired by the same Eastern Greek atoning hypothesis when they describe what God has done for us. The two Wesleyan hymns Grundtvig has rewritten in Danish, showing convergence itself, will here built the bridge to Grundtvig's theology on atonement.

### **Grundtvig: How to understand the atonement of Christ**

In Grundtvig's great hymn, *Hail, our reconciling Saviour!*<sup>77</sup> we find several important themes of Grundtvig's theology on Christ's deeds for us. Even from the perspective of incarnation it is clear that the purpose, the motif with Christ's entrance into this world is that he shall live a full human life, including death, which is one integrated part of the conditions of sinful human beings.

What with God has so distressed You, (verse 5)  
why our earthly dust possessed You,  
that with us You chose to languish,  
life redeeming through Your anguish,  
giving of Yourself in full?

The amazement of the incarnation leads directly to the explanation that the driving force behind the incarnation is love. God's love is the explanation to why Christ was willing to enter the world and live a full human life under the conditions of sinful mankind, even to death.

Fervent heart and loving-kindness (verse 6)  
triumphed over human blindness;  
giving You prefer to taking,  
therefore paradise forsaking  
in our place You chose to cross.

The death of Christ has a deputy role. He takes the place of human beings in death. In that way he pays the price, which is the consequence of the sin in the world, exactly the death, "You have paid my debt in full," (verse 11).<sup>78</sup> Christ did voluntary go into death, "You have chosen the Shame of the cross!" (verse 4),<sup>79</sup> and came through the death like gold tested and cleansed, "Because clean, as Gold tested, You are merciful!" (verse 2).<sup>80</sup> Just like the proven one, who are the true Savior, "Hail, our reconciling Saviour!" (verse 1), the worshipper can come near the risen one, "Before Your Face I will stand, I believe, You are near;" (verse 2),<sup>81</sup> and see that the suffering and pain of death, "From Your body rent asunder" (verse 8),<sup>82</sup> because Christ has overcome the sufferings, they are turned into a spring of life, "springs flowed out that called forth wonder," (verse 8),<sup>83</sup> a spring the worshipper want to have a share of, "that You in my

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<sup>77</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2, no 232, 455-457: "Hil dig Frelser og forsoner." English rewritten in *Hymns in English* no 17, 32-34: "Hail, our reconciling Saviour!"

<sup>78</sup> Du betalte Syndens Sold!

<sup>79</sup> Selv Du valgte Korsets Skam!

<sup>80</sup> Fordi reen, som Guldet prøvet, Du er dog miskundelig!

<sup>81</sup> For Dit Ansigt vil jeg træde, Thi jeg troer, Du er tilstæde

<sup>82</sup> Dog jeg troer, af dine Vunder,

<sup>83</sup> Væld udsprang til stort Vidunder,

weans set flowing, such a flood, ... wash my sins away!" (verse 9),<sup>84</sup> and finally that the worshipper, to whom the cross always will be a mystery, "O the mystery and the favour" (verse 12),<sup>85</sup> will be addressed like the co-prisoner of Christ on the cross, who was tempted to loot him, however, he prayed that Christ would remember him, and as an answer to that, Christ welcomed to be with him in Paradise the very same day: "say: We go to Paradise!" (verse 12).<sup>86</sup>

The suffering and death of Christ is seen as the fulfilment of total incarnation. Christ becomes a human being and it means that he become a human, who is deadly. The fact that he overcomes death gives him the victory over the power of death. He earns and deserves his status as superpower over death, and by this he is able to help the other dying ones back to life.

The hymn, *Hail, our reconciling Saviour!* is one of several hymn Grundtvig wrote with the inspiration from the so-called *Latin Hymns*. The Latin Hymn is another source Grundtvig uses in his theological thinking. We find these Grundtvig texts in a section of his *Sang-Værk*, and the original sources are from the late period of the same in the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon period. These Latin hymns and theology have been focused in Jørgen Elbek *Grundtvig og de latinske salmer*, and in Lars Thunberg's studies of the same.<sup>87</sup>

Otto Møller *Gjenløsningen* from 1884 is one of the first studies in the similarities of the cross-resurrection-theology in Grundtvig's theology compared to the Christian Antiquity.

### Christ's fight against the sin, the death and the great Tyrant

In the whole authorship of Grundtvig we find traces showing that Grundtvig to great extend follows the Eastern Greek thinking in the interpretation of what Christ has done for us. Aulén talks about the classic atonement hypothesis where Christ is understood as the one who won the victory over the powers of corruption and death, in contrast to the Latin and forensic atonement hypothesis where focus is on law and justice.<sup>88</sup> In his early authorship Grundtvig edited and publish the periodical *Danne-Virke*, where we find his Easter play, *Paaske-Lilieu*, first printed. In this play Grundtvig lets the angels sing Easter morning at the grave:

The Dragon is bonded,  
The Dead has lost its Sting,  
The Lion has won,  
Life is the lots for the Believers  
[...] Defy the bond of the Grave and the tricks of the Satan  
... Offer mockery to the Grave and defy the Dead!<sup>89</sup>

The dragon, the Death and Satan represent the opponent whom the Lion Christ<sup>90</sup> has conquered by binding the opponent and holding the rope of the grave. By this action, the believer has access to life and can defy the Death and mock the grave. In very few words Grundtvig shows his explanation of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection using the Eastern Greek dramatic thinking and not the Latin forensic terminology.

The words used in description of Christ's attributes are about overcoming, victory and conquering, especially that Christ is a hero. The description of Christ's suffering and death are in

<sup>84</sup> Leed den ind i mine Aarer, Floden ... Som kan Blod-Skyld tvætte af!

<sup>85</sup> Ja, jeg troer paa Korsets Gaade,

<sup>86</sup> Siig: vi gaae til *Paradis!*

<sup>87</sup> *Grundtvig-Studier* 1992, 67-96

<sup>88</sup> Aulén 1930, 38-69, 141-171. Bjerg 2002, 116

<sup>89</sup> Grundtvig *Danne-Virke II* 1817, 317-318, 321: "Dragen er bundet, Døden har mistet sin Brod, Løven har vundet, Liv er de Troendes Lod. [...] Trods Gravens Baand og Satans List ... Byd Graven Spot og Døden Trods!"

<sup>90</sup> Rev. 5:5b "The Lion of the tribe of Judah ... has conquered." Gen 49:9: "Judah is a lion's whelp"

words of a heroic deed that demanded a lot from Christ, but also gave him the total victory.<sup>91</sup> One of Grundtvig's Christmas hymns *Guds Engle i Flok! Synger liflig i Kor*,<sup>92</sup> has the word about the newborn Christ that he "is our hero and our Lord," who has come to the world for, "in his image," to recreate "us again."<sup>93</sup> The heroic deed of Christ is seen as something during his whole life and not limited to the drama in suffering, crucifixion and resurrection. Christ's deeds are seen as the foundation of salvation, offered to all people, with the purpose that the image of God may be recreated in the believers. In other places Grundtvig formulate salvation as forgiveness of human sin.<sup>94</sup>

The human life too is a fight, a battle. During that fight the knowledge of Christ's victory shall be a resource, a fortune, because the faith in him gives the believer a confidence that he will give us the victory in our fights and battles. The story of Christ's life is completed in a way that includes death, and the death as something not given the final end but opening to a new era. Every living human being is facing the end of life in the future, but the end is also an open door to something new. The Christian "awakening"<sup>95</sup> is, according to Grundtvig that people of faith can live, borrow and take over the end of life from Christ, his death and resurrection, and make this end of life his own story. This is "the hope" of the "in corruptible," and it is open to everything he has "prepared to us."<sup>96</sup>

It is in his preaching we find Grundtvig's most concentrated and completed interpretation of Christ's deeds for us. Here it is focused that the Father and the Son united and driven by love allow Christ to die, to "atone the sin of the World," for to overcome the great Thrant, the Death, and break the chains that bind all deadly people, and this act of the Father and the Son united leads to the invitation to all people of access to life, here and everlasting.<sup>97</sup>

When we consider the great day of death, as the triumph of God's love, as the heavenly day of sacrificial act on earth, when the Father sacrificed the only begotten and the Son sacrificed himself, to atone the sin of the World with his blood, with his voluntary and innocent death on behalf of the deadly ones, he conquered the great Tyrant and broke the chains, by which he slaved the fallen Adams because the death is the price of sin. When we in this way consider the marvelous day of death and join into the praise of the crucified as the savior of the world and the prince of life, we will find our self under the divine power of the cross giving comfort to all of us and all we love who carries the marks of death, and especially the divine comfort is linked to every marks of death at the Word of the Crucified and the church on earth, and this divine comfort is at the cross articulated in his

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<sup>91</sup> Grundtvig *Om den sande Christendom* 1826, Begtrup IV, 486: "... Jesu Selv-Opoffrelse paa Korset, som den store Helte-Gjerning, hvormed han frelste os, saa Troen derpaa er Overgangen fra de Dødes Rige til de Levendes Land."

<sup>92</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 4.1, no 186, 249: "The choir of God's angles are singing delectable together"

<sup>93</sup> "vor Helt og vor Herre," "i Billede sit," "os paany."

<sup>94</sup> Grundtvig *Om Christendommens Sandhed* 1826-1827, Begtrup Vol IV, 630: "... det var ikke for sin egen, men for sine Troendes Skyld, vor Jesus døde, og at denne Hans Død var Vilkaaret for den Synds-Forladelse vi i vor Troes-Bekjendelse ophøie ... at Christi, Guds Søn, frivillige Død .. kan udvirke hans Troende Synds-Forladelse!"

<sup>95</sup> "opvaagnelse"

<sup>96</sup> Grundtvig *Den christelige Kamp* 1825 Begtrup Vol IV, 439: "... vi skal kun glæde os over Seiren, Jesus vandt, da Han førde Liv og Uforkrænkelighed igjen for Lyset, da Han i Graven, hvoraf Han sejerrig opstod, beredte os ... en glad Opvaagnelse ... Ja, dette store, uforkrænkelige Haab, det er den Salighedens Hjelm, der holder de Christnes Hoved opreist under Kampen ..."

<sup>97</sup> Grundtvig *Om Kiødets Opstandelse og det evige Liv* 1855, 87 about "Tyranniets Tid." See also Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2, no 254, 483-484 about the fallen Thrant

pleasing expression in his lifegiving words from my dying savior's lips: Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.<sup>98</sup>

The great day of death is the day of pain and defeat. Innocent blood is shed, and much suffering has spread horror. Without disregarding the long darkness of good Friday and without being absorbing to the sacrificial act, the triumph overrules the pain because the results of the death throes are known, and this knowledge turns the good Friday into "the marvelous day of Death."<sup>99</sup> The victory at the day of resurrection is the perspective from where the great day of fighting and dying is seen.

Grundtvig uses the fight- and victory terminology on people, who are sinful and living facing death in front of them. He calls them prisoners of death, prisoners of evilness and of the Evil One. Christ himself was never a prisoner of anything or anyone. He accepted to live a human life under normal conditions for people, with the purpose to destroy the powers of corruption.<sup>100</sup> The results of Christ's deed for us are multiply, but first of all our liberation and victory. He is the one who conquered, and he offers victory to human beings in their lives and fighting.<sup>101</sup>

Grundtvig easily combines Old Testament images of יהוה Jahwes fighting with images of the fighting of Christ. It can be יהוה Jahwes descendence to mount Horeb to meet with Moses,<sup>102</sup> or the peoples in the days of Jeremia,<sup>103</sup> who were like broken vessels, or other stories about God's fighting and victories. Grundtvig's hymn *Daniel i Løver-Kulen*<sup>104</sup> reflects Christ's death and resurrection. In the same way as "the angels of God" bound "the gabs of the Lions," so did "Savior in the Snake-Garden," and in contrary to "the Sinful-Nature's Order," he didn't "Dissolve." Therefor this "the friends of Jesus" are able "this Evening to smile at the Death," because they "shall arise shining in the dawn."<sup>105</sup> The battle and victory is connected to the Easter drama, Good Friday and Easter Morning in particular as the exponent of God's victory over the powers of destruction and corruption, but the use of other stories of God's fight and victory gives his presentation a cosmic and overall inclusive character.

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<sup>98</sup> Grundtvig *Prædikener i Vartov*, bind 2, 170: Naar vi nu saaledes rolig betragte den store Dødsdag, som Guds Kiærligheds Triumf, som den himmelske Offerdag paa Jorden, da Faderen offrede sin Enbaarne og Sønnen opoffrede sig selv, for med sit uskyldige Blod at afsone Verdens Synd, med sin ligesaa frivillige som uforskyldte Død paa de Dødeliges Vegne at overvinde den store Tyran og bryde de Lænker, hvori han holdt det faldne Adams Kiøn, fordi Død er Syndens Sold, naar vi saaledes betragte den mageløse Dødsdag, og istemme Lovsangen til den Korsfæstede som Verdens Frelser og Livets Fyrste, se da, m. V. føle vi os netop under Korset guddommelig trøstede over alle Dødstegn baade hos os selv og hos Alt, hvad vi elske, og da især guddommelig trøstede over hvert Dødstegn hos den Korsfæstedes Ord og Menighed paa Jorden, og denne guddommelige Trøst har paa Korset selv fundet sit velbehagelige Udtryk i det livsalige Ord fra Frelserens døende Læber: sandelig, siger jeg dig, idag skal du være med mig i Paradis!

<sup>99</sup> "Den mageløse Dødsdag."

<sup>100</sup> Grundtvig *Prædikener i Vartov*, bind 2, 169: "Han som havde reddet Andre af Dødens Vold, kunde umuelig selv blive dens Rov ... thi jeg har Magt til at sætte Livet til og tage det igjen, ... det var for at løskiøbe os der Alle som Syndere, var Dødens Fanger, har han selv forklaret sin frivillige Død, forklaret den af det, kun for os dunkle, men i sig selv evig soleklare Dyb, hvis Navn er *Kiærlighed*."

<sup>101</sup> Grundtvig *Om den sande Christendom* 1826, Begtrup IV, 550: "... vor almægtige Skyts-Aand, og med vor usynlige Konge, der knuser Konger som Leerkar, og rører ved Bjergene, saa de henflyde som Vox for Hans Ansigt, og vidner, at den almægtige Jord-Drot ogsaa er den Himmel-Drot, vi i ham tilbede! ... thi Seiren er vundet, Riget er frelst, mens visov, af Ham, der ikke slummer men vaager altid over Israel ... da vi herefter ... levende tage Deel i Hans Kamp og Seier."

<sup>102</sup> Deut 4:11-12. Psalm 97:5

<sup>103</sup> Jeremias 19

<sup>104</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2. no 307, 566-567: "Daniel in the Lions' Pit"

<sup>105</sup> "Guds engle" "Løvers Munde" "Frelseren i Orme-Gaarden" "Syn-Naturens Orden" "Opløsning" "Jesu Venner" "i Kveld ad Døden smile" "Skal i Gry opstaae med Glands"

Grundtvig uses another Old Testament image in his Easter hymn *Tag det sorte Kors fra Graven*,<sup>106</sup> where he compares the resurrection of Christ with the Phenix bird,<sup>107</sup> who dies and burns up and becomes ashes, but arises again from the ashes, “Palm-Bird for an ash jar! Praise songs for painful sighs,” and Grundtvig continues with connecting the human resurrection with the likeness of the wings of the Phenix that are growing out again, “Growing of the Bird-Wings of the Soul!”<sup>108</sup> Or the very short formulation: “Like the Sun-Bird you will be young again!”<sup>109</sup>

Grundtvig’s ideas of Christ as the hero and the one, who redeems those, who are living their lives under the conditions of death, are developing strongly in Grundtvig’s description of what happened to Christ during the three days from his death on good Friday until his resurrection on Easter Morning. “He has ransomed you among the slaves of Hell.”<sup>110</sup> This understanding unfolds in a major figurative language on the mythological drama between what is good and what is evil, and how this fight is going on behind the visible world.<sup>111</sup> The insight into the hidden drama Christ fights, do not change, that the logic understanding of the cross remains a riddle to us, and only in faith the believer can face it, “Yes, I have faith in the Riddle of the Cross.”<sup>112</sup>

The Apostolic Creed’s “descended to the dead,” *descendit ad inferna*, is the place, where the dead gather when soul and body is separated in death. Grundtvig has, like Wesley, many considerations about how we can understand Christ’s presence in the underworld.<sup>113</sup> Christ doesn’t arrive as a damned person, even though he took upon himself the sin and the guilt of the world, he was innocent. And he doesn’t arrive as the gleeful person, who could show his own innocence and victory to the damned persons so that they could see what they have missed because they didn’t have faith in Christ. Grundtvig turns against the understanding that Christ should be a victim or a judge. He comes as he comes to other places voluntary and for the purpose to save. As part of the reflections Grundtvig wonders on the differences of Hades, the land of the Death, Hell and Paradise. Christ arrives into the place where the evil power and the Evil One are, and only here he can fight the great opponent and proclaim liberty to those, who also in this place have faith in him as their savior.<sup>114</sup>

Hell in Danish language, like Hades in Greek, is the Land of the Dead, you know, but if you will know where it is placed, then tell me first, where the Soul is placed in the Body, and when we have good time, we can talk about, where the Soul is

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<sup>106</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 4.1, No 124, 155-157: ”Remove the black Cross from the Grave.”

<sup>107</sup> Job 28:18, LXX Ps 92:13, 1 Clement 25:1-5. Grundtvig recognizes that in Ps 103 the Phenix bird has been an eagle, but the Phenix motif is still behind. See Grundtvig *Phenix-Fuglen* 1840, 16. See Wesley Works Vol 7, 155:13-16 for Wesley’s use of the Phenix motif.

<sup>108</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 4.1, No 124, 155, No 147, 278: ”Palmefugl for Askekrukke! Frydesang for hule sukke,” ”Voxer Sjælens Fuglevinger!” ”Sol-Fuglen lig, bliver ung du igjen!”

<sup>109</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.1, No 64, verse 3, 155

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., no 64, verse 3, 155: ”Løskøbt har Han dig blandt Helvedes fanger”

<sup>111</sup> Grundtvig *Søndags-Bogen*, sermon on Matt. 28:1-10, Begtrup V, 217: ”... hvad der virkelig skedte paa Jorden, da Herrens Engel foer ned fra Himmelten, oplukkende med Kongens Nøgel den forseiglede Dør mellem de Dødes Rige og de Levendes Land, fordi Livets Fyrste, som ved en Feiltagelse, var kommet til at ligge i Dødens Lænker, som da nødvendig maatte sprænges.”

