



Fig. 11.1: Portrait of N.F.S. Grundtvig. Reproduced by courtesy of www.skolehistorie.au.dk.

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Chapter 11

Three Delineations of Jerusalem Interpretations in Nineteenth-Century Scandinavia

This article provides a sketch of how different aspects of the Jerusalem metaphor were used by three of the most central church groups at the end of nineteenth-century Denmark; the Grundtvigians, the Inner Mission, and Kirkeligt Centrum.

In his widely used introduction to the church history of Denmark, Martin Schwartz Lausten identified three main groups or parties that emerged in the Danish church at the end of the nineteenth century. The first one he associated with Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783–1872) and his followers (Fig. 11.1),¹ the second one with the Pietists in the Inner Mission, and, finally, the group who labelled themselves as the third option, the Church Centre [*Kirkeligt Centrum*].² Taken together, these three groups represented different visions of Jerusalem and the city's significance for life in the national church and society. This article seeks to present some core elements that characterised these visions.

The two first groups, in particular, transformed the post-Pietist, rationalistic spirit of the eighteenth century into vibrant images of the future of Christianity.³ Grundtvig and his followers exploited the nationalistic mood and transferred the imagery of Jerusalem and the biblical landscape to the Nordic scene. The imagery was connected to a cluster of ideas – particularly to those ideas that demonstrated a close relation

1 The image is a so-called “perception board” or “object of perception” [*anskuelsestavle*], which was used in education at the beginning of the twentieth century. The pupils would connect abstract ideas to a concrete object, *i.e.* Grundtvig's teachings to his portrait.

2 Martin Schwartz Lausten, *Danmarks kirkehistorie* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1987), 248–268.

3 As Ludvig Koch, one of the representatives of the third group wrote in his memoirs, commenting on his experiences as a student of theology. He was introduced to the radical critique of the biblical scriptures by F. C. Baur (Tübingen), who “continued the dismantling of the Canon of Scriptures that Semler started. . .” Still, the distinction between true and false authors of the New Testament “left both me and most other students untouched.” Koch could not disprove Baur's results, but the Bible was for him a unity, namely the promise of God's salvation and the fulfilment of that promise, encompassing history from creation to its end. Ludvig Koch, *En gammel præsts erindringer* (Copenhagen: Det Schönbergske forlag, 1912), 49–50. My translations.

between Nordic mythology and the spirit of Christianity – which proved to have an immense effect on schools and the nurturing of the national languages. The Inner Mission on the other hand, used the imagery of the Temple and the spatial distance to the most holy in order to distinguish between different believers and their levels of commitment. Those who regarded themselves as close to the Ark, and had experienced the personal encounter with Christ – the true believers, so to say – worked hard to do mission within the framework of the state church. They viewed other, less committed believers as subjects of mission. The third group reacted to Grundtvig and the Inner Mission in order to defend the traditional structures of the church, particularly the office of the pastor. These churchmen understood themselves as closer to the religious roots of Scandinavian Christianity: “We are the tree that carries the two branches,” one of its central figures, Dean P. G. Hansen, wrote, referring to the two other groups.⁴ By utilising the organic metaphor of the tree, a powerful image, Hansen sought to transcend the partiality he attributed to the followers of Grundtvig and the members of the Inner Mission.⁵

Grundtvig and a Jerusalem in the Nordic landscape

One of the most spectacular orchestrations of the Jerusalem code in Scandinavia happened when the 84-year-old Grundtvig entered his church, the Vartov Church in Copenhagen, on Palm Sunday morning in 1867. One of the attendees, the church historian Frederich Hammerich, referred to the sermon as “a remarkable mixture of madness and transcendent thoughts.”⁶ The charismatic pastor dwelled in the church for six hours, preaching and distributing the sacraments. In the pews sat the Queen Mother, a warm supporter of Grundtvig. The presence of a central member of the royal family added an air of national importance to the liturgical event; indeed, the significance of this moment did not escape Grundtvig. After he had held his penitential sermon and absolved the communicants of their sins, Grundtvig shouted to the congregation: “Where is the Queen of Denmark? The Queen of Sheba came to hear the Wisdom of Solomon, and – alas – here is more than Solomon.”⁷ As the Queen mother

4 “Vi er roden som bærer de to grene . . .” P. G. Lindhardt, *Den danske Kirkes Historie VII* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1958), 372.