<sup>112</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værket* 1982, 1.2, no 232, verse 12, 457: ”Ja, jeg troer paa Korsets Gaade.”

<sup>113</sup> Grundtvig *Om Kiødets Opstandelse og det evige Liv* 1855, 104-106. 105: ”... han ogsaa nedfoer til det Under-Jordiske, ... opholdt han sig tre Dage i de Dødes Rige.”

<sup>114</sup> Grundtvig *Søndags-Bog III*, 176-195. Sermon IX *Christi Nedfart til Helvede* 1. Petersbrev 3:18-22. Grundtvig lift up the two aspects, first the defeat of dead and the Devil, and second the preaching to the dead, a second chance. Some scholars have focused the second chance aspect in Grundtvig’s preaching, Grundtvig himself emphasizes the defeat of dead and the Devil, see Gregersen in Holm & Pedersen Ed. 286-293

outside the body, when we are Dead; but you see it doesn't matter in Faith, because Faith is only that the soul of Christ, when his body was lying in the grave, was a guest to those souls of the deceased, and do you think it was impossible?<sup>115</sup>

Grundtvig asks rhetorically, as though his explanation is understood by all. We find Grundtvig's description of Christ's descendancy into the land of the dead and his ascendance from the same all over this authorship.<sup>116</sup> Christ is the hero, who became a hero because he by his death and interment got the Death to bite on him, so that he by his resurrection could conquer and defeat them and lead them as prisoners in his triumphant march.<sup>117</sup>

Christ's fight in the land of the death leads the believers to the understanding that evilness has been overcome. The evilness has many faces: Death and corruption. Death and corruption and the Hell are explained as phenomenon but also personified, and in this way the opponent has the character of a personal and evil power. The most clearly personification of the evilness we find when Grundtvig describes the fight as a duel, e.g. with allusion of bible texts on duels, where "the Hero who won the victory and bound the Strong one, took the armor he was depending on, plundered his Palace and shared the loot with his friends!"<sup>118</sup> Likewise, Christ's battle is seen as the fulfillment of the promise given to mankind after the fall that the offspring of the woman "shall crush the Head of the Snake, but you shall be bite in your heel."<sup>119</sup>

The suffering and the fight is portrayed dramatically. The victory, the triumph and Christ's heroic exit of the fight are getting even higher priority.<sup>120</sup> Even though the pain and death of good Friday is comprehensive and the fight in the land of the dead have a great space in the explanation on what Christ has done for us, then the total dominant perspective we find in Grundtvig's interpretation of the resurrection on Easter morning. "Welcome you with the crown of victory, in the Light of the battle in the hidden place ... Welcome to the plain place, away from Shadow Land in the Depths!"<sup>121</sup> The pain, death and the fight is always seen from the perspective of the victory in the resurrection.

Compared to Grundtvig's pictorial and metaphoric language on the motif of fight and victory Wesley's language is more muffled and plainer. It is not because Wesley is slurred or imprecise

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<sup>115</sup> Grundtvig *Om Christendommens Sandhed* 1826-27, Begtrup IV, 597: "At Helvede paa Dansk, saavelsom Hades paa Græst, er de Dødes Rige, det veed du vel, men vil du vide, hvor det ligger, da siig mig først, hvor Sjælen ligger i Legemet, og naar vi har gode Stunder, kan vi snakke om, hvor den ligger udenfor Legemet, naar vi er døde; men du seer nok, det kommer ikke Troen ved, som kun gaar ud paa, at Christi Sjæl, medens hans Legeme laae i Graven, gjæstede Sjælene af andre Afdøde, og mener du virkelig, det var umueligt?"

<sup>116</sup> Grundtvig *Ved Tusindaars-Festen* 1826, Begtrup IV, 744: "Guds egen Søn, o glem det ei! Gik til de Dødes Rige, Kun for at du, paa Livets Vei, Til Lysets Hjem kan stige!"

<sup>117</sup> Grundtvig *Søndags-Bogen*, sermon on Acts 2:1-11, Begtrup V, 209: "Helten, der kommer seierig tilbage fra de Dødes Rige, førende Døden og Helvede med sig i Lænker ... naar vi kun har den Tro, at Død er Syndens Sold, men det evige Liv Guds Naade-Gave i Christo Jesu, vor Herre, og jeg tør vel mene, at Herrens Opstandelse staaer ei i større Glands for noget Menneske-Øie, end for Unger-Svendens, hvem Døds-Tanken vakde af hans søde Drømme om Jord-Livets Herlighed, eller hvis Hjerte vaandede sig under Følelsen af Verdens-Livets Tomhed, naar han under sine stille Betragtninger faaer Syn paa Helten, der kommer seierig tilbage fra de Dødes Rige, førende Døden og Helvede med sig i Lænker, og udstrækkende sin milde Haand med Livets Brød og med Salighedens Kalk, til Muldets Frænder i Græde-Dalen!"

<sup>118</sup> Grundtvig *Prædikener i Vartov*, volume 2, 171. Allusion of Matt 12:29: "den Helt der overvandt og bandt den Stærke, tog hans fulde Rustning, som han forlod sig paa, udplyndrede hans Palads og delede Byttet med sine Venner!"

<sup>119</sup> Genesis 3:15. Grundtvig *Om Kiødets Opstandelse og det evige Liv* 1855, 71-75, Christ as the "Snake-Crasher": "skal sønderknuse (Slangens) dit Hoved, men du skal sønderknuse hans hæl."

<sup>120</sup> Grundtvig *Prædikener i Vartov*, volume 2, 253: "See, at denne Fader-Kiærlighed og til denne Gienløsningens Helte-Gerning gav Han sin eenbaerne Søn, den heltemodige Løve og det taalmodige Lam, som knuste Slangens Hoved ..."

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 175: "Velkommen seierkronet, I lys fra Slag i Løn ... Velkommen paa det Jævne, Fra Dybets Skyggedal!"

but because Grundtvig is more powerful and uses so many expressions taken either direct from the old Greek liturgy and Fathers or from the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon poems.

### The victorious leads the Death and Hell in chains

Grundtvig's work with other sources influenced by the same thinking we find in the Eastern Greek fathers has a catalyzing effect on his own writings. We find that already in his work on the *Beowulf* Poem, he had learned during the publication of Thorkelin in 1815. Grundtvig shows in his commentary to the poem that he understands it as a Christian poem, where the heathen events are structured and put into a Christian framework of explanation. There are several levels of meaning in this poem. The Beowulf, Grundtvig name him Bjovalf, is the good God who defeats the evil powers, that is Christ's fight and defeat of the powers of corruption. Simultaneously, the poem tells the story of how Christianity fought the heathen cultures and powers in the Nordic region of Europe. Grundtvig's interpretation of the Bjovalf Drape poem is both a history of the mission and an explanation of what Christianity is all about.<sup>122</sup> The poem is "a great Pictorial Word [...] the Word is, as Scripture teaches, and as we now are able to understand, the highest and deepest Expression of the Revelation of Life, and this whole Story must be understood as the Words coming to Fight and Victory."<sup>123</sup>

Grundtvig understands that behind Bjovalfs Drape we find a "fundamental-story," an "Epos," that dominates other stories and gives the patterns for other stories and imaginations. The "fundamental-story" is powerful compared to other stories it is connected to. Christianity has shown in its spreading around in the world that it has this powerful influence on other cultures and mythologies. Bjovalfs' fight and victory are in this perspective a reproduction of the Christian "fundamental-story" on the fight and victory of truth.<sup>124</sup>

The life of Christ on this Earth, The Word's hiking in flesh, is the Event that not only is an image of, but contain the Fight and Victory of Truth, and that, spiritually understood, have created the only true Epos, which in History is Created.<sup>125</sup>

Grundtvig is convinced that *Cædmon* or someone closely related to him is the source to the Bjovalfs Drape. This conviction may have stimulated Grundtvig's interest in the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon Christianity, which is the direct reason for Grundtvig's journey to England in 1829-31, where he learns more about Cædmon but also Bede and Kynewulf and texts of the Exeter-Book e.g. the *Messiaden*.<sup>126</sup> The knowledge from the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon writings gives Grundtvig an even more clearly understanding of what Christ has done "for us all and for our salvation."<sup>127</sup>

The most coherent depiction of Christ's descent into the land of the dead, and what happened there, we find in Grundtvig's great retelling of Cædmon's poem. Grundtvig found this

<sup>122</sup> Grundtvig *Danne-Virke II* 1817, *Om Bjovalfs Drape*, 207, 276-279

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 273: "et stort Billed-Ord [...] Ordet er, som Skriften lærer, og som vu nu kan fatte, det høiste og dybeste Udtryk for Livets Aabenbarelse, og den hele Historie maa betragtes som Ordets Kamp til Seier."

<sup>124</sup> Grundtvig *Krønnike-Rim* 1875, 96

<sup>125</sup> Grundtvig *Danne-Virke II* 1817, *Om Bjovalfs Drape*, 275: "Christi Liv paa Jorden, Ordets Vandring i Kiød, er en Begivenhed, der ikke blot afbilder, men indeholder Sandheds Kamp og Seier, og som synes, aandig beskuet, at maatte frembringe det eneste sande Epos, der i Historien lader sig Skabe."

<sup>126</sup> Bradley 1998

<sup>127</sup> The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed on Christ's deed: τον δι ημας τους ανθρωπους και δια τηνημετεραν σωτηριαν, See Faith and Order Paper No 153, 10

text in Bede's writings.<sup>128</sup> The connection from Grundtvig to Cædmon to Bede<sup>129</sup> to the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon Christianity in England is also the connection to the Eastern and Greek Christian Antiquity,<sup>130</sup> from where we have knowledge about Christ's death and resurrection told as a mythological battle between God and the Devil, Life and Death, Christ and Satan. It is from an Eastern and Greek thinking Grundtvig takes inspiration when he writes about Christ's fight against the powers of Hell, and how Christ empties Hell by giving freedom to the prisoners and lead them back to life, to Paradise. Grundtvig's first great hymn on Christ's descendants to the land of the Dead is *I kveld blev der banket paa Helvedes Port*,<sup>131</sup> a 20 verse long narrative poem. "The Herald was strong," when he knocked "on the gate of Hell" and announced to "the dragons of Hell," that he has come to trample "on Lizards and Dragons" and to crush "the Viper-Snake" and "the Wolf of Hell." His arrival wakes up all, who are prisoners, and "at that moment the Sun of Heaven was shining in Hell." The first one "our Savior-Man" is calling is "Adam, where are you?" Then "Eve" is found, and they have conversations "my Son and my Lord," about what went wrong, so that they ended up here. "Now, from Hell the Lord" together with "a Crowd" so big of those, he has found in Hell. "Ten thousand Miles than the deepest place the Devils now was falling" and only "Death was sitting in Hell" left behind,<sup>132</sup> when "our Savior, innocently crucified" triumphantly returned back, while the doors of Hell were closed when "the Son of God" "stood up on the third Day" after he has "visited Hell!"<sup>133</sup>

Grundtvig's understanding that the deeds of Christ are acts of liberation, acts of redemption of prisoned people, and that the intention to give freedom to as many as possible, we find in another hymn of Grundtvig from the same year, 1837. Grundtvig's rewriting of Montgomery's *O Spirit of the Living God*<sup>134</sup> in *Du, som gaaer ud fra den levende Gud*, verse six, says that the tri-une God is behind an act of salvation which is a redeeming, a ransom, that count all people to the extent that only an absolute minimum of God's creation, the "Descent of destruction,"<sup>135</sup> finally will be lost.

<sup>128</sup> Noack, 1983, 68-72. Grundtvig's inspiration from the old-english or Celtic-Anglo-Saxon poems is very much on the theme of Eastern understanding of atonement. Noack retells *Stykker af old-engelsk Kristen digtning* in *Helvedstorm og Himmelfart*, poems, Grundtvig understood that Cædmon was behind, see Grundtvig *Danne-Virke II* 1817, *Om Bjovalfs Drape*, 277. See also *Nikodemusevangeliet* 17-27, Giversen III, 443-451. See also Allchin in *Grundtvig-Studier* 2001, 31-40

<sup>129</sup> Bede Venerabilis (ca 672-735). Christensen-Göransson I 1969, 268-269

<sup>130</sup> Hieatt 1983, xxviii, xxxvii. The Celtic-Anglo-Saxon Christianity had via the seaways and the first missionaries and monks from the Greek Christian antiquity in the East followed the tradition of the East, e.g. the liturgy. First after the Normans take over of the power the connection shifts to the Latin Christendom with the tradition from Rome and Carthage.

<sup>131</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2, no 243, 471-474. Grundtvig's note on page 471: "Efter Angel-Sachseren hos Cædmon." "Knoking on the door of Hell tonight." See also Kjærgaard 2003, 225-227, Kædmon, 7. Century.

<sup>132</sup> Maybe the understanding is here that only the Dead is left back in Hell, and the Devils are falling even deeper down in darkness, verse 17. If so this can be a parallel idea to what we find in Wesley about a two-camber system, where you find a place for the souls until the judgement day and the resurrection, and that Hell is something else after the Kingdom of Death.

<sup>133</sup> "Herolden var stærk," "paa Helvedes Port" "Helvedes Kryb," "paa Øgler og Drager" "Hug-Ormen" "Helvedes Ulv. "da skinnede i Helvede Himmerigs Soel." "vor Frelser-Mand" "Adam, hvor er du?" "Eva" "min Søn og min Herre" "Fra Helvede steg nu den Herre" "en Skare" "Titusinde Mile end dybere ned sank Djævle" "Død sad i Helved" "vor Frelser, uskyldig korsfæstet" "Guds Søn" "opstod paa den tredje Dag" "Helvede giæstet!"

<sup>134</sup> *Hymns and Psalms* 1983, No 322

<sup>135</sup> "Fortabelsens Åt"

Montgomery's<sup>136</sup> text from 1823

God from eternity hath willed  
All flesh shall His salvation see:  
So be the Father's love fulfilled,  
The Savior's sufferings crowned through Thee

Grundtvig's text from 1837

Saligheds Fryd, for Gienløserens Dyd,  
Times lad Mennesker alle!  
*Faderens Raad og den Hellig-Aands Daad*  
Sammen i *Frelseren* falde!  
Saa af det Hele, som Gud har skabt,  
Gaar kun Fortabelsens Æt fortabt!<sup>137</sup>

The "Descent of destruction" in this hymn has the same value as "the Devils," who are "falling Ten thousand Miles to the deepest place," in verse 17 in *I Kveld blev der banket paa Helvedes Port*. Both Montgomery and Grundtvig are moving the focus away from the perdition to the wish for salvation for all and the hope that almost everybody will be saved.<sup>138</sup>

In the poem *I Kveld blev der banket paa Helvedes Port* we find Grundtvig's rewriting of the descent of Christ, the preaching to the prisoners and his victory over Death, the great snake and the Devil. Noack has in his rewriting of the same section in the Exeter-Book's *Messiade* put on the very significant headline "Storm of Hell," a section Grundtvig thinks is written by Cædmon.<sup>139</sup> The next section of the *Messiade* Noack gives the name the "ascension to Heaven."<sup>140</sup> Grundtvig was inspired by these sections of the *Messiade* to write the hymn *Kommer sjæle, dyrekiøbte*.<sup>141</sup> He understood that Kynewulf is behind this section of the *Messiaden*.<sup>142</sup> This hymn has in eight great verses focus on the ascending. Our "Savior-Man, the Creator of the World and the Judge of the World," is like a "Redeemer of the string of Death and All the Devil's Fright and Cruelty," coming "Victoriously from the Deepest." "The Souls, who have a high price," those who "Before was lost, but now are found," are now a whole "People" of "Redeemed." He "Came from Hell" and "Ascending from the Valley of Lamentation" and having the direction to Heaven, where the "Welcome-Song from the Army of Heaven" receive "Him and many Millions, paid for with His Blood." Grundtvig tells a coherent narrative story, like one great ascension from Hell to Paradise beginning on Good Friday and continuing until the Ascension Day of Christ.<sup>143</sup>

We find the same understanding in Grundtvig's hymn *Til Helvede vor Drot nedfoer*.<sup>144</sup> The Lord, who is also "our Hero," who "descend into Hell," for the reason "to overthrow the Throne of Death," and to "defeat the Strong enemy's mockery," he is also named "A Preacher with the

<sup>136</sup> James Montgomery (1771-1853) Methodist from Scotland, editor and hymn writer. Grundtvig's knowledge about Montgomery's hymns is from his travel in England 1829-31, see Kjærgaard 2003, 300. See also Balslev-Clausen's article "Du, som går ud fra den levende Gud" in *Grundtvig-Studier* 1983, 42-67

<sup>137</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2, no 360, 625-627. Grundtvig's note on page 625: Montgomery's "O Spirit of the Living God" imitated. See also *NFS Grundtvigs Kirke-Salmebog* no 227

<sup>138</sup> See also Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 4.1, no 78 verse 3: "Du vil ingen Synders Død"

<sup>139</sup> "Helvedstorm." Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 2, no 132, 382-384 verse 2: "Frelseren laa i sorten Jord," verse 3: "Han i Gravens Land, Stormede Dødens Taarne."

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., "Himmelfart"

<sup>141</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2, no 244, 474-475. Note: Af den Angelsachsiske *Messiade* i Exeter-Bogen. Kjærgaard 2003, 262, *Kynewulf, Messiade*, ca. 800 AC. See also *NFS Grundtvigs Kirke-Salmebog* no 214. "Come, the Souls, who have a high price."

<sup>142</sup> Noack 1983, 101-104

<sup>143</sup> "Frelser-Mand, Verdens Skaber og Verdens Dommer" "Løseren af Dødens Baand og Alle Djævles Skræk og Gru" "Seierrig fra Dybet" "Sjæle, dyrekiøbte" "Før fortalte, men fundet nu" "Folk" "igienløste" "Kom fra Hel" "Stigende fra Jammer-Dale" "Himmel-Hærrens Velkomst-Sang" "Ham og mange Millioner, Dyrekiøbte med Hans Blod"

<sup>144</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.1, no 47, 127-128: "Our Hero descend into Hell:" "vor Drot" "nedfoer til Helvede" "at styrte Dødens Trone om" "Neddæmp den stærke Fiendes Spot" "En Prædikant paa Aanders Sprog" "vor Herres Nadfart Præk" "Fra Helved i Triumf" "Fanger sjæleglad" "Fra Helvede til Himmerig" "hvad vi forstaae!" "vor Tro, Kun Herrens og vort Eget!"

language of Spirits,” who with “our Lord’s descendent Preach,” he appeals to the faith of the prisoners. Now, he is on his way “in Triumph out of Hell,” and many “deeply happy Prisoners,” are saved and free and follow Him “From Hell to Paradise,” even though nobody asks “what do we understand,” but only ask for “our Faith, only the Lord’s and our own!”

In one of Grundtvig’s late written hymns *Til Dødningshjem vor Drot nedf’or*<sup>145</sup> the same theme is repeated, that “the Savior is a Preacher” to them, who are “Prisoned greatly” whatever they are those who “before the candle of Christianity was lightened” were in “the Gentile Darkness,” or those worried Christian people who need comfort, “That in the land of the Death, Even the Word of Life has found its Way and Voice.”

I addition to the inspiration from the old Celtic-Anglo-Saxon sources and the contemporary sources, e.g. Watts, Wesley and Montgomery, Grundtvig finds inspiration to describe the deeds of Christ for us in the Greek liturgy. Scholars have exactly defined Grundtvig’s *Greek Awakening*.<sup>146</sup> Behind a number of Grundtvig’s hymns we find his studies of the Greek liturgy, and in these hymns the Eastern Greek atonement hypothesis is clear.<sup>147</sup>

The single hymn which is the most clearly reflection of a classic Eastern Greek atonement hypothesis is *I Dag sukker Holved og klager*.<sup>148</sup> In this hymn Grundtvig lets the Death and Hell be the speaking subject whose questions are answered by those who after the resurrection have seen the fight and victory of the Divine-Man.

Today the Hell is Moaning and Groaning:  
O, I hoped He was never born,  
This Son of *Mary*, my Tormentor!  
O, I hoped He was never dead!  
How are my brave Giants?  
Where are my Ports and Rampart!  
Where is now my Great Strength!  
He spoiled it All like a God!  
Glory to the Divine-Man,  
Crucified and risen!<sup>149</sup>

The great opponent, the Hell, complaints that he, who is both God and man, was born. He has from birth been a tormenter to all the evil ones. Even his death was a blow against the evil ones, because it gave him the possibility to destroy the power of evil and show that he is God.

Today the Hell is Moaning and Groaning:  
O woe that I catch up Him in my arms!  
O woe how easy the shin cheats,  
His Tears, His Colour, His Name!

<sup>145</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1984, 5.2, no 209, 356-357. Written 1860-1862. ”To the home of Dead our Hero descend” ”Frelseren er Prædikant” ”i det store Fangenskab” ”Før Christendommens Lys blev tændt” ”I Hedenskabens Mørke” ”At i de Dødes Rige, Dog Livets Ord fandt Vei og Røst”

<sup>146</sup> Thodberg in Thodberg & Thyssen Ed., 1983, 180-184. When Grundtvig worked out his *Sang-Værket* he borrowed the *Leiturgikón* from the Royal Library in Copenhagen. The protocol of loaners shows Grundtvig’s name on January 23, 1837. The *Leiturgikón* contains prayers and hymns for the great Orthodox holidays.

<sup>147</sup> I have not found any other Western theologian who articulates the Eastern and Greek atonement hypothesis so complete and classic as what we find in Grundtvig’s hymn writing after January 1837. See also Elbek 1960, 23, 59-69. A content of Grundtvig’s 38 hymns with Greek inspiration you can find in Elbek 1960, 149

<sup>148</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2, no 218, 441-443. Grundtvig’s note: En *Græsk Sang*, frit oversat. ”Today the Hell is Moaning and Groaning”

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., I Dag sukker Holved og klager: O, gid Han dog aldrig var fød, Den Søn af *Maria*, min Plager! O gid Han dog aldrig var død! Hvor er mine Kæmper saa bolde? Hvor er mine Porte og Volde! Hvor er nu min Styrke saa prud! Han sprængde det Alt som en Gud! Ære være Guddoms-Manden, Korsfæstet og opstanden!

He called himself the *Son of Man*,  
I believed Him, now I harvest the reward!  
He came like the Bird to the Cage,  
Now He flew away and the Nest is empty!  
Glory to the Divine-Man,  
Crucified and risen!<sup>150</sup>

The great opponent, the Hell, complaints that he attached the son of Man. It was a great mistake that he saw him just like a son of any human being. It turned out that this son of Man, brought to the Cage by the Evil himself, has taken all what was in the Cage and has flown away with it. The reward is now that Hell is only emptiness.

Today the Hell is Moaning and Groaning:  
Before I was so fat and so plump,  
Now I became a complete skinny one,  
Why, the most “*Alive*” knows,  
My food during countless days  
I had to give it back!  
Here I am sitting naked and curved,  
O woe how this Giant was cruel!  
Glory to the Divine-Man,  
Crucified and risen!<sup>151</sup>

The opponent complaints that the Giant and now most “*Alive*” has made a full stop to the good days in Hell. The understanding, that the opponent eats, lives off those who have their final destination in Hell, is a summary of Peter’s first letter: “your adversary the devil walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”<sup>152</sup> Only the most Alive knows how the opponent was forced to give back, what he has swallowed. “The Death is victoriously devoured. Death! Where are your sting? Death! Where are your victory?”<sup>153</sup> That is the reason why he is knocked out, and you can see it, so skinny, naked and curved he is.

Today the Hell is Moaning and Groaning:  
Oh, Adam and all his stock  
Now are marching out in flocks  
Redeemed by the hidden Son of God!  
I collected them one by one and in fun  
Now he has robbed them everyone  
Now, on the word of the Crucified  
They raced from Hell to Heaven!  
Glory to the Divine-Man,

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., I Dag sukker Helved og klager: O vee, at jeg tog Ham i Favn! O vee, hvor dog Skinnet bedrager, Hans Taarer, Hans Farve, Hans Navn! Han kaldte sig *Menneske-Sønnen*, Jeg troed Ham, høster nu Lønnen! Som Fuglen til Buret Han kom, Nu fløi Han og Reden er tom! Ære være Guddoms-Manden, Korsfæstet og opstanden!

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., I Dag sukker Helved og klager: Jeg før var saa rund og saa feed, Nu blev jeg en Beenrad fuldmager, Hvorfor, den “*Lyslevende*” veed, Min Mad i utallige Dage, Jeg maatte nu give tilbage! Her sidder jeg nøgen og krum, O vee, hvor den Kæmpe var grum! Ære være Guddoms-Manden, Korsfæstet og opstanden!

<sup>152</sup> 1. Peter 5:8. Grundtvig *Bjovulus-Drapen* 1865, 35-36: ”Da sikkert uden Naade, Han reent os æder op; Jeg veed, det er hans Vane, At sluge Folk, den Trold ... Hvis Hovedet jeg taber, Saa led kun ei derom! Thi i sin Bug begraver, Mig vist den Fyldevom.” 59: ”Slugte Haand og slugte Fod.”

<sup>153</sup> Grundtvig *Om Kiødets Opstandelse og det evige Liv* 1855, 46

Crucified and risen!<sup>154</sup>

The opponent has to accept that the whole human stock is dragging out of Hell with Adam in the front row, and he can do nothing about it. The hidden God's Son has redeemed all those who the opponent has collected. The Crucified one leads the march out of Hell, and the direction is from Hell to Heaven. The moaning and groaning of the opponent is answered by those who are looking back at the fight and victory of the Divine-Man.

Today the Hell is Moaning and Groaning:  
O Death, you are my only begotten Son!  
What is the use of it that you make an effort!  
Only biting sarcasm is your labor pay!  
They are laughing when you stretch out you hand,  
They know, He wakes up them all!  
O shame on me! I bite at the hook!  
O shame on me that He came down here!  
Glory to the Divine-Man,  
Crucified and risen!<sup>155</sup>

In the last verse Grundtvig uses a very typical Eastern expression for Christ at the Cross, the metaphor "the hook." Gregory of Nyssa explain that the Devil did not understand who Christ was and was outwitted by his humanness. That is why the Devil, "like it is with a ferocious fish, the Divine *hook* should be swallowed together with the flesh of the bait."<sup>156</sup> Because Christ is God the Dead couldn't defeat him. In this way the great swindler was deceived himself. "The flesh of Christ was the bait that tempted the Devil, his Divinity the hook where he fastened."<sup>157</sup> Grundtvig let the opponent complain that he himself was outwitted to swallow the hook. Now Hell talks to its only begotten Son who are the Death, that the labor of the Death from now on is ridiculous and for no use, because the Divine-Man raises them all. So, it happened back in history, and it happens now, where the crucifixion and the death are seen in the perspective of the resurrection.

In the hymn *Helten, som os hjalp af Nød*<sup>158</sup> Grundtvig tells that "the Hero," who by his death takes away the power of Death, so that Death from now on has to cry and withdraw. Hell is given several names: "the Snake-Pit" where "the Dark-Helmet-Hero" has his nest. Grundtvig uses the parables about the lost coin and the lost sheep<sup>159</sup> to tell that the Hero "Eagerly looked for" and "searched high and low" for "his Penny and his Sheep." The picture that "the strong Giant" was "Caught in his own nets" is the fowler-net metaphor of Gregory the Great, which is a later version of Gregory of Nyssa's hook metaphor with the same meaning; "the Snake" is now caught and has to be stripped of his "Helmet and Breastplate-Armour." "The Semen of the

<sup>154</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2, no 218, 441-443: I Dag sukker Helved og klager: Ak *Adam* og hele hans Kiøn. Nu trodsig i Skare uddrager, Gienløst af den skjulte Guds Søn! Jeg sanked dem smaalig med Gammen, Nu røved Han dem Alle sammen, Nu, paa den Korsfæstedes Ord, Fra Helved til Himmels de foer! Ære være Guddoms-Manden, Korsfæstet og opstanden!

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., I Dag sukker Helved og klager: O Død, du min eenbaarne Søn! Hvad nytter det, du dig umager! Kun Spot er dit Arbeides Løn! De lee, naar du Haanden udstrækker, De veed, Han dem alle opvækker! O vee mig! Paa Krogen jeg beed! O vee mig, at Han kom hernald! Ære være Guddoms-Manden, Korsfæstet og opstanden!

<sup>156</sup> Richardson 1965, 82. From Gregory of Nyssa *The Great Catecism* XXXIV: Som fallet är med en glupsk fisk, gudomlighetens *krok* skulle slukas tillsammans med köttets agn

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 82: Kristi kött var det bete, som lockade djävulen, hans gudomlighet den krok, på vilken han fastnade. See also Gregory of Nyssa *Dogmatic Treatises* 1892, 677-679: "The hook of the Deity be gulped ..."

<sup>158</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2. no 229, 451-452: The Hero helped us out of distress

<sup>159</sup> Luke 15:1-10

Woman, the Son of Mary" has "Plundered his Residential" and "Dealt the Loots with the Minor." The whole drama has a character of taking place in present time because the risen one is "waving to us with the sign of Victory," now when we are celebrating the victory.<sup>160</sup>

The hymns *Engelen som Lynet*<sup>161</sup> and *Herren af Søgne opvaagned*<sup>162</sup> belongs to the hymns Grundtvig wrote in the time where he studied and was inspired by the *Leiturgikón* Easter liturgy. Both hymns are looking back on the Death of Christ from the perspective of the resurrection. The Death has fled from him, "the Death from Him has escaped," because "it is Great Things, our God has done for us" "In the land of the Dead." Christ has left "the Cave" when "He raised in Glory," and those who were prisoned, "Adam's fallen Stock," he has taken with him from Death, because "the Caves he emptied." "Christ is risen from the Dead," that is the same as "Hell is exploded," and "in his Death He has tread down the Neck of Death." The consequences of "The Gospel from Old to Old," that "Christ is risen from the Dead," is for "each and every mortally Human Being," here and now, that "He raises them up from the Death."<sup>163</sup>

The theological development we find in the poetry of Grundtvig is parallel to what we find in his preaching during the same period. In the sermon to Easter Day 1837 we find clearly the fight- and victory motif in his understanding of Christ's deed, but also the resurrection as an event taking place here and now.<sup>164</sup> The resurrection is always something present, it happens the very same day. In the congregational celebration of Easter Worship Service, we find the cosmic drama like a resurrection, a regeneration, a restoring of what is broken.<sup>165</sup>

Returning home after the last journey to England in 1843 Grundtvig writes *Paaske-Morgen slukker Sorgen*,<sup>166</sup> a nine-verse hymn about "The Lord's" fight against "Darkness" and "The Dead." Now the battle is won, because "the Deliverer is Risen." He is "our Redeemer," who "would bleed for us." Now Hell is crying, Heaven is rejoicing," for "dead is the Death." In the last verse we find the strong character of the here and now dimension when it is said that "the Lord we meet, the Lord we meet in new Praise singing!" when "we" are moving "up we rush" together with him.<sup>167</sup>

In the hymn *Gud! Vi er I gode Hænder*, Grundtvig names the opponent "Sin and Dead and the plague of Hell."<sup>168</sup> As much as four times in the seven verses it is repeated that "the Cross-

<sup>160</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2. no 229, 451-452: "Helten," "Orme-Gaard," "Mørkhjelms-Drotten." "Flittig opsøgte," "med Lys og Lygte," "sin Penning og sit Faar." "Den Jette stærk" "Fanget i sit eget Garn." "Slangen" "Hjelm og Brynje-Særk, Plyndret blev hans Bolig," "Kvindens Sæd, Marias Søn," "Deelde Byttet blandt de Smaa." "Vinker til" "os med Seiers-Tegnet."

<sup>161</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1982, 1.2. no 221, 445. Note: Et Græsk Paaske-Vers. "The Angle like a lightning"

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., no 219, 443-444: "The Lord wake up of sleep"

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., no 221, 445 and no 219, 443-444: "Døden for Ham rømde," "det er stort, Hvad vor Gud har gjort" "I de Dødes Rige." "Hulen" "Herlig Han opstod," "Adams faldne Kiøn," "Gravene Han Tømde." "Christus opstod fra de Døde," "Helvede sprængdes," "Han i sin Død traadte Døden paa Nakke." "Budskab fra Old til Old," "Christus opstod fra de Døde," "hvert dødeligt Menneske" "Han Reiser dem op fra de Døde."

<sup>164</sup> Grundtvig in Thodberg in Thodberg & Thyssen Ed., 1983, 182: "Paa Opstandelsens herlige Fest maae vi, som føle Herrens Nærværelse ret, med Fliid og Fryd ihukomme til Hans Ære, at Hans Kirke og Menigheds Liv paa Jorden, Folkets Bestandighed, som dyrker Jesus Christus den Korsfæstede, det er ikke blot hvad man kalder et Vidnesbyrd om Hans Opstandelse og Himmelfart, men det er en bestandig Gientagelse af Hans sejerrige Kamp med Døden og et soleklart Beviis derpaa, at Jesus Christus har Magt til at sætte sit Liv til og Magt til at tage det igien."

<sup>165</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 3.2. no 176, 330-333 *Stod med Christ vi op af Døde*

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., no 258, 503: Easter morning quenches the thirst of sorrow

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., no 258, 503-505: "Herrens" "Mørket" "Døden" "Redningsmanden er opstanden." "vor Forsoner," "vilde bløde for os." "græder Helvede, Himlen sig glæder," "død er Døden." "Herren vi møde, Herren vi møde med Lovsang ny!" "vi" "op vi fare"

<sup>168</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 4.2. no 385, 480-481. Hymn written 1853-1855: "Synd og Død og Helveds Plage, Al vor Magt mod dem er Tant, Kaldtes en af dem den svage, Os dog brat den overvandt, Helten under Korsets Mærke, Han alene bandt de Stærke!"

Hero,” “With his Love,” has bonded the strong ones: “Sin and Death and the plague of Hell.” The hymn is a meditation hymn like the *Hil dig Frelser og Forsoner*<sup>169</sup> and has clear trinitarian marks. It is the tri-une God who fights the fight and wins the victory over the enemy. “Our God-Father in the Highest,” is the “Well of Love” who united with “your Son and Holy Ghost,” who also is Your Hands,”<sup>170</sup> has saved us by “loosen our bond of slavery” so that “we” can be reinstated into the conditions of God’s childhood.<sup>171</sup>

During the years where Grundtvig works on hymns and poetry on the theme what Christ has done for us, his sermons have a strong character of the same ideas as what we find in the hymns. Grundtvig is able to use his hymns as part of preaching. Specially in the preaching on Easter themes we find Grundtvig’s understanding of God’s deeds for us in what Christ has done.<sup>172</sup>

Even more examples of Grundtvig’s poetry on Christ’s descendancy first to human life and further on to the Death could be mentioned to underline this strong theme in Grundtvig’s theology. E.g. in his writing history Grundtvig put Christ’s descendancy and victory into the context of mission, as the most important new thing, Ansgar brought to the North.<sup>173</sup>

The critique against Grundtvig’s theme on Christ’s descendancy into the land of Dead and his preaching for the prisoners there was the question: Will this understanding of Christ open the doors for conversion after death? Is this understanding of Christ a violation of the claim of justice and righteousness? Pietistic groups claimed that in the moment of death people faced the judgement either to go to punishment in Hell or to go to eternal happiness in Paradise. In relation to this understanding Grundtvig’s interpretation of Christ was an undermining of the claim of conversion to Christ here and now and absolutely before death. This question alone coursed the long distance between the Grundtvig inspired groups and the revivalist groups, and several schisms occurred.<sup>174</sup> Here we see that Grundtvig’s Eastern inspired understanding of atonement is in conflict with what he understands is typical westerns inspired theologies on the atonement. Probably we see the same resistance against Grundtvig in the fact that only very few of Grundtvig’s hymns which have the fight and victory motif was taken in into the authorised Danish hymnbooks. On the other hand, in the Grundtvigian congregations this theme was underlined, e.g. by following the praxis from Grundtvig’s Church in Vartov by using the Danish word for the Apostolic Creed’s *descendit ad inferna* saying “descended into Hell.”<sup>175</sup> Grundtvig may have heard the translation “descended into Hell” in Wesley Capel in London, where he was a visitor, because Wesley used the same translation and recommended “into hell” in his *Sunday Service* 1784.<sup>176</sup> The possibility for conversion after death is not in Wesleyan theology linked to the theme of Christ’s descendancy into the land of the Dead, but to the theme of salvation in relation to the Grace a person has received.<sup>177</sup>

The consequence of Christ’s deeds for us is to Grundtvig and to Wesley the total defeat of Corruption, Emptiness, Death and the Devil. The good news is liberation for human beings, the opportunity for human beings to go from a life under the dominion of death to a life under the dominion on resurrection, to live under the conditions of regeneration. In Grundtvig’s terminology the way is opened from Death and the land of the dead to *the land of the living*.<sup>178</sup> In the same way as seen in Wesley we find that Grundtvig speaks about the eschatological reality as

<sup>169</sup> See note 77

<sup>170</sup> Typical for Grundtvig and Wesley to talk about trinity like “the hands of God,” also typical Eastern Greek  
<sup>171</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 4.2. no 385, 480-481: ”Vor Gud-Fader i det Høie,” ”Kærlighedens Kildevæld,” ”Din Søn og Helligaand,” ”Dine Hænder,” ”løse vore Trællebaand,” ”vi”

<sup>172</sup> Thodberg in Thodberg & Thyssen Ed., 1983, 181-184

<sup>173</sup> Grundtvig *Kong Harald og Ansgar* 1865, 39, 41, 44-45

<sup>174</sup> Lindhardt 1978, 72, 127

<sup>175</sup> Nedsteget til Helvede

<sup>176</sup> Wesley *Sunday Service* 1784, 6, 18, ”He descended into hell”

<sup>177</sup> Thaarup 2016, 339-340

<sup>178</sup> Grundtvig *Søndags-Bog* Bind 3, IX, 179: ”De levendes land”

something happening here and now. The land of the living is the condition Christian people take part of already here and now, and not only as a waiting on the coming good in a distant future. Grundtvig's understanding we could name realised eschatology.