5 Vilhelm Beck, the undisputed leader of the Inner Mission, referred to them – rather sarcastically – as “those not to be related” [de uævnelige]. Vilhelm Beck, *Når Gud går foran. Livserindringer* (Oslo: Indremisjonsforlaget, 1946), 163. It was “below their dignity to be a ‘party,’” the Church Historian P.G. Lindhardt wrote, as “they were ‘the church itself’.” Lindhardt, *Den danske Kirkes Historie VII*, 371.

6 “Prædikenen, der holdtes i en løftet stemming, var den underligste blanding af vanvid og åndfulde tanker.” Frederik Hammerich, *Et levnetsløb*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Forlagsbureauet, 1882), 205.

7 “men hvor er dog Danmarks dronning henne?” udbrød han. ‘Dronningen af Saba kom at høre på Salomons visdom, og her er sandelig mere end Salomon!’ Hammerich, *Et levnetsløb*, 204.

left her chair, knelt before the altar, and received the absolution of her sins, Grundtvig improvised over the liturgy, saying: “and herewith are all the sins of Denmark absolved. Now just let the King of Prussia come, because Denmark is now at peace.”⁸ By referring to the disastrous war with Prussia of 1864 – when Denmark lost Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg in the Second Schleswig War – Grundtvig made this national trauma the backdrop of his vision. In a glimpse, Grundtvig saw his whole speculative national narrative fulfilled on Danish soil in an apocalyptic vision of the New Jerusalem.⁹ Christ’s coming to Jerusalem was not understood in *analogy* to the situation in Vartov church. Grundtvig did not merely see salvation coming to sinners; rather he promoted a vision of a redeemed Jerusalem where the promises to the city of cities had been fulfilled, not in Palestine, but in Denmark.

At the time, according to S. A. J. Bradley, Grundtvig’s mind rested upon the different scriptural symbols of Jordan and Jerusalem; more precisely upon how these symbols could describe the successful moments of the spiritual mission of a nation,¹⁰ and now Grundtvig felt that the hour was come. In the sermon in Vartov Church, on Palm Sunday 1867, Grundtvig said:

What people through all the ages have puzzled over, the Lord had devised – a vital unstillness (*perpetuum mobile*) in the human heart, and the squaring of the circle (quadrature of the circle [*sirkelens kvadratur*]) in the foursquare heavenly Jerusalem, measured by the man’s measure. . . . There had been many impediments to the Lord’s coming, for the intellect [*Aanden*] and the heart [*Hjærtet*] had become separated. The intellect God had planted in the east on the hill of visions [*synernes høj*] and the heart here on the Danish islands. But now they have at last been reunited and now Jordan flows out into the Øresund, now the Lord is riding into his city. The foal of an ass which bears him has grown up among us, but first its mother must be set loose, and that is what I am doing today.¹¹

8 “Enkedronningen trådte derpå ud af sin stol og knælede ned for altaret, og idet han tilsagde hende syndernes forladelse, føjede han til: ‘og hermed er så alle Danmarks synder forladte’; efter et ophold, mens alteret fyldtes på ny, sagde han end videre; ‘lad nu Prøjserkongen kuns komme, for nu har Danmark fred!’” Hammerich, *Et levnetsløb*, 204.

9 The year before, in 1866, Grundtvig had emphasised that it was in the Nordic countries that the apostolic Church should be reborn. The Danish Church was the last stop on the way to the New Jerusalem. Ander Pontoppidan Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People, 1848–72,” in *N.F.S. Grundtvig: Tradition and Renewal. Grundtvig’s Vision of Man and People, Education and the Church, in Relation to World Issues Today*, eds. Christian Thodberg and Anders Pontoppidan Thyssen (Copenhagen: Danish Institute, 1984), 359.

10 Sid A. J. Bradley, “Grundtvig’s Palm Sunday 1867 and the Anglo-Saxon Descent into Hell,” *Grundtvig-Studier (GStud)* 44 (1993), 199–200.

11 I have used the translation of Hammerich’s report in Sid A. J. Bradley, *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2008), 310. An almost identical account is found in Helweg’s report to the Ministry of ecclesiastical Affairs. Cf. Bradley, “Grundtvig’s Palm Sunday 1867,” 208, note 2.