### **Wesley and Grundtvig in final discussion on the theme of Christ's deeds for us**

In Wesley we find an extended interpretation of Christ's deeds as his victory over the powers of Death, evilness and corruption. His victory is the basis for human beings' liberation and healing, an interpretation we often find in the Eastern tradition.<sup>179</sup> Wesley talks about Christ's deeds as a ransom and redemption, language we recognize from written sources, Wesley read, e.g. from Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen or in The Apostolic Constitution. When Wesley uses the offering motif it is often in the meaning of an offer to liberation, as we find it in the Exodus texts, no guilt offer, but an offer for ransom and liberation. Wesley finds support in this use of the offer motif in Makarios and in The Apostolic Constitutions. Grundtvig on his side uses a number of texts from the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon tradition, e.g. Cædmon via Bede and the Exeter-Book texts, to connect to the version of the fight and victory motif in the Eastern interpretation of Christ's dead and resurrection. The Celtic-Anglo-Saxon tradition was a midway station for the Eastern theology to the Nordic Christianity, and the dramatic interpretation of Christ's showdown with the powers of Death and corruption in the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon tradition was a direct inspiration for Grundtvig on this theme. The underlining of the Eastern theology via the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon inspiration was further supported by the inspiration Grundtvig found in the Greek *Leiturgikón*, from where the fight, victor and liberation motif found its way to so many Grundtvig texts, e.g. Grundtvig's use of the hoke-metaphor from Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory the Great, and his use of the Phenix metaphor.

To Wesley and Grundtvig apply that they both uses more than one interpretation of the atonement.<sup>180</sup> Wesley describes that Christ is the one, who has given the sinful human being satisfaction, and that Christ's offering of himself has an objective value for God's acceptance of human beings, a way to understand the atonement which is in harmony with the Anselm forensic satisfactions hypothesis. Likewise, Grundtvig's contemplative and empathic description of Christ's suffering and death is very much in harmony with Abealards subjective hypothesis of the atonement. A few places Grundtvig talks about Christ's atoning act as Christ "became the Guild of sin for us," and that he "had to trample alone the angry God's press," an expression in line with an anselmic forensic thinking. This article does not compare the different hypothesis of the atonement used by Wesley and Grundtvig, but only to clarify the dominant thinking on the issue of atonement, and here we found a dominant use of the fight and victory motif. A narrow and limited forensic understanding is not possible for Wesley and Grundtvig in the same way as the Eastern tradition never would accept only to focus on the forensic dimension of the atonement.

The elements, we have found in Wesley's and Grundtvig's theologies show a parallel and converged thinking even though their thinking is not the same. Wesley and Grundtvig do not represent identical theologies. But the common sources in the Eastern Greek thinking makes them draw in the same direction. The common sources for inspiration show the ecumenical perspective in the theology.

### **Second theme: The two-sided conditions of divine-human relationship**

The second theme in this article for analyzing convergent traits in the theologies of Wesley and Grundtvig is the theme: two-sided conditions of the divine-human synergistic relation. Very

<sup>179</sup> Link Ed. 1988, 78

<sup>180</sup> Richardson 77-90

often in Western theology when the divine-human relation has been described with some synergistic ideas it has been rejected with the reason that it would give human beings a share in own salvation, an idea in conflict with Christian teaching. In the Eastern tradition we often find some synergistic ideas on the divine-human relation without any reason for accepting human beings' own profit in own salvation.<sup>181</sup> Even though human beings are able to reach out for God and to receive God's salvation it is still God, who is the souverain saviour. In this second theme we don't find many quoted sources from where Wesley and Grundtvig got their inspiration. However, the reason why their theologies give the impression of more Eastern than Western thinking is that they believe God is an acting god on the human side, and in their understanding of the consequences of human sin, original sin and not inherited guilt.<sup>182</sup> The synergistic thinking or the double-sided or covenantal relation is differently understood in Wesley's and Grundtvig's terminologies. The relation is exactly convergent in the same way as each of their theologies are convergent with typical Eastern theology on this theme.

Wesley fought against theologies he perceives was extremely Western and unilateral. First, it is against the Moravians who wait on God's actions and in that time, they neglect to use the means of grace, worst of all the eucharist. Secondly it is the Calvinistic teaching on the double predestination, which lay on God the full responsibility for salvation and pacify human beings. Wesley has the understanding that the human nature is totally corrupted because of sin, but God's preventient grace balances, outweighs and support human beings so that they become able to cooperate with God on his or her own salvation. On this point Wesley finds inspiration in Makarios, and Wesley holds that human beings are working on own salvation, and this is only possible because God makes them able to do so.<sup>183</sup>

Grundtvig on his side holds that the indelibly image of God always makes it possible for human being to go through a double conversion, one turning yourself away from what is not of God, and a second turning yourself to God. In this process of conversions God is cooperating with human beings. However, the great theme in Grundtvig's theology is the theme of interaction. Synergism is a non-known word in Grundtvig's understanding. Interaction is the word used in several connections. Both in the human-Divine relation and in the relation between the cultural narratives of the people and the gospel of the Bible. Both in the relation between the single language and word, and the Divine Word. And finally, in the relation between what is human and what is Christian. The interaction-thinking in Grundtvig's theology is comprehensive and applicable on several relations, and in all of them we find that the interaction is between what comes from God and what comes from human beings.

### **Wesley: The divine-human relation**

Wesley fought two theological battles who had this in common that it was on theologies represented by persons, he was strongly related to and dependent on.

The *one* battle was with the Moravians. On his journey to the American Colonies in 1735 Wesley meat the Bohemian Brethren congregation, whose steadfast faith in Christ and assurance of reconciliation with God influenced Wesley strongly and became a catalysis for Wesley's own faith development. The Bohemian Brethren (Moravians) had for a wail lived in asylum at the Earl Ludwig Nikolaus Zinzendorf's (1700-1760) castle Marienborn in Herrnhut.<sup>184</sup> Marienborn was the centre of Zinzendorf's great Lutheran-pietistic faith community, he developed.<sup>185</sup> In the American Colony Georgia the Moravians had established

<sup>181</sup> Aagaard 1994, 37

<sup>182</sup> Papazu 1995, 195-199

<sup>183</sup> Aagaard 1994, 38

<sup>184</sup> Rack 2002, 162-163

<sup>185</sup> Hägglund 1975, 309-310. Christensen-Göransson II, 1969, 349-352. González Vol III, 1989, 305-306

a colony of settlers under the leadership of Bishop Spangenberg, and this place was several times an oasis of spiritual and theological inspiration to John Wesley.<sup>186</sup> Wesley's first hymn book, published 1737 in Charles-Town, Georgia, is a testimony of the close ties Wesley had to the Moravians in America. Under the journey back to England Wesley met with the Moravian pastor Peter Böhler, with whom Wesley has many discussions about the reformatory main theme: justification by faith alone. Wesley's own experience of God's justification by faith alone in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ culminated under a meeting in the religious society in *Alders Gate Street*, May 24, 1738. In harmony with good Moravian praxis, Wesley is able to announce time and place for his experience so precise as 8.45 PM, when someone read out a paragraph of Luther's declaration on Paul's Letter to the Romans, the paragraph where Luther explains the faith that leads to salvation.<sup>187</sup> Wesley is the co-initiator to a new religious society in London, the Fetterlane Society, a so-called band-society.<sup>188</sup> Wesley spends the fall of 1738 in Marienborn in Herrnhut, where he studies the life of the colony and has theological conversations with Zinzendorf. Wesley is so excited of what he experiences in Herrnhut that he in his diary describes the place as Paradis on earth where he wants to settle down.<sup>189</sup> During the time of 1739 and a couple of years Wesley is getting more and more critical to what he learned from the Moravians and their theology. It leads to a dramatical schism with the Fetterlane society, when Wesley leaves it under protest, and further more to theological conflict with Zinzendorf, a conflict where Zinzendorf sets up posters in London to warn the public against the preaching of the Wesleyan brothers.<sup>190</sup>

Wesley's growing critic that at last led to his schism with the Moravians is on two subjects, closely related, partly the theme of quietism and partly the theme of antinomianism. Wesley claims the Moravians for being too passive and pending in their relation to God. The Moravian praxis of meditations on and empathetic attitude to the suffering and death of Christ in addition to their passive waiting and pending, an awakening in prayer, on God's answer in the form of an experience of justification and regeneration, Wesley meant was an overruling of the human responsibility for own life and faith. Likewise, Wesley found that Zinzendorf and the Moravian's preached disparagingly on the value and favourable side of the Law. The Law and the action-part in the religious life didn't have any importance or was directly negative, and any good action could lead to justification by works or to overruling of God's sovereign actions of salvation, a heresy the Pelagians have done. Wesley couldn't accept the passive role and the lack of responsibility the human beings were given in this Moravian preaching. Wesley has the same critic to Luther when he for the first time read his Commentary on the Galatians. In Luther Wesley finds a theology that leads to a passive role of human beings and a neglecting of the commandments of the Law.<sup>191</sup> Later in life Wesley develops a more positive understanding of Luther's theology.

The *other* battle was on the theme of predestination. The discussion on predestination includes a number of theological themes, which together leads to the understanding of God's sovereignty and omnipotence in relation to the human receiving of salvation. In continental European Christianity, Augustin's conflict with Pelagius, and the following formulation of the predestination doctrine, has had a major influence.<sup>192</sup> Augustin's understanding was that human beings, because of the sin, in no way could affect his or her own salvation. The human being was dependent on the external powers and without any opportunity to influence your destiny or

<sup>186</sup> Norwood 1992, 25-26

<sup>187</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 18, 249:21-250:2. See also Rasmussen (Thaarup) 1998, 7-8, 23

<sup>188</sup> Heitzenrater 1995, 79-90

<sup>189</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 18, 259-261

<sup>190</sup> Rack 2002, 184-190

<sup>191</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 19, 201:14-23, 201:25-30

<sup>192</sup> González Vol II, 1987, 29-49

effectuate your own will. Under these conditions for life, the human being was subject to the initiative and grace of God, if any salvation should be possible. The human being is totally dependent on God's grace, which is irresistible and works out the will of God. The human salvation ends up in the question: who is subject to God's irresistible grace, "gratia irresistibilis," and who is not subject to the same grace, hidden in God's wisdom. Luther was an Augustine monk in the tradition after Augustin's theology. In his fight with Erasmus of Rotterdam, Luther develops his understanding on the determined human being, who is not able to choose or to have responsibility but is left over to God's selection and grace.<sup>193</sup> It is incompatible with Luther's understanding of sin as a total corruption of human nature that the human being should have any free will in the decision on receiving of God's salvation. Those people who receive salvation by faith in the atoning work of Christ are those, who are selected by the hidden God, those who are subject of God's irresistible grace.<sup>194</sup> Calvin is the one who develops the teaching on predestination in the most radical form, as a teaching on God's prior and sovereignly decided double way of salvation. God's selection is not only limited to those who are predestined to salvation and by this selection subject for the grace of God, what nobody can resist, but also those, who are lost are selected, even though it seems not understandable.<sup>195</sup> In the Reformed tradition Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) developed an alternative teaching on the theme of God's pre-working actions on the human side. Arminius taught that God's "prevenient grace," during the divine initiatives after the fall, by which each and every human being are recovered, so that human beings are equipped with a steering and acting will, and this will can co-work with God in God's continuing work to save that person. Salvation is, according to Arminius, dependent on the human being's free response to God's universal grace, and not to those whom God has sovereignly selected for his irresistible grace.<sup>196</sup> Arminius' writes that God's grace is resistible, and people have the power to turn away from God's initiative. Arminius alternative teaching got a great influence but was defeated at the Dordrecht Synod (1618/19),<sup>197</sup> where the so-called double predestination doctrine was consolidated as Orthodox Calvinist teaching. On the other hand, in England, where the influences of Calvin's Geneva and the Reformed tradition in general was substantial, the Arminius teaching on "prevenient grace" has a high acceptance within the Anglican tradition. In the Puritan circles, both inside the Anglican church and within dissenter groups, the double predestination doctrine, inclusive a deterministic anthropology, was dominant. Wesley belonged to the Arminian influenced branch of Anglicanism.<sup>198</sup> George Whitefield and Lady Huntingdon, the two persons Wesley co-worked with during long periods, belonged to the Calvinistic branch in harmony with the position of the Dordrecht Synod. In 1770 and the following years, the so-called Calvinistic conflict breaks out, where Wesley fight against the double predestination doctrine, fight against the deterministic anthropology, fight against the doctrine of God's irresistible grace and fight against the antinomianism. Contrary to this Wesley supports the teaching on the "prevenient grace," the recovering of the human conditions so that human beings are free and have a responsible choice in relation to God.<sup>199</sup> Wesley's theological statements are further underlined by the fact that he, in directly extension of the Calvinist conflict, edits and publishes the periodical *Armenian Magazin*, a periodical he himself continues to edit until his death in

<sup>193</sup> Luther, Hillerdal Ed., 1964, *Om den trälbundna viljan*

<sup>194</sup> Gregersen in Holm & Pedersen Ed., 2006, 241-246

<sup>195</sup> Wesley *Letter to Fletcher* 1775, Wesley's *Letters* in Telford Ed., Vol VI, 174-175

<sup>196</sup> González Vol III, 1987, 279-288

<sup>197</sup> Hägglund 1975, 245-246

<sup>198</sup> Cragg 1985, 66-67, 144-145

<sup>199</sup> Rack 2002, 454-456

1791.<sup>200</sup> It is also during the time of the Calvinistic conflict that some of John Fletcher of Madeley's most important writings are published in support to the Wesleyan position.<sup>201</sup>

### **The baptism communicates justification and regeneration**

Wesley had a classic understanding of baptism, where he holds that baptism is the sign on God's gift in justification and regeneration. However, he takes a distance to the position that the baptism isolated and in one action should initiate and complete God's salvation of the individual person. The character of the baptism as a mutual contractual relationship puts responsibility on both parties of the contract. God is acting in the sacrament, and his action is not depending on the human being. But without the human receiving of God's action in baptism and in what the baptism has changed, the effect of the baptism will get lost, and a renewal is needed to bring the mutual contractual relationship of giving and receiving back again.<sup>202</sup>

The character of the baptism as an initiation of Christian life is kept, and without a responsible commitment of the new baptismal relation, the act of baptism has a very limited importance. In this meaning Wesley is able to talk about England as a nation of baptized heathens.<sup>203</sup> But when the justification and regeneration, given in the baptism, are received and assigned by the individual, who was baptized, Wesley can say that the sanctified and mature Christian person is a person, where the gifts given in baptism now are fulfilled. The person, who experiences regeneration and sanctification in his or her life, has experienced a realization of baptism and its meaning.<sup>204</sup>

Wesley acknowledges the objective and sacramental meaning of baptism. But he doesn't accept that baptism leads the human being into a static relation to God. It initiates a relation where God's address to and gift opens the relationship, but where the receiving of what God has given, and the human response to that, effects the further development or settlement of the relationship. Baptism as a momentary act doesn't lead to a static relation. Wesley put his focus on what the baptism communicates, renewal of God's image within the human being to the likeness of Christ.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Heitzenrater 1995, 268

<sup>201</sup> Fletcher, John 1770: *First Check to Antinomianism*. 1772: *Logica Genevensis*. 1774-75: *Equal Check*. 1775: *Last Check*

<sup>202</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 1, 428:29-429:5, 429:7-8, 430:6-8, 11-13, 14-19: "Say not then in your heart, I was once baptized; therefore, I am now a child of God. Alas, that consequence will by no means hold. How many are the baptized gluttons and drunkards, the baptized liars and common swearers, the baptized railers and evil-speakers, the baptized whoremongers, thieves, extortioners! What think you? Are these now the children of God? ... 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye do.' [...] Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed, that ye were born again in baptism. Who denies that ye were then made 'children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven'? ... Ye have heard what are the marks of the children of God; all ye who have them not on your soul, baptized or unbaptized, must needs receive them ... And if ye have been baptized, your only hope is this: that those who were made the children of God by baptism, but are now the children of the devil, may yet again receive 'power to become the sons of God'; that they may receive again what they have lost, even the 'Spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father'!"

<sup>203</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 9, 104:35-105:2. Wesley *Works* Vol 11, 517:32-519:8

<sup>204</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 3, 76:3-4: "... to whom (God) ye were consecrated many years ago in baptism. When what was then devoted is actually presented to God, then is the man of God perfect."

<sup>205</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 9, 226:1-24: "what use is it of, what good end does it serve, to term England a 'Christian country'? (Although 'tis true most of the natives are called Christians, have been baptized, frequent the ordinances; and although a real Christian is here and there to be found, 'as a light shining in a dark place'.) Does it do any honour to our great Master among those who are not called by this name? Does it recommend Christianity to the Jews, the Mahometans, or the avowed heathens? Surely no one can conceive it does. It only makes Christianity stink in their nostrils. Does it answer any good end with regard to those on whom this worthy name is called? I fear not; but rather an exceeding bad one. For does it not keep multitudes easy in their heathen practice? Does it not make or keep still greater numbers satisfied with their heathen tempers? Does it not directly tend to make both the one and the other image that they are what indeed they are not? That they are 'Christians', while they are utterly

Wesley has a sacramental understanding of baptism, but he also rejects an “ex opere operato” understanding.<sup>206</sup> Baptism doesn’t lead to a salvation determinism. God is active in baptism, but in co-work with the baptized person. Wesley focuses the actual situations where the signs of human justification and regeneration takes place in a life in love with God, fellow human beings and the world. These signs Wesley sees are the realization of the meaning of baptism. In the understanding of baptism as a mutual contractual relationship the meaning of “prevenient grace” has an important role. It is because of the God given gift of “prevenient grace” that human beings are able to be co-workers to God in his transferring of the baptismal salvation. Even though the young and the mature Wesley didn’t have identical understandings of God’s grace, it doesn’t change the fact that the human receiving and response to God is very important.<sup>207</sup> The communication of God’s grace to justification and regeneration that takes place in baptism or directly by God’s grace shall always find its meaning in the human response and receiving of the same without which God’s gift is of no meaning to the human being.

To Grundtvig the baptism is of great importance. Baptism is absolutely the great sacrament to Grundtvig, in the same way as the Eucharist is to Wesley. But we also find in Grundtvig that he, to the baptism or baptismal covenant,<sup>208</sup> as he often names it: it is part of the condition for the baptismal covenant that human beings are receiving God’s gift. The element of receiving is included in Grundtvig’s understanding of the sacrament. Grundtvig doesn’t advocate for a determinism of salvation because of the baptism, but an interaction, a co-work between God and the human being in the further receiving of God’s salvation, or what Grundtvig names “food in your Christen life.”

### **Freedom and independency in the interaction with God**

It is Wesley’s understanding that all people are subjects to God’s “prevenient grace.”<sup>209</sup> The natural and super individual human being is a philosophical construction, because God doesn’t let any person alone and isolated by him or herself. God, who is reaching out, does that the human being, who has no free will, gets his or her will restored and becomes a free human being, include a free will in the relation with God. The sinful and by grace restored human being becomes thereby responsible for own actions and able to give answer to God by an “yes” or a “no.” God’s grace, as a God’s power to and enlightenment of the human being, is a gift that restores the things in the human being, which the sin, understood as separation from God, has spoiled and made the human being unable to have a positive role in the relation with God. To Wesley exactly the human freedom is fundamental, it is a condition for the free will and the responsibility for own life, and it is essential for the whole anthropology. If not the freedom of choices and the individual responsibility exist human beings would be unhuman. God’s acting out in grace, “prevenient grace,” make the fundament that human beings are human and not unhuman.<sup>210</sup>

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without Christ and without God in the world? - To close this point: If men are not Christians till they are renewed after the image of Christ, and if the people of England in general are not thus renewed, why do we term them so? ‘The God of this world hath long blinded their hearts.’ Let us do nothing to increase that blindness, but rather labour to recover them from that ‘strong delusion’, that they may no longer ‘believe a lie.’

<sup>206</sup> Hägglund 1975, 171, 218. Borgen 1972, 122-123

<sup>207</sup> Outler in Footnote on Wesley *Works* Vol 2, 157: “the early Wesley tended to ground ‘preventing grace’ in baptism; the mature Wesley linked it more closely to repentance; the late Wesley correlates it with the order of salvation as a whole.”

<sup>208</sup> Daabspagten

<sup>209</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 3, 207:8-27

<sup>210</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 4, 24:19-24: “And although I have not an absolute power over my mind, because of the corruption of my nature, yet through the grace of God assisting me I have a power to choose and do good as well as evil. I am free to choose whom I will serve, and if I choose the better part, to continue therein even unto death.”

Wesley holds the understanding of human beings that they are free and independent, and that is a result of God's grace. In addition, Wesley has the understanding that God's grace is given freely to all people. On God's side there is no selection of whom are subjects to God's grace. Because the grace is universal and to all it leads to an interaction between God and human beings. God gives his grace to all, and the effect of this given grace is dependent on the human response.<sup>211</sup>

In Grundtvig we find a substantial effort on the theme that human beings have to be free and not bound by any pressures if they have to answer "yes" to God and join Christianity. Freedom has an important role in several themes in Grundtvig's theology.

### **The synergistic relation with God**

Wesley's teaching on "prevenient grace" is the starting point of his understanding of human life as a continuous interaction between the free God's grace, given to all people and in all situations and times, and the human response to the received grace. Wesley's whole theological thinking can be described from the perspective of "responsible grace."<sup>212</sup> God gives his grace to human beings who then are able to respond, and to this respond God again gives his grace, and again human beings are able to respond to the given grace. Wesley describes it in this way: "Stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace."<sup>213</sup> The possible human response and the human responsibility is, according to Wesley, always in relation to the grace, the human being has received. He goes that far to say that no human being does anything wrong because of shortage of grace, but because of not using the grace he or she is given.<sup>214</sup>

Wesley also describe the divine-human relation as a continuous breathing, or in the literal understanding: an inspiration.

... the continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit: God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, the re-action of the soul upon God; an unceasing presence of God, the loving, pardoning God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith; and an unceasing return of love, praise, and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of hands, all our body, soul, and spirit, to be an holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus.<sup>215</sup>

The Wesleyan thinking is synergistic, and it is supported by inspiration from Jesus, the parable of the Talents, where different servants are given different fortunes, but where the judgment of each of them are depending on what they have done with what they were given. The one, who has done nothing with what he has got and been passive and just waiting is the one who gets the toughest judgment. Likewise, Wesley quotes several times Augustin for the mutual and double-sided relation between God and human beings, and in relation to that he focuses on the active involvement of human beings in their own salvation and the world as well. Wesley finds support in Augustin for his thinking on human beings' active participation in own salvation, maybe because the theology of predestination, a theology he is fighting, also find support in Augustin.

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<sup>211</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 3, *Free Grace* (110), 544-563

<sup>212</sup> Maddox 1994

<sup>213</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 3, 208:15-16

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 207:25-27

<sup>215</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 1, 442:8-17

The general rule on which his gracious dispensations invariably proceed is this: ‘Unto him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not’, that does not improve the grace already given, ‘shall be taken away what he assuredly hath’ (so the words ought to be rendered). Even St. Augustine, who is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine, makes that just remark, *Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis*.<sup>216</sup> ‘he that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves.’ He will not save us unless we ‘save ourselves from this untoward generation’; unless we ourselves ‘fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life’; unless we ‘agonize to enter in at the strait gate,’ ‘deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily’, and labour, by every possible means, to ‘make our own calling and election sure’.<sup>217</sup>

The mature Wesley writes the Sermon, *On Working Out Our Own Salvation* (85) in 1785. It is the most complex presentation of his understanding of the divine-human relation. Wesley found the title in Pauls letter to the Philippians 2:12-13. In this Sermon Wesley mark his position in relation to the salvation-universalism some branches of the Arminian tradition had developed into, and in relation to the Pelagian position, a position Wesley’s opponents claimed him to support because he gave priority to the human free will and the importance of human actions in relation to God. Humans have responsibility for own salvation, even though it is God alone who saves, and humans influences that good thing can happen in this world because God empowers and enables them to do good deeds.

If it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, what need is there of our working? Does not his working supersede the necessity of our working at all?<sup>218</sup> [...] Therefore inasmuch as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation. Since he worketh in you of his own good pleasure, without any merit of yours, both to will and to do, it is possible for you to fulfill all righteousness. It is possible for you to ‘love God, because he hath first loved us’, and to ‘walk in love’, after the pattern of your great Master. We know indeed that word of his to be absolutely true, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ But on the other hand, we know, every believer can say, ‘I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.’<sup>219</sup>

In his Sermons Wesley often writes about the human response in actions as the conditions for what God can do in the future. And to those who are standing still in their Christian life and don’t experience development, the lack of response is the conditions that hold back the grace of God. God is the one who makes people to will and to do, but the human willingness and ability to act has determining influence on God, or according to Augustin: “*Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis*, God that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves.”<sup>220</sup> Wesley’s giving priority to the human response to God is the reason why he is so critical to Luther in his Commentary on Galatians, where he finds Luther too passive and in a reserved and waiting position to God in stead of responding to God in actions.<sup>221</sup> What Wesley

<sup>216</sup> Footnote on Wesley *Works* Vol 3, 208: Augustine, Sermon 169, xi (13); cf. No. 63, ‘The General Spread of the Gospel’, § 12 and n.

<sup>217</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 3, 208:19-209:5

<sup>218</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 3, 206:17-20

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 207:28-208:4

<sup>220</sup> See notes 212 and 213

<sup>221</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 19, 201:14-23. Wesley’s critic to Luther’s Commentary on the Galatians: “... how blasphemously does he (Luther) speak of good works and of the law of God! Constantly coupling the law with sin, death, hell, or the devil! And teaching that Christ ‘delivers us from’ them all alike. Whereas it can no more be proved by

is missing in Luther, on this place, is an appreciation of the third use of the Law as a response to God's grace. Exactly the thirds use of the Law, what we find in Luther's writings in other texts, is the use of the Law as a direction for human actions to fellow human beings and the world.<sup>222</sup> It is the appreciation of the human response Wesley is looking for.

Synergism or likewise wordings are unknown in Grundtvigian theology. On the other hand, Grundtvig has a clear dialectic understanding of many themes, where he uses the wording "interaction."<sup>223</sup> "Interaction" includes always a human element or contribution into the co-working with the divine. Not as a successive line where you have a first step that determine a second step, but as a continuous and dialectic situation. In this understanding we find, according to Grundtvig, the human response to God, what in Wesley is included in his synergistic understanding of the divine-human relation.

### **Mutual covenantal relation in action and faith**

The human response to God's grace is an expression of faith. Faith is a God's gift, it is a conviction and belief that goes beyond what is rational even though the faith gets its content from a rational reading of the gospel. Simultaneously faith is the human response to God because of the grace he has given. Faith is a gift that human beings cannot decide on, and yet faith is something human beings are able to search for and are responsible for too.

Wesley organized the people who followed him in religious societies. The bylaws for the societies were an underlining of the purpose to help people to search the grace of God and respond in faith. It is remarkable that Wesley doesn't demands of the members of the societies that they should fulfil some specific criteria of content of faith or a concrete formulation of faith, e.g. the Creed or Standard of Doctrines. His bylaws are completely focused on something the members shall do. It is an action demanded membership. Faith has to be visible in what people are doing. The passive acclamation to a given formulation of faith or any limited admission to the content of faith is subordinate to faith demanded actions. If Christian faith is not recognized when membership is joined, an absolute possibility, then it is the understanding that faith will grow as a result of the actions of the new member; as will determined actions done with the intention to articulate faith. The bylaws, the so-called *General Rules*, content three rules: 1) "Do no harm," 2) "Do good," 3) "Attending upon all the ordinances of God."<sup>224</sup> To each of the rules is given an explanation what the rule mean in the actual time, however each society should revise the explanation to each of the rules according to the changing contextual conditions. The explanation to *Do no harm* is that the rule is about evil actions and thoughts about your human neighbour, but also political-economic issues e.g. buying and selling goods produced or transported by slaves or buying and selling goods where poor people are abused or kept in bad financial conditions. The explanation to *Do good* is that the rule is about doing good actions to your human neighbour, but also supporting schools, health clinics and so-called *acts of justice*, that could be protesting against the bad conditions in the prisons or against slavery. The explanation to *Attending upon all the ordinances of God* is that the rule is about using the means of grace, God has given, for the reason that all people thereby can receive God's grace, and that the church directly and by the ministers offers to people. It is about taking part of the fellowship of the Church, searching the Scripture and preaching, taken the Eucharist as often

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Scripture that Christ 'delivers us from the law of God' than that he delivers us from holiness or from heaven. Here (I apprehend) is the real spring of the grand error of the Moravians. They follow Luther, for better, for worse. Hence their 'No works, no law, no commandments.' But who art thou that 'speaketh evil of the law, and judgest the law'?"

<sup>222</sup> Lindström 1946, 81

<sup>223</sup> Vexelvirkning

<sup>224</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 9, 67-73. Wesley is inspired by 2 Cor 13:5-9. See Wesley *Notes upon NT*, 2 Cor 13:5-9

as possible, and participate in private and public prayers. The purpose for the religious societies under the supervision and leadership of Wesley was to help people, in actions and deeds, to respond to the grace, already given to them, and help them to, in actions and deeds, to search the grace of God and thereby again responding to the grace, given thereby to them.<sup>225</sup>

Wesley summarizes his understanding of the divine-human relation in a worship service, a liturgy that he encourages to be used every year. The so-called *Covenant Service* Wesley wrote in 1755.<sup>226</sup> In this liturgy we find a remembering of the baptism, as a sign, a seal on the covenantal divine-human relation.<sup>227</sup> The content in the main part of the Covenant Service is about the dynamic relation between God and human beings, where humans are subjects to God's grace and respond back to God in the forms of actions driven by faith and directed towards God, human neighbours and the world.<sup>228</sup>

The relation between God and human beings as a covenant is seen from the perspective of covenant in the Bible. In the Old Testament Jahve יְהוָה initiates a number of covenantal relations. We find it in the covenant with Cain, the Noa covenant, the covenant with Abraham and with Moses. In each of the established covenants Jahve יְהוָה is the one, who initiates the covenantal relation, who sets the conditions for the covenant, including what Jahve יְהוָה promises to do, and what is expected human beings should do. The covenantal thinking continues in the New Testament, where Christ is the one, who renews the covenant, so that the old covenant becomes "the new covenant in my blood."<sup>229</sup> In harmony with the old covenant there is an individual entrance into the covenant including the individual sign, the circumcision, which under the new covenant is replaced by the baptism; and parallel with the individual perspective on covenant we find a collective too, where the Easter celebration is replaced by the Eucharist in the new covenant. The whole way through the idea of covenant we find that God is the one who initiates and maintain the covenant, and people are active in responding to the covenant. In the same understanding Wesley speaks on the divine-human relation as a covenantal relation.

Wesley's *Hymnals* no 421 is Charles Wesley's hymn on the divine-human covenantal relation. The hymn is part of the most used liturgies of the Covenant Service:

Come, let us use the grace divine,  
And all with one accord,  
In a perpetual covenant join  
Ourselves to Christ the Lord.<sup>230</sup>

The covenant is presented not only as a reality, but as an option for human beings to use. Human beings can take God on his word, and the call is given "let us use," and let us the "covenant join." The following verses have most character of human responses to God, that we will "Give up ourselves through Jesus' power," and "promise .. for God to live and die." Even though the covenant exists only because of God's initiative, the confirmation of the covenant in the Covenant Service has the character that "The covenant we this moment make." The old covenant including all the promises becomes new. The prayer to God is that he will "Come down, and

<sup>225</sup> Watson 1987, 67-91

<sup>226</sup> Inspired by Richard Alleines *Vindiciae Pietatis* from 1663

<sup>227</sup> Wesley *Covenant Service* 1755, revised 1781: "There is a two-fold covenanting with God, in Profession, in Reality: an entering our names, or an engaging our hearts: the former is done in Baptism, by all that are baptized, who by receiving that Seal of the Covenant, are visibly, or in Profession, entered into it ... for the help ... and accommodated to all the substantials of our baptismal Covenant."

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.: "Lay hold on the Covenant of God, and rely upon his promise of giving grace and strength, whereby you may be enabled to perform your promise. Trust not to your own strength, to the strength of your own resolutions, but take hold on his strength."

<sup>229</sup> 1 Cor 11:25, Jeremiah 31:31-34

<sup>230</sup> Wesley *Hymnals* 1780, no 421. See also Wesley *Works* Vol 7, 710-711

meet us now!” Wesley gives the perspective that it is the three-one God, who is behind the covenant, “Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Let all our hearts receive.” And the respond is given to the three-one God, “The peaceful answer give.” The last verse underlines that “the new covenant in my blood” is the covenant depending on what Christ has done for us in his death and resurrection. Then the hymn is ending with the response from the congregation, where it is repeated what God has done for us:

To each the covenant blood apply,  
Which takes our sins away;  
And register our names on high,  
And keep us to that day.

The hymn is a call to action in faith, but a call built on the understanding that it is God who gives the first power, the grace, the impulse that makes it possible for people to do good deeds.

In Grundtvig we shall see that the covenant is very important too, especially in his understanding of the baptismal covenant like a covenant, initiated with the sign of covenant, the baptism, but as a framework for the whole life that follows the moment of baptism.

### Salvation in relation to the grace received

The most consequent expression of Wesley’s understanding of the mutual relation between God and human beings, between his understanding of God’s free grace to all people and the human responsibility of responding to that given grace, is his understanding of who will finally be saved. Wesley is a reformatory preacher of justification by faith alone. He has a Christ-centred understanding of the gospels. But when it comes to the final judgement, the final salvation, Wesley is consequent in the understanding that human beings will be judged relatively and different, not on an objective and monolithic law but dependently to the grace from God the individual person has received.

... it may be asked: ‘If there be no true love of our neighbor but that which springs from the love of God; and if the love of God flows from no other fountain than faith in the Son of God; does it not follow that the whole heathen world is excluded from all possibility of salvation? Seeing they are cut off from faith; for faith cometh by hearing. And how shall they hear without a preacher?’ I answer, St. Paul’s words, spoken on another occasion, are applicable to this: ‘What the law speaketh, it speaketh to them that are under the law.’ Accordingly that sentence, ‘He that believeth not shall be damned,’ is spoken of them to whom the gospel is preached. Others it does not concern; and we are not required to determine anything touching their final state.<sup>231</sup> How it will please God, the Judge of all, to deal with them, we may leave to God himself. But this we know, that he is not the God of the Christians only, but the God of the heathens also; that he is ‘rich in mercy to all that call upon him’, ‘according to the light they have’; and that ‘in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him’.<sup>232</sup>

<sup>231</sup> Footnote on Wesley *Works* Vol 3, 296: For other references to the salvability of the heathen (as yet another implication of Wesley’s ‘catholic spirit’), cf. Nos 106, ‘On Faith, Heb. 11:16’, I.4; 127 ‘On the Wedding Garment’, §17; 130, ‘On Living without God’, §14; cf. also No. 44, Original Sin, I,5 and n.

<sup>232</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 3, 295:21-296:8

Wesley's position is that God is "rich in mercy," and he will look upon people from the perspective of "the light they have," the enlightenment and grace they have got. From that perspective all human beings, whether they are Christians or not, or whatever philosophy of life they might have, those who "feareth God" and in actions have shown the faith they have "wor-keth righteousness," be accepted by God "is accepted of him."<sup>233</sup> Wesley's position is that the final judgement takes place on the background of what human beings are given and the possible response to what is given.<sup>234</sup>

In Wesley the possibility of salvation for gentiles is bound to the idea of use of the grace, given to all people, the "prevenient grace," that enlighten all people, John 1:9. In Grundtvig the possibility of salvation for gentiles is bound to the idea of Christ's descendence into Hell, where his preaching takes place, and where Christ are liberating all prisoners and lead them out of Hell.<sup>235</sup> Wesley and Grundtvig are clearly different here, but the convergence treats of their ideas, on this limited fields, is the focus both of them have on the possibility of God's salvation of those outside the ordinary way of salvation.

### **Grundtvig and the divine-human relation**

Grundtvig describes the relation between God and humans as a relation, where God effects his salvation and where human beings active receiving of this salvation is a condition for the final salvation. The human part of this relation is often recognized as the conditions, *vilkårene*, for salvation.

### **Conversion from**

The human conversion from all that is not of God is the point where the new beginning takes place in the divine-human relation. The conversion is the human part in the changing of the relation to God, and to this God will respond in mercy and grace.<sup>236</sup>

In the parable on the Lost Son Grundtvig is focused on the son, who had broken the relation with his father and is located in distance from his home, his "coming to himself," and he acknowledged that he had "sinned against heaven, and before the (the Father)."<sup>237</sup> The Father forgives his son even long before the son arrives at home again, but first at the arrival it is visible that the Son has acknowledged his wrong deeds and that the Father has forgiven him. There is a double move in this conversion. The son is turning away from all that until now has taken his attention, and he makes a new orientation in direction of the Father. Simultaneously the Father prepare himself to receive the son long before the Son shows up at home. Grundtvig understands in the description of the son, that human beings, in their broken relation to God, are able to turn away from what has influenced them during a long time, and re-orient in direction of God.<sup>238</sup> The human turning away from all that is not of God are expressed in the renunciation of the evilness. The renunciation is a wording Grundtvig often uses about the human conversion away from and distancing to all what the person wants to lay behind. The renunciation will always be an individual and personal issue, like it was for the lost son, but collectively expressed by the Christian congregation, that is a fellowship of individual who have converted

<sup>233</sup> Runyon 1998, 218-220

<sup>234</sup> Wesley Works Vol 3, 494-495

<sup>235</sup> See paragraph of this article on *The victorious leads the Death and Hell in chains*

<sup>236</sup> Grundtvig *Den Christelige Børnelærdom* 1868/1941, 145: "... den "forlorne Søn" ... var dog en færdig Gien-stand for sin Faders Medynk, Naade, Tilgivelse og fulde Indsættelse paany i alle Børne-Rettigheder, fordi han følde og bekiendte, at han var selv Skyld i sin Ulykke, og fordi han havde Sind til at vende om..."

<sup>237</sup> Luke 15:18

<sup>238</sup> Grundtvig *Søndags-Bog I* 1859, 369-370

away from something and to God. The renunciation as a liturgical element of worship is the Christian expression for and acknowledgement of their conversion.<sup>239</sup>

Grundtvig uses different wordings about the human turning away from and turning to, first of all the renunciation and the conversion, and to make the understanding clear, he refers to the New Testament metanoia.<sup>240</sup> Conversion is not limited to the human part of a new divine-human relation. It is also the condition for the next step in a new relation to God, exactly the acquisition of Christian faith and the profession of the faith in the triune God. The conversion away from all that is not from God is the condition for conversion to God and a positive acknowledgement of faith in him. Grundtvig doesn't understand the renunciation as a "Renunciation-of-Devils,"<sup>241</sup> but as an expression for the human acknowledgement of the human conversion.

In the same way it is clear that it would be a gross fraud, who promises salvation for Sinner without any conversion, it would exactly be the same as promising a person, who was on the wrong way that he, without turning around, could come to the right destination, he had turned away from, in the same way it would be a gross fraud with the Baptismal-Grace to regeneration and new life, if not the Baptismal-Grace, as one of the conditions, included a Turn-Around from all that is Lie and Evilness, without which it impossible can be honestly with the appeal to Grace and Truth that is expressed with the Apostolic Creed.<sup>242</sup>

Grundtvig connects here the baptism and the baptismal grace to the conversion, as a condition. The renunciation prior to the baptism expresses a conversion away from all Evilness, a conversion that is promised in the baptism but not effected until the baptised person turns around and convert. The congregation's participation in the liturgical renunciation is the congregation's acceptance of the condition to be a fellowship in conversion, and it is the same as to confirm the conditions of the individual baptism.<sup>243</sup>

In his sermons to the confirmation classes Grundtvig comes back again and again to the presentation of baptism as a covenantal relation, where God's taking away the sin of man is related to the human conversion from evilness and to the human daily lifestyle in justice.<sup>244</sup> Grundtvig teaches that the renunciation is the repeated testimony about the conversion away from all that is not of God, and that testimony is a part of the responsibility of the baptised person in his or her relationship with God.

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<sup>239</sup> Grundtvig *Den Christelige Børnelærdom* 1868/1941, 31: "Først naar vi saaledes betragter Forsagelsen fra den rette Side, som det christelige Udtryk for Omvendelsen, og paa sit rette Sted, som Vilkaar for vor Indgang i Guds Rige, først da seer vi Forsagelsens Vigtighed og kan opdage dens Nødvendighed, uden at ændse hvad Skumlerne sige, at det seer ud, som om Tro paa Djævelen ogsaa hørde til den apostoliske Troes-Bekendelse."

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 32: "'Omvendelse' eller Besindelse (Metanoia), som det bruges i den nye Pagts Bog."

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 37: "Djævle-Forsagelse (Exorcismus)"

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 31-32: "Ligesom det nemlig er klart, at det vilde være en grov Bedrager, som lovede en Synder Salighed uden Omvendelse, vilde være netop det samme som at love en, der var paa gale Veie, at han, uden at vende om, skulde naae det Maal, han vendte Ryggen til, saaledes vilde det jo ogsaa være et grovt Bedrag med Daabs-Naaden til Gienfødelse og nyt Liv, dersom ikke Daabs-Naaden, som et af Vilkaarene, udtrykde Bortvendelsen fra al Løgn og Ondskab, uden hvilken det umuelig kan være ærlig meent med den Henvendelse til Naaden og Sandheden, som den apostoliske Troes-Bekendelse udtrykker."

<sup>243</sup> Grundtvig *Skal Reformationen fortsættes?* 1830 Begtrup V, 287-288: "Derfor hører det til Daabens Vilkaar i den Christne Kirke, at forsage eller undsige Djævelen med alt hans Væsen og alle hans Gierninger, som Noget der strider mod Christendommens Aand." See also Bede 731, translated Sherley-Price 169: "We do renounce Satan and all his works as we promised at our Baptism."

<sup>244</sup> Grundtvig *Kirkelige Leilighedstaler* 1877, (tale fra 1823), 367: "Thi det er Daabens Pagt, at Gud for Jesu Skyld vil glemme eders Overtrædelser, overse eders Skrøbeligheder, naar I af hans Naade vil lade eder tugte til at forsage det ugudelige Væsen og de verdslige Lyster og leve tugtelig, retfærdelig og gudelig i denne Verden."

### The faith acquisition – conversion to

From conversation and the act of renunciation there is a direct connection to the faith acquisition, expressed in the faith profession in the creed. These two steps are the preparation and the entrance into the new relation, where baptism marks the beginning and the agreement, the covenant, a Christian person lives his or her life on. The conversion, the faith acquisition, and the baptism belong inextricably.<sup>245</sup> Each step in this thinking on the order of salvation, the order of the entrance into Christian life, are strongly related to what is before and what comes after. The baptism in itself loses meaning if the conditions of the baptism, conversion *from*, the renunciation, and the conversion *to*, the profession of faith, has low priority or are taken away.<sup>246</sup>

Grundtvig doesn't understand baptism as a one-way action from God's side. Here Grundtvig has a clear distance to any "ex opere operato" understanding of baptism. The receiving part of what has been given in the baptism cannot be underrated.<sup>247</sup>

The baptism of children ... The Lord will let it take effect to the same extent as the Child gradually can and will by faith acquiring the Baptismal Covenant and the Baptism Word, ... because the one who doesn't search for something in the Baptism, never will find anything ... and the one who doesn't believe, neither has any share of the promises given to everyone, who 'believes and are baptised'.<sup>248</sup>

Grundtvig often comes back to the baptism in his theological thinking and argumentation, the baptism as an expression of God's action, wherein God's whole salvation are given to the person baptised, but what God is doing in the baptism cannot be understood isolated from the human turning around to God and receiving God's gift. The scholars have only seldom recognized that Grundtvig teaches about baptism as a double sided and mutual relation.<sup>249</sup> The mutual aspect is seen in baptism as a covenant, an agreement, where the baptismal act marks a starting point, but only a beginning of a relation that afterwards are dependent on the two parties, the human being and God, who the covenant is about.<sup>250</sup>

God's part of the covenant is that he forgives and regenerate and gives new life. The human part of the covenant is to hold on his or her conversion and profession of faith.<sup>251</sup> Grundtvig is almost always talking about the baptism as the baptismal covenant, what moves the focus from baptism as the momentary action where the new relation to God is marked to the most important relation in itself as a mutual and conditional relation.<sup>252</sup> Grundtvig summarizes his position:

<sup>245</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk*, 4.2, 1983, No 277, 361-363

<sup>246</sup> Grundtvig *Om Christendommens Sandhed* 1826-27 Begtrup IV, 615: "Naar Hedninger tvinges til at lade deres Børn døbe, da undrer det mig vist nok ikke, at Barne-Daaben, for at tækkes dem, maatte skilles ved Alt, hvad der giver den christelig Betydning, og gjøres til en aldeles ligeegyldig Handling ..."

<sup>247</sup> Grundtvig *Den Christelige Børnelærdom* 1868/1941, 59: "... advare alle Mennesker og besværge dem dog endelig ikke at lyve for Gud ved at bekiende en Tro, de ikke har, eller at drive Spot med Herrens Saligheds-Midler, som de gjør, naar de, uden Tro paa Faderen og Sønnen og den Helligaand, lader sig døbe i den treenige Guds Navn ..."

<sup>248</sup> Grundtvig *Lidt mere om Alterbogs-Daaben* 1856, 4-5: "Barne-Daaben ... Herren vil lade den træde i Kraft i samme Grad, som Barnet efterhaanden kan og vil troende tilegne sig Daabs-Pagten og Daabs-Ordet, ... thi hvem der ikke søger noget i Daaben, finder heller Intet ... og hvem der ikke troer, har heller ingen Deel i Forjættelsen til enhver, som 'troer og bliver døbt.'"

<sup>249</sup> Gregersen i *Grundtvig-Studier* 2004, 101

<sup>250</sup> Grundtvig *Den Christelige Børnelærdom* 1868/1941, 31: "... see Guds Rige tæt ved os, og i Daabs-Pagten høre de to Vilkaar, hvorpaa Herren, ved sin Daab af Vand og Aand, vil føre os derind, saa Forsagelsen siger os, hvad Herren forstaaer ved Omvendelse, og Troes-Bekiendelsen siger os, hvad Herren forstaaer ved Tro paa Evangelium."

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 57: "... Troens Ord, som alle ved Daaben skal bekiende og maae troe for ved Daaben at optages af Herren i hans Menighed."

<sup>252</sup> Grundtvig *Kirkelige Oplysninger* 1840-42 Begtrup VIII, 423 "... Daabens saliggiørende Virkning naturligvis under Pagtens Vilkaar ..."

The Kingdom of God has come near,  
The Gate and Doors are open  
To everyone, who loves the true  
And by baptism are knocking the door  
Because by conversion and faith  
To be included into the place where Engels lives  
To eternal life in Grace!<sup>253</sup>

The baptismal covenant, as an agreement, a new relation with God, is after the entering into the baptismal contract, depending on that the human being doesn't renounce his or her covenantal responsibility, but "... we have to, necessarily as long as we want to stay as Christian people, keep our baptismal covenant with no blame."<sup>254</sup> The conversion as the fundament of profession of faith is part of the conditions for the relation, where God gives his grace. The conversion, expressed in the renunciation, and the profession of faith Grundtvig put together in what he names "The Constitution of Truth:"

This "Constitution of Truth" says exactly that everybody who will become a Christian person and be baptized must acknowledge by the renunciation and the profession of Faith in the Baptismal-Covenant, and not leave it without loosing his or her Baptismal-Covenant, and by such action step down from all Claim on the Baptismal-Grace and Christian-Name, these two only given on the conditions of the Baptismal-Covenant, by him who doesn't say for nothing: Who is not with me is against me, and who is not against me is with me, because nobody can be both with and against the eternal Truth, only the Fundamental-Lier, the most contradiction one can say what is false that he or she is both and not.<sup>255</sup>

The validity of the baptism, understood as God's proclaimed will to save, is not dependent on the human respond. The baptism is valid independent of what human beings are doing of it. But the meaning of baptism and the effect is dependent on the response of the baptized person and that the baptized person acquires the grace given to that person in baptism.

... the one Part of our Baptismal-Covenant, it means: the agreement we on behalf of our Lord shall make with all those, who by the Lord's Baptism, in the Name of the Father and Son and Holy Ghost, will be members of our Lord Jesus Christ's Congregation, and thereby they will get access to Forgiveness of Sin and the Hope of Salvation, what He has promised to give all those, who have "faith" and are "Baptized", and by this it follows that those who only pretend to answer Yes to this covenant and agreement, or if they after time deny their words, have no use

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<sup>253</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 4.2, No 277 vers 2, 362: "Guds Rige nu er kommet nær, Dets Port og Dør staaer aaben, For alle, som har Sandhed kiær, Og banker paa ved Daaben, For med Omvendelse og Tro, At lukkes ind hvor Engle boe, Til evigt Liv af Naade!"

<sup>254</sup> Grundtvig *Søndags-Bog III* 1860, 265: "... saa maae vi dog nødvendig, saalænge vi vil blive ved at være Christne, ubrødelig holde vor Daabs-Pagt."

<sup>255</sup> Grundtvig *Den Christelige Børnelærdom* 1868/1941, 36: "Denne Sandhedens Grundlov maa nemlig enhver, som vil christnes og døbes, vedkiende sig ved Forsagelsen og Troes-Bekiedelsen i Daabs-Pagten, og kan ikke fragaae den uden derved at frafalde sin Daabs-Pagt, og derved fralægge sig alt Krav paa Daabs-Naaden og Christen-Navnet, som kun skiankes paa begge Daabs-Pagtens Vilkaar, af ham, der ikke for intet har sagt: hvem der ikke er med mig, er mod mig, og hvem der ikke er mod mig, er med mig, fordi baade med og mod den evige Sandhed kan Ingen være, men kun Grund-Løgneren, i vitterlig Selv-Modsigelse, falsklig sige, han baade er og er ikke."

of their baptism at all, no Share or Portion in what the Lord only has promised those, who in True have Faith in his Word and stay faithfully until Death.<sup>256</sup>

The human response is not limited to the period, where the agreement by baptism is made. It is a continuing response during the whole life, “faith until death.”<sup>257</sup> The other side of the covenant is also something developing over time, like a process leading to “the Hope of Salvation, what He has promised to give.” The mutual relation is described in presence and future tenses and neither in imperfect or completed tenses. Baptism, after conversion expressed by the renunciation and the acquisition of faith expressed by the profession of faith, is precise the covenantal relation where mutuality is important in the continuation of the covenantal common life.

... only on these Conditions Baptism is given to us, only on the Conditions that we will disgust what we renounced and believe what we professed, we are declared reborn again in Water and Spirit, and have the assurance that with the Holy Ghost and the forgiveness of sin, we have received the eternal Blessing of the Heavenly Bath.<sup>258</sup>

The conditions, as something stretching out over the momentane time, are expressed by focusing that the conversion is not limited to the said words but depending on “that we will disgust what we renounced,” and the profession’s word not only to say them, but to “believe what we professed.” It is in the acquisition of faith and the Christian praxis the fulfilment of the conditions will be shown for those who “reborn in Water and Spirit” and “with the Holy Ghost” have received the content and effect the declaring is about. The signs on the acquisition of God’s gift is also described as the fruits of the Spirit<sup>259</sup> or the effect of Christianity. It is the effect of what is dedicated that Grundtvig is looking for:

... the new Life can only be given to us by Words of the Lord in Baptism and Eucharist when we by all our Speech and Writings on the Kingdom of God are striving for awakening and sharp attention to the Fruits of the Spirit and the effect of Christianity, who are the only one who can prove that it is not Fake or empty imagination in your own spirit that the new Life, the Lord has promised all believers, and that we are able to be proud of.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 52: ”... den ene Deel af vor Daabs-Pagt, det vil sige: den Aftale, vi paa Vorherres Vegne skal giøre med alle dem, der ved Herrens Daab, i Faderens og Sønnens og Helligaandens Navn, vil optages i Vorherres Jesu Christi Menighed, og derved faae Deel i den Synds-Forladelse og det Salighedens Visse Haab, som han har lovet at skianke alle dem, der ”troer” og er ”døbte”, saa det følger af sig selv, at hvem der enten kun paa Skrømt svarer Ja ved denne Pagt og Aftale, eller gaaer dog siden fra sit Ord, har slet ingen Gavn af sin Daab, slet ingen Lodd eller Deel i hvad Herren kun har lovet dem, som i Sandhed troer paa hans Ord og bliver troe til Døden.”

<sup>257</sup> Wesley’s personal seal had the word ‘Faith until Death’ in Greek, Πίστος αχρι θανατου, Rev 2:10, See Wesley’s *Notes upon the NT*

<sup>258</sup> Grundtvig *Kirkelige Oplysninger* 1840-1842 Begtrup VIII, 418: ”... kun paa disse Vilkaar er Daaben os meddeelt, kun under Forudsætning af, at vi skye hvad vi forsagede og troe hvad vi bekjendte, er vi erklærede for Gienføde af Vand og Aand, og forsikrede om, med ‘den Hellig-Aand og Syndernes Forladelse,’ at have annammet ‘den evige Velsignelse i det himmelske Bad.’”

<sup>259</sup> Galatian 5:22

<sup>260</sup> Grundtvig *Kirkelige Oplysninger* 1840-1842 Begtrup VIII, 422f: ”... det ny Liv kun meddeles os gennem Herrens Munds Ord til os ved Daaben og Nadveren, naar vi med al vor Tale og Skrift om Guds Rige stræbe at vække og skærpe Opmærksomheden paa de Aandens Frugter og Christendommens Virkninger, som ene kan bevisse, at det ikke er Blændværk og tom Indbildung med den egne Aand og det ny Liv, som Herren har lovet sine Troende, og som vi rose os af at besidde.”

On the issue of God's Spirit's effect on and through human beings, Grundtvig has the same understanding as Wesley, who often expresses the mutuality by quoting Pauls letter to the Romans 8:16. Wesley's teaching on "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,"<sup>261</sup> correspond with Grundtvig's "... a unique lovely Life and in that the testimony of the Spirit for the authenticity ..."<sup>262</sup>

Grundtvig's sermons to those being confirmed shows that he gives priority to the baptismal covenant as an agreement depending on mutuality and co-operation.<sup>263</sup> Confirmation is the affirmation of the baptism, partly in the understanding that God's gift in baptism is actualized again, and partly in the understanding that the depute "Yes" in the baptismal act now can be repeated by the baptized person, and by this new "Yes" the person has now given his or her own answer to God's appeal. The baptism contends of "the Holy Promise they today repeat."<sup>264</sup> The one who is baptized, and who has acquired the Christian faith, and who is ready to give testimony to this faith so that the congregation can hear that baptism, teaching and acquirement has happened, can, by repeating the promise, take over the responsibility from those who gave the deputy answer, and by this action make the baptismal covenant to your own. Grundtvig speaks on several places directly to the confirmation candidates about the deputy ones who how are waiting to hear their confirmation of the covenantal relationship with God.<sup>265</sup>

In those speeches to the confirmation candidates, that is after the catechizing, Grundtvig develops his understanding of the divine-human relation to a relation, where the value of the promises is dependent on the following behaviour and actions. Grundtvig asks, "was your 'Yes' more than words in your mouth?" And furthermore he asks, was the promises honestly meant and taken as a commitment, where "It was clear to you what this Holy Covenant binds you to what the Lord demands from You if You will enjoy the Good things he will do ...?"<sup>266</sup>

The acquirement of faith as a profession and praxis the individual takes responsibility for is part of Grundtvig's understanding of the divine-human relation, as a mutual and obligating relation.<sup>267</sup> "You have in your solemn 'Yes' renewed Your Covenant and Agreement with the Living One, who sees us."<sup>268</sup> Grundtvig has no doubt in God's part of the covenant. Neither he doubts on God's pleasure to work on the human side to will and to do.

In the *Formula of Concorde* (Book of 1577) we find a paragraph on the "the Synergists," a branch of Lutheran theologian to whom "the Holy Ghost" makes people able to "by own natural Forces to come to God and to some degree ... contribute, help and co-operate for the purpose to prepare and qualify oneself for God's Grace and catch it." The Book of Concorde rejects this understanding of the divine-human relation. Grundtvig's understanding is apparently more in favour of the synergists than of those opposing them, likewise Melanchton's position.<sup>269</sup>

<sup>261</sup> Wesley *Works* Vol 1, 270:36-37 "... συμμαρτυρει τω πνευματι ημων ..." Sermon no 10.

<sup>262</sup> Grundtvig *Kirkelige Oplysninger* 1840-1842 Begtrup VIII, 419: "... et mageløs herligt Levnets-Løb og deri Aandens Vidnesbyrd for sin Ægthed ..."

<sup>263</sup> Grundtvig *Kirkelige Leilighedstaler* 1877, 351-446

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 356: "det hellige Løfte, de i Dag gjentage."

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 355. "De ere samlede at høre eders Regnskab for eders Tro og eders Haab, for at høre eders Stadfæstelse i Daabens Pagt, for at høre af eders egen Mund det hellige Løfte, som, da I var spæde, gjordes af andre paa eders Vegne, de ere komne for at høre, om I ogsaa ere blevne ved Kristum, ligesom I ved Daaben indpodedes i ham." See also 366 "I har med det højtideligste Ja fornyet eders Pagt og Forbund med den levende."

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 365: "var eders Ja ogsaa mer end et Mundsvejr?" "Stod klart for eder, hvad den hellige Pagt forbinder eder til, hvad Herren kræver af eder, hvis I vil nyde godt af hans Miskundhed ..?"

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 367: "Fattede I for alle eders Dage det faste Forsæt med Guds Naades Bistand at stride den gode Strid, Fuldkomme Løbet og bevare Troen [...] det er hvad han kræver af eder, .. at I skal aflægge de gamle Menneske, som fordærves efter vildfarende Lyster og iføre det ny Menneske."

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 366: "I har med det højtideligste Ja fornyet eders Pagt og Forbund med den Levende, som ser os."

<sup>269</sup> Konkordiebogen 1882, § 40, 423: "Synergisterne" "den Hellig-Aand" "af sine egne naturlige Kræfter at komme Gud imøde og nogenlunde .. bidrage, hjælpe og medvirke Noget til at berede og skikke sig til Guds Naade og gibe din." See also Radler 1988, 160-161

### God's work on the human side like the preventient grace

In the divine-human relation the human being is not left to one self. It is Grundtvig's understanding of the image of God in humans that the original image of God in humans is not totally corrupted or spoiled by the fall. Sin is not or don't have the power to totally destroy what God has created. The human being is damaged by the sin and to a degree that makes a new birth necessary if new life shall be possibly. But human beings have a will, even a weak one, and a capacity to turn around to God, as the lost Son turned to his Father.<sup>270</sup> Likewise the human being has the capacity to believe that God is Good and provides a new relation, a new covenant to people. Even though humans to some extend have the capacity, the skills and the power to step into a relation with God, then Grundtvig also has the understanding that God is working on the human side in the divine-human relation.<sup>271</sup> It is a function of the Holy Ghost to enlighten, to guide and to strengthen the human will, like "... an Engel whispering to us: go home to your Father, .. it is even much better."<sup>272</sup> One of the conditions for human beings to enter into covenantal relationship with God is the conversion from all darkness and the acquisition of faith and keeping the faith. Grundtvig talk about the human part of maintaining the covenant, and he call it to fight the good fight. The human being has a responsibility and a task in the divine-human relation.<sup>273</sup> But God is an active assistant, a co-worker on the human side, and it makes the human part of the covenantal relation possible.<sup>274</sup>

In Grundtvig's writings we don't find the wording "prevenient grace," "gratia preveniens" or another corresponding Danish wording. However, his description of God's accommodating, outreaching and assisting functions, developed in the function of the Holy Ghost, is convergent with what e.g. Wesley describes as God's grace, "prevenient grace." To human beings it mean that the relation with God is a relation, where God empower the human being to step into the relation and be an active part of keeping the conditions on the way towards restitution of the image of God in man by regeneration and renewal.<sup>275</sup> "The baptismal-covenant ... the spiritual Life ... shall to all degrees be Divine, and Christianity clearly requires that the Human Life in the Image of God ... to be born again and renewed."<sup>276</sup> Høirup describes Grundtvig's divine-human relation as "Grundtvig was not afraid to speak of salvation as a real communion between divine and human nature."<sup>277</sup>

In the understanding of the divine-human relation as a mutual covenantal relation, an obligating agreement, Grundtvig attaches "man of Creation" and the creation theological aspects greatest importance to the human being's fulfilment of his or her part of the relation. While Grundtvig attaches importance to the creational aspects, Wesley pay attention to the spiritual

<sup>270</sup> Grundtvig *Fragment* 1814 i *Grundtvig-Studier* 1986, 8: "Han ville, at hver Skabning med Villie skulde lyde Ham med Villie .. og Mennesket ville lyde Ham."

<sup>271</sup> Grundtvig *Sang-Værk* 1983, 4.2, No 297 vers 7, 403-404: "Dertil os hjelper Naadens Aand, Som os Vorherre tilsender, Han har vort Hjerte i sin Haand, Han det som Bækkene vender, Vender det mildt i Jesu Navn, Leder det til Gud-Faders Favn: Naadens og Sandhedens Kilde!"

<sup>272</sup> Grundtvig *Søndags-Bog* I 1859, 369: "... en Engel hviskede til os: gak hjem til din Fader, .. der er dog meget bedre."

<sup>273</sup> Grell 1980, 113-116

<sup>274</sup> Grundtvig *Den Christelige Børnelærdom* 1868/1941, 39: "... den Erfaring, at Sandhedens Aand, ... ham er og blive vi ... modtagelige for, og fattes da hverken det Liv eller det Lys, som hører til at stride den gode Strid, fuldende Løbet og bevare Troen, og som kan giøre os glade i Herren altid, fordi vi føle den Guds Kraft hos os, som nødvendig maa og skal overvinde Verden, fordrive alt Mørke fra vor Synskreds, og tilintetgiøre Døden aldeles for vort Vedkommende, som vel syndige men benaadeede, faldne men opreiste, døde men gienfødte, formørkede men igien oplyste og herlig forklarede christelige Mennesker!"

<sup>275</sup> Grundtvig *Kirkelige Leilighedstaler* 1877, 358-359, 367

<sup>276</sup> Grundtvig *Den Christelige Børnelærdom* 1868/1941, 109: "Daabs-Pagten ... det aandelige Liv ... skal i alle Henseender være gudeligt, og Christendommen forudsætter klarlig, at Menneske-Livet i Guds Billede ... gienfødes og fornyes."

<sup>277</sup> Allchin 1989, 109. Translated quotation of Henning Høirup *Fra Døden til Livet* 1954, Gyldendal, København

aspects and the idea of prevenient grace. But we do also find in Grundtvig that “God’s help,” God’s assistance, God’s promoting effects on humans are a reality so that human never find themselves alone or left behind on their own conditions in the relation to God.<sup>278</sup> Grundtvig says that God “requires by You … that You shall lay of the old Man, who is corrupted after misleading Lusts and take on the new Man,” and “the Force he himself will give you in the name of Jesus by his Spirit, by the Holy Ghost.” God’s co-operation with human beings in the human beings stewardship of the covenant is in relation to the conditions that he in the human beings is looking for “the Wish and the Will, the sincere intention, the heartfelt disgust for Evilness, the heartfelt longing for Righteousness and Holiness, these Things he will find in your Heart, in the cry for help from the heart, the cry for sigh and prayer from the heart, that he wants to hear … and the Heavenly Farther gives his Holy Ghost to those who asks him.”<sup>279</sup> In Grundtvig’s perspective God is active on the human side in the divine-human relation in a way similar to what in Wesley’s universum is understandable as the “prevenient grace.”<sup>280</sup>

## Interaction

The relation between the human part, *det menneskelige*, and the *Christiane* part, *det kristelige*, in Grundtvig’s thinking has been subject for the research several times. Kaj Thanings interpretation of Grundtvig focused on the distinction between what is human and what is the *Christiane* in Grundtvig’s universe.<sup>281</sup> It was the difference and separation and the distance in a dialectical relation between what is human part and what is *Christiane* part Thaning was focused on, and this interpretation has dominated the Grundtvig reception since.

The dialectic relation, as a relation built on the distance and separation, is important for many themes in Grundtvig’s thinking. His theme *Human first, in that way Christian*<sup>282</sup> becomes in the perspective of distance and separation a theme of an order, a time line, where the generally human and what is common to everybody, comes first as a first focus area, and then, secondary and under special conditions comes the *Christiane* part finally. In the pedagogic thinking and in the perspective of distance becomes also the generally human and what is common first, while the *Christiane* follows in another order, necessary or optional. The Antiquities of the Peoples’ including their mythological narratives becomes under the perspective of separation a first and completed chapter, and then follows the major Christian narrative, like a continuity or a replacement of the first. The agenda of the Church under the perspective of separation becomes the one-sided focus on first what is human and then what is *Christiane*. The acquisition of the faith can be explained in two steps, first to be a human being, and when you succeed in that, then to be a Christian. The missiology or the understanding of people and Church can correspondingly be described as a two-step movement, e.g. the mother tongue and the language, as a first step, and then a discovery of the Word of God and the Living Word in the Christian oral tradition, or the mythologies of the people and imaginations as a mirror for the appeal of

<sup>278</sup> Gregersen i *Grundtvig-Studier* 2004, 120-122

<sup>279</sup> Grundtvig *Kirkelige Leilighedstaler* 1877, (sermon in 1823) 367-368: “Ønsket og Viljen, det oprigtige Forsæt, den inderlige Afsky for det onde, den inderlige Længsel efter Retfærdighed og Hellighed, disse Ting vil han finde i eders Hjærte, Hjærtets Raab om Hjælp, det Hjærteraab i Suk og Bøn, det vil han høre … og den himmelske Fader giver dem sin Helligaand, som bede ham derom.”

<sup>280</sup> McDonald 2011, 50 quotes *Luther’s commentary to Paul’s letter to the Galatians*, a commentary Wesley og Grundtvig knew, for the understanding of God on the human side: “[God] does not permit a [believer] to be idle but drives him to all the exercises of devotion, to the love of God, to patience in affliction, to prayer, to thanksgiving, and to the practice of love toward all men. Therefore, we, too, say faith without works is worthless and useless.”

<sup>281</sup> Thaning *Menneske først - Grundtvigs opgør med sig selv I-II-III* 1953

<sup>282</sup> *Menneske først, Christen saa*

the Gospel. And many other consequences of this Grundtvig interpretation from the perspective of separation and differences in the relation between the human part and the Christiane part.

The problematic in this emphasis on separation and differences is the definition, what and how and when takes the moving part from the one to the second. If the human part and the folksy and mythological and common language part, is the starting point, what indicates the movement to what is Christiane and evangelical and the Living Word? If the opposite is the situation that the Christiane and ecclesiastically and sacramental is the starting point, what indicates the common human and folksy dimension? Is the fundament on which Christianity is built on a left behind stage that exactly is left behind because it has laid the road for Christian thinking, or is it still a reservoir of resources you can use and under some specific conditions? Likewise opens a focussing on what is separated and different to a one-sided priority to only one of the two, either on the human and folksy part or on the Christiane part, proclamation of the Word or the sacraments. In the history of the reception of Grundtvig's theology we find descriptions of the consequences of an interpretation where what is separated and different and polarized in several dialectical relations are the strong perspective.<sup>283</sup>

A number of scholarly researches have been in opposition to this dominating perspective caused to Thaning's 50 years old Grundtvig interpretation. Already when Thaning at his disputation gave his presentation of the distinction between what is human and what is the Christiane part his opponent Regin Prenter protested. Since then a number of scholars have taken another position on the issue of what is common human, the folksy aspect, on the one side, and what is the specific Christiane, ecclesiastically aspect on the other side, and not supported the perspective of separation and what is contradictory between the two. These scholars are: Grell,<sup>284</sup> Iversen,<sup>285</sup> Riis<sup>286</sup> and latest Cappelørn.<sup>287</sup> In opposition to the separation and distance the interpretation takes direction after what Grundtvig often uses by the word "Vexel-Virkning,"<sup>288</sup> *interaction*, as a more correct wording for Grundtvig's understanding. It is about a continuously and dynamic interaction, Vexel-Virkning, between what belongs to the theology of Creation, to the human part, the cultural and secular, and on the other side, the salvation theological and pneumatologically, the ecclesiastical, Christiane and faith.

'Menneske først, Christen saa,' *Human first, in that way Christian*, you can not separate so that the pure human is isolated from what is Christian, either permanent or partial. It is as human the human being is a Christian person, and it is as Christian a human being understands what common human is. Likewise, the antiquity of the people, the mythologies in their relation to the Christian Gospel. It is as Christian that Grundtvig perceives the Asa Religion and the Nordic Mythology as a Genesis for the upcoming of Christian culture in Northern Europe. It is as human being, formatted by a specific people and a concrete linguistically culture that the influence of the Christian Gospel is possible. The only possibility a human being has to hear the Christian Gospel from the invisible and unapproachable God is when this God uses the language, culture and secularity of the specific people. Likewise, in other relations there is no separation or distinction, but det inseparable and mutual mirroring that is typical in Grundtvig's thinking. The dynamic and continual interaction between human languages and the Word of God, between those by human imagination occurred performances and the Divine Disclosure, between the

<sup>283</sup> Thyssen 1957 og Nørgaard 1936-1938

<sup>284</sup> Grell *Skaberordet og billedordet* 1980 og *Skaberånd og folkeånd* 1987. See the published discussion from Grell's disputation in Schjørring Ed. *Menneske først, kristen så* 1988

<sup>285</sup> Iversen *Grundtvig, folkekirke og mission* 2008

<sup>286</sup> Riis *Det grundtvigske menneskesyn og dets rod* 1997

<sup>287</sup> Cappelørn *Gudsbillighed og syndefald: Aspekter af Grundtvigs og Kierkegaards menneskesyn på baggrund af Irenæus* 2004

<sup>288</sup> Selected: Grundtvig *Danne-Virke I* 1816, 225-226, 233-238; *Danne-Virke II* 1817, 18-22, 39; *Danne-Virke III* 1817, 277-280, *Danne-Virke IV* 1819; 152, 265-266; Grundtvig *Om Nordens videnskabelige Forening* 1839 i Christiansen & Kjær 1942, 176-179, 182-185

common human and well known to everybody in relation to the special knowledge about God, and his message to the world. Correspondingly the relation between the living Church universal, holy and established by God, and the local Church with its unperfect fellowship of faithful people in the specific context. And so fourthly in Grundtvig's dialectical universe. It is the interaction with its including function of mutual mirroring that is the fruitful tension.<sup>289</sup>

The interaction-thinking becomes another way to understand the mutual expression of salvation in Grundtvig's theology. God, the transcendent alien, communicates himself to human beings in areas, where peoples own culture and creations are understandable. All what is human is the impact for the Divine, and the Divine is only understandable to the degree it finds expression in human philosophy and creations. In this thinking we come back to history, which is always human history, both the individual and the collective history of a people. The history is always the human history seen from the perspective of human beings. But simultaneously the same history is God's history, because God is the only reality human beings live in relation to.<sup>290</sup>

The final discussion of ***the two-sided conditions of divine-human relationship*** most include that we found no directly quotations or sources in Wesley's or Grundtvig's writings that connected them to the Eastern tradition of theology. Wesley could have quoted Clement of Alexandria or Chrysostom, who develop the issue of the divine-human relation and interaction.<sup>291</sup> Wesley uses mostly Augustin as his source for support to the idea of the co-working dimension. Maybe Wesley gave priority in his use of Augustin for the reason that he wanted to lift up another interpretation of Augustin than what in history the Pelagian fight did, an interpretation where Augustin often was used to put all focus on God's sovereignty and simultaneously minimize the human responsibility and freedom in action and attitude.

Neither Grundtvig has any direct quotations or references to specific Eastern tradition in his position. But the thinking around the interaction, *Vexel-Virkning*, between the human plan and the divine plan, the human response to God's appeal and grace as a God's gift of empowering human beings to co-work with God on the human salvation, God working on the human side and the human fight and strengthening this human fight, is a thinking we often find in the Eastern tradition. On the other hand, the Western tradition has very often had difficulties with the idea of the human co-work, human co-operating, not least in the Lutheran conflict on the synergism that marked the *Formula of Concorde* with condemnation of those who accept any minimum of human complicity or response on God's appeal and actions to save people.<sup>292</sup>

Wesley and Grundtvig faced the Western thinking in their context, Wesley in his showdown with the Moravian quietism and antinomianism, and in his showdown with the Calvin predestination theology. Wesley's and Grundtvig's position on this theme ***the two-sided conditions of divine-human relationship*** is of course closely related to their position on the themes "Dynamic Anthropology," harmartology and "The God, who is reaching out." In these themes Wesley and Grundtvig show they are dependent on the thinking of the Eastern Greek father, and the same dependence is on the themes of Salvation and Co-operating energies. Here the connection for Wesley is to Clemens of Alexandria, Macarios, and for Grundtvig to Irenaeus.

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<sup>289</sup> Grundtvig *Om Nordens videnskabelige Forening* 1839 in Christiansen & Kjær 177-183. Bjerg 77ff

<sup>290</sup> Grundtvig *Om historisk Vidskab, Danne-Virke I* Begtrup III, 347-348, 351-354

<sup>291</sup> Ware 2000, 224

<sup>292</sup> Konkordiebogen 1882, § 40, 423

### The Morningstar of Christianity

As mentioned above my dissertation *Kristendommens Morgenstjerne*<sup>293</sup> analyses six themes where Wesley and Grundtvig show inspiration from the Eastern Greek tradition in their theology. And this common source of inspiration makes their theologies converged. In summary the five other themes of comparison are:

#### The first theme is *Dynamic anthropology*

Wesley's anthropology is relational. He sees human beings in their relation with God. This relation can be described as the human participation in God or dwelling in God, descriptions Wesley knew from Macarius and Ephraem Syrus. A third character of the human-divine relation is partaking, human beings take part of the life in God, and God takes part in human life. Participation, dwelling and partaking is what Wesley understands as the fundamental fellowship between humans and God, and from this fellowship other characteristics of the human being are defined. The main character of man is the *imago Dei*, the understanding that human beings are created in the image of God. Wesley has a threefold description of the *imago Dei* as the natural image, the moral image and the political image, each of the images compares to different parts of human life and abilities. The threefold *imago Dei* is a character each human being is created with, but it is also a potential to be developed in relation to the One from whom the image is given. The already implemented and the not yet completed are two aspects of the understanding of humans as *imago Dei* and in the conditions of fellowship with God as participation, dwelling and partaking. Humans are created *imago Dei*, and as they are facing God, they also reflect what they are facing. A final aspect in Wesley's anthropology is the understanding of complexity in unity. Wesley quotes Macarius in his composition of the human being as body and soul, material and spiritual elements of the one being. Wesley's argumentation against the dualism in anthropology of his own time was analogue with the church fathers' discussion with the gnostic theologians. The human being is one united being composed of different elements. This wholeness of man provides the conditions for how to understand the human life and salvation.

Grundtvig's anthropology is strongly influenced by the thinking we find in the writings of Irenaeus. First the idea of human beings as created like small people, not grown up yet. Man is from the very beginning a small and childish man. Creation of man is not completed in the moment of birth. The Genesis narrative about man's fellowship with God in Eden indicates that only in the relation with God, man is able to develop the potential to be a full grown adult person. Fellowship with God is the condition for the little man to develop into a full grown human being. This understanding of the little man growing into an adult person is parallel to what is said about man's image and likeness of God. The interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27, that image and likeness focus the distinction between something already completed and something not yet realized, is typical for several Eastern fathers, but unusual in Western theology. Grundtvig is a frequent interpreter of the distinction of image and likeness. Grundtvig sees the potential for growth and development in the way of human behaviour, either as faith, hope or love. The three dimensions, faith, hope and love, express the human threefold image of God. Wesley's threefold *imago Dei* as a natural, a moral and a political dimension, has its counterpart in Grundtvig's different threefold *imago Dei* as the faith, hope and love aspect of human behaviour. Finally, Grundtvig has a developed theology on the theme of Logos, the Word and language. Grundtvig sees human language and the ability to speak and develop ideas in wording and oral expressions as a sign of the human *imago Dei*. God is the creating Word, and in his and her reflections of God, the linguistic ability and sense of mankind is a sign of each human

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<sup>293</sup> The Morningstar of Christianity

being's origin in God. The word as an instrument of language to create imaginations, attitudes and understandings is the specific criterion for the nature of human beings and the sign of *imago Dei* within mankind. The theology of *Logos*, the Word and language, is the way Grundtvig is connecting the two elements of human nature, the body and the soul, the material part and the spiritual part. The different elements of human beings are united in a wholeness that gives the conditions for understanding of human life and salvation.

### **The second theme is *The God, who is reaching out***

In Wesley's universe, the natural human being is a philosophical construction. It is a way to define human beings in themselves. But humans are never isolated and without God. Not because of the conditions of humans, but because of God, who is always reaching out to humans. It is Wesley's thought that God always supplements humans in their limitations. The presence of the God, who is reaching out, within the life of every human being, is a fundamental quality of man, not because of man, but because of how and who God is. The major subtheme is what Wesley learned from Macarius and Arminius about prevenient grace. With the wording of grace, Wesley describes how God prepares, assists and fights side by side the human being. Also, with the word of "enlightening everyone," Wesley describes God's action to assist humans to see what they couldn't see by themselves. Prevenient grace is not only God's action to initiate a new relationship to him or some other changes, but a God's power during the whole life and in any aspects of salvation. Prevenient grace understood as God's action, God's radiating power, makes Wesley underline the Trinitarian aspect of grace. God, the father, is the giver of grace, God, the Christ, is he who won the victory over evil and laid the foundation of grace, and God, the Spirit, is grace in action given to humans. The understanding of prevenient grace includes the reaching out of the triune God to human beings.

Grundtvig describes God's reaching out to every person as God's wooing, tempting and assisting. God is active and pushes on in the human-divine relation. What God is doing never overrules the human being but helps and assists in the human longing and striving. In the human-divine relation, God is active on both sides and makes the human side strong and progressing in the relationship. Gregory of Nyssa calls God a co-fighter on the human side. Grundtvig's thought of a God who is reaching out is not limited to what God is doing within human beings. Grundtvig has a major sub-theme on God's presence and preparing initiatives within the cultural context of every person. Because God is an assisting and helping God to all people in their longings and strivings, we will find marks and messages from the one God in all imaginations and stories people are producing. The mythology and constructed life stories, we find in every culture and people, contain some marks and messages from the one God. Grundtvig found the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon pre-Christian mythologies and history very interesting as preparation for and the first step in receiving the greatest of all stories, the Christian gospel. And when Christianity has been the dominant religion of the new arising time, the Christian gospel will strongly enlighten the marks and messages of the one God in the pre-Christian culture and religion. In Grundtvig's thinking the pre-Christian culture of the people has a prevenient grace function in the process of receiving Christianity as the new paradigm of life. God is the one who is reaching out to human beings individually, but also collectively in the culture, in the mythologies and stories, which have formed the people and cultural identity.

### **The third theme is *The Fall or Original sin***

Wesley sees human beings as fallen creatures. The fall of humanity is a result of humans rebelling against their creator. The signs of the fall are found in the human brokenness and needs. The consequences of the human rebelling or sin against God are guilt, corruption and death. Wesley's main focus is sin as corruption and death. Wesley does not support the idea of transfer of guilt from generation to generation, but he does support that the corrupted nature of human

beings and the condition of living in the shadow of death and destruction are transferred from generation to generation as a result of original sin. Wesley teaches his understanding of sin with reference to brokenness and needs of people in his own time. The corruption in socio-economic categories, the evil among people, the abuse in families and among employees and employers, the poverty, illnesses and death among people, Wesley sees as signs of the brokenness and needs, and he identifies it as sin. On the level of the individual human being Wesley describes the consequence of sin as a corruption and destruction of the *imago Dei*. How this destruction looks, Wesley develops from the perspective of the threefold *imago Dei* as a natural, a moral and a political image of God within man. Sin is not limited to the question of guilty or not guilty. Guilt is included in what constitutes the broken relation with God. But the main difficulty is the corrupted nature, described as a near destruction of the natural and political image of God in humans, and a total destruction of the moral image of God. Sin does not change humans into demons or unhuman creatures. They are still created in the image of God, and they are God's rebelling children. But the image is broken, they have turned away from facing God, and the knowledge about the relationship with God has gone lost.

Grundtvig identifies sin as damage to the human being. It is an accident to the creation of God. The cause of the injury is to be found in the human disobedience to God in the same way as the youngest son in Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal who turned away from the close relationship to his father. Grundtvig's teaching on sin focuses on the consequences for the human nature. He holds that it is important to acknowledge sin as a reality in the conditions for human life, but also holds that sin has not totally destroyed the human nature and turned humanity into evilness or what is inhumanity or bestiality. Grundtvig uses the wording of the image and likeness of God in humans to describe how the divine image can never be cancelled or deleted, but changed, injured and made unclear and dimmed. Sin as damage to human beings is first of all damage to the image of God within the life of human.

### **The sixth theme is *Salvation understood as growth***

Wesley has two centers in his understanding of salvation. The one is justification by faith in Christ. The other center is the regeneration or the sanctification. While justification is described as a momentary dimension of Salvation where the deeds of Christ is understood as the foundation for justification of the believer, and received or experienced by the believer in a moment that totally changes the relation with God, regeneration or sanctification is described as a process, a growth, a development that starts with justification and continues afterwards. The two centers of salvation are strongly connected, so a life on the basis of justification will lead into regeneration or sanctification, and all talk about regeneration and sanctification is understood as depending on justification. The first leads to the second, and the second is only possible as a result of the first. In Wesley's theology regeneration and sanctification are the major theme. His explanation on how regeneration and sanctification have to be understood is going in several directions. One explanation is that regeneration is growth, a parallel growth in personality as the biological growth from child to adult. A second explanation is growth to the likeness of Christ, the model of a mature and perfect man. An often-used sub-theme of growth and development is how salvation is understood as a restoration of the broken *imago Dei* in humans. Wesley was inspired by the Ephraem Syrus' *Exhortation* in his understanding of restoration of *imago Dei*. Another sub-theme often used is salvation as therapy, a healing process of what is broken in man, a terminology Wesley found in Plato. A final subtheme of growth is salvation as the growing of love. Wesley uses the double law of love, the love to God and the love to your neighbor, as a description of the goal for growth in love. Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* 7<sup>th</sup> book is for Wesley an inspiration in his own development of the theme of growth in love as an under-

standing of sanctification and holiness. And beneath the theme of growth Wesley has his understanding of preventient grace as God's work in human beings for the purpose of restoring and growth to the likeness of Christ.

Grundtvig holds that it is like children, we come to God. It is like small men we begin with God, if any beginning is to take place. The beginning with God is also the justification received in faith without any deeds. Baptism is the sacrament of the re-established divine-human reconciliation. But Grundtvig's understanding of salvation doesn't stop here. After justification the way opens for what Grundtvig calls growth and nourishing. The Eucharist is the main sacrament for nourishing to growth and development in the Christian life. In Irenaeus, Grundtvig finds his inspiration for growth to the development from childhood to adult life. Grundtvig also speaks of growth to the likeness of Christ. The main sub-theme for growth is the regeneration and renewal of the image of God within man. The renewal is, on the one side, that the image of God, the creational mark in each man, is successively made more and more clear, and, on the other side, that the metanoia of humans, creates a directly face to face relationship between humans and God, and this new relation makes it possible to reflect the likeness of God in men. Grundtvig holds that the image of God is something connected with creation itself, and the likeness of God is something depending on the relation with God, because people are mirroring what they are facing. Growth is not only understood individually, as something the single man develops, but it is in the collective, in the fellowship of the ecclesia, the church as a fellowship of believers, that growth has its nourishing context. The individual grows in the connection with the growth of the ecclesiastical body. Grundtvig also sets a goal for growth, and he uses his faith, hope and love terminology to indicate the steps and goals of growth. It is the motives of the human that state the goals. For Grundtvig love is the main goal. A life where all motives are dominated by love is the absolute highest goal and the meaning of life. Growth as development of the person will show a way beginning in faith, founded on what Christ has done for you and your salvation, continued in hope, connected to what Christ will do for you when you are raised up with him in newly generated life, and fulfilled in love, where love to God and your neighbor human being will absorb both faith and hope and be all in all.

### Three more themes of convergence theologies

A further study of the parallel thinking we find in Wesley's and Grundtvig's theologies you can find in my post-doctoral dissertation *Med venner i lys vi tale*.<sup>294</sup> In this study the comparison is done first on the background on both the Deistic theology in England and the Rationalistic theology in Denmark, Wesley and Grundtvig fought when they developed their new European version of protestant thinking. The analysis of Wesley and Grundtvig is also done on the background of the Three Types of Theology, developed by Professor Justo L. González. González typological instrument has drawn on the Lutheran Lunda theologians, Nygren, Aulen and Wingren in their "motif research." González typological instrument is very useful in the analysis of all nine themes in this article and have had a heuristically function in the research to find the convergence theological ideas. It is in the light of what González calls the Type C we discover the convergence similarities of Wesley's and Grundtvig's theologies. Next this study has three more themes for comparison of the theologies of Wesley and Grundtvig, the theme of "Love as the overall theme in theology," the theme of "No holiness but social holiness / Human first of all, thus Christian," and the theme of "Trinity."

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<sup>294</sup> Enlightened and together with friends we are talking

### **The seventh theme is *Love***

If we are looking for one overall theme in the theology of Wesley and Grundtvig, it must be the theme of love. The preaching of love dominates other themes, e.g. themes of righteousness and the law. Love is the action of God in the world, and love defines what God is saving people to. Sermons and hymns on love are multiple in Wesley's and Grundtvig's writings.

### **The eighth theme is**

#### ***No holiness but social holiness / Human first of all, so Christian***

In this theme the focus is on the human dimension of Christian theology. It is within the perspective of human life and relations that we understand what Christianity is all about, and the understanding of salvation is always on the background of human conditions and life. The purpose of Christianity is the development and potential given to humans, created in the image of God.

### **The ninth theme is *Trinity***

Wesley and Grundtvig are both very strong Trinitarian theologians of their own time and context. They do not teach the dogma of the Trinity from a philosophic definition of the metaphysical monotheistic God divided into the three as often taught in the Western tradition. Wesley and Grundtvig are following the Eastern way by focusing on how the three; Creator, incarnated Logos and Holy Ghost are in function in the world and how they are cooperating in what God is doing. Multiple are the sermons and hymnals where Wesley and Grundtvig describe what God is doing by describing the interaction and cooperation of the three persons in God. The argumentation of the Trinitarian dogma goes from the three to the one, and seldom the other way. Wesley on his side draws on his knowledge about natural philosophy, or what we would call natural science today, that many are the phenomena in nature we do not understand or are unable to explain. But the lack of understanding we have, e.g. the phenomenon of gravity, does not limit our observations of the fact that bodies and masses are moved by the power of gravity. The same way with the Trinity. We are not able to understand the mystery of the Triune God, but we can observe and describe the three divine persons of the one God and accept their testimony of unity and oneness. Grundtvig gives a long and detailed description of how the compound *imago Dei* in humans are reflecting the Triune God. With the developed dogma of the Trinity, Grundtvig develops his anthropology, using e.g. the wording of faith, hope and love to connect his understanding of the function of the Trinity to the dimension of human life. Also God's function in the ecclesia, the church, Grundtvig sees as a mirroring of the Triune God in formation of people. A typical word from the Eastern tradition is found in Grundtvig's description of God's functions, especially in the sacrament, when he calls it the hands of God, the fingers of God. We do not find direct connections between Wesley and Grundtvig, on the one side, and identified sources of the Eastern tradition. Wesley and Grundtvig are not only similar to one another in Trinitarian teaching, but they seem to be more in harmony with the Eastern ideas of Trinity than with the Western.

### **Convergence theology**

In some themes it is possible to find that Wesley and Grundtvig directly use sources they identify by names. In other themes it is not possible to find Wesley's and Grundtvig's own references, but the thoughts and ideas connect them to specific sources or traditions represented by several of the Greek theologians. When Wesley writes that he studies Macarius, Ephraem Syrus,

Bede, the Apostolic Constitution and Clement of Alexandria, we have an indication of connections. And when Grundtvig studies the writings of Irenaeus, Bede, the Exeter Book and the Leiturgikón, we see his own indication of connections. But often we have no indicated sources, only the content of the theology they are teaching, and no suggestion of connection back to the sources, where we find the ideas represented. Within the nine themes we have seen the specific character of Wesley's and Grundtvig's thinking. They are not the same and they are in different contexts. But the obvious similarities in their thinking appear when they are evaluated on the background of what we found in the Eastern tradition on the same themes. Some dominant thoughts of the Eastern theologies have influenced Wesley and Grundtvig and marked their own theologies and formed their special characters.

The result of the study shows how two theological traditions, with only limited connections, can be drawn in the same direction by a third and strongly influential source. It opens for a new understanding of ecumenism. The relation of two or more theological traditions is not only depending on the ideas and circumstances that gave the traditions their original identity and formation. Connections to a third source, new or old, influences theological traditions to develop theologies with the same characteristics. Grundtvig as a Lutheran theologian and Wesley as an Anglican theologian are examples of this.

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