The perceived reconciliation between *Aanden* (the intellect, spirit) on the one hand, and *hjærtet* (the heart and body) on the other, was important to Grundtvig. The opposition between them runs like a common thread through most of his work, and this dichotomy was part of the double optics through which he saw the world, through opposites such as earth and heaven, dust and spirit, man and woman, etc.¹²

Grundtvig's idea of Christianity was closely connected to the idea of a national spirit, with a special emphasis on the mother tongue, due to the inherent capability of language to reconcile opposites. Unlike the pietist vision of a conventicle consisting of "friends" or a small church (*ecclesiola*) with an ascetic distance to the "world," Grundtvig developed a large cultural vision in which national languages served as a foundational ground for a history shaped by a particular reading of the Bible.¹³ It was essentially an idea of the world as a divine mirror; a world that displayed an ongoing process of revelation in history. The theory was dynamic and flexible, because the national "identities" he constructed were historically conditioned. Grundtvig was particularly interested in how man reflected God's image through language. When a new University was established in the capital of Norway in 1813, Grundtvig saw it as a sign of an eschatological fulfilment: "Should thou, Christiania / be called Philadelphia?" he wrote, referring to the Book of Revelation.¹⁴

For Grundtvig, the human being was not a finished product from the hand of the Maker. Man should rather grow up together with God, "in whose image he was created" and according to whose words – in their poetic and *national* linguistic expression – fulfilment could be created. When the nation discovered its own historical process, its identity as "the land of the living" could be further developed.¹⁵ An instrument for realising the vision of Man searching fulfilment was the *folk high school* [folkehøgskole] *movement*, intended to educate people who did not have the time or resources to embark on university studies. Grundtvig fought against Latin:

¹² A typical example was Grundtvig's framing of universal history through these glasses. Ancient history was characterised as a *male* era, whereas the Middle Ages was a *female* era. Why? In the ancient world of myth the *head* was used, in the Middle Ages the feelings appealed to the *heart*. Cf. Ole Vind, *Grundtvigs historiefilosofi* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1999).

¹³ Grundtvig's attempt at turning it into a political program failed, however, Cf. Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen, "Grundtvig and Romanticism," in *Kierkegaard and his Contemporaries: The Culture of Golden Age Denmark*, ed. Jon Stewart (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 224. In addition, it is difficult to get a clear picture of his understanding. As one of his sympathetic contemporaries remarked in a letter: "Grundtvig is the personified Nordic spirit, the leader of the North, because no one has seen – as he does – where the Nordic spirit moves . . . Grundtvig has, however, the misfortune that almost nobody, not even his closest friends, knows his opinions." Cited from Jes Fabricius Møller, "Grundtvig, Danmark og Norden," in *Skandinavismen. Vision og virkning*, eds. Ruth Hemstad, Jes Fabricius Møller and Dag Thorkildsen (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2018), 99. My translation.

¹⁴ Holger Begtrup, ed., *Nik. Fred. Sev. Grundtvigs udvalgte skrifter*, Andet Bind (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1905), 606.

¹⁵ Dag Thorkildsen, *Nasjonalitet, identitet og moral* (Oslo: NFR, 1995), 46–7.

that dead, foreign element which threatened to eradicate the popular spirit [*folkelighed*]. As Grundtvig underlined in his poem “To the Fatherland” of 1813: “The lands of the South with their queasy heat, they pity the cold North with its snow and ice . . .”¹⁶ In spite of the sinking glory of Denmark, the Nordic tongue will be used for praise, he claimed. Grundtvig added a description of the peace that would follow if Denmark would “give God the glory”: “God will again be your mighty fortress / and you would become his Jerusalem.”¹⁷

Vilhelm Beck and his Allegory of the Temple

The Inner Mission was a Low Church movement within the church of Denmark that sought to guide people into a personal relation with Jesus Christ.¹⁸ The movement was founded in 1861 and had a built-in tension. On the one hand, it wanted to serve the church, on the other, it broke the church order by sending preachers across parochial borders. Vilhelm Beck (1829–1901), one of the most profiled leaders of the Inner Mission, used a theological model of the Temple in Jerusalem to integrate both concerns. Beck seldom used the concept “church” or “congregation,” but preferred to denote the church as “God’s parental home on earth.” The common use of “church” blurred the distinction between the faithful and the infidels, he claimed. This distinction was crucial to Beck. It divided the parochial congregation into X, Y, and Z, and it divided the people who were gathered in worship. The large folk church (*ecclesia*) was the outer court of the temple, with all the baptised members. The small church (*ecclesiola*), the inner circle of “those who have a living faith in communion with the Saviour and in communion with all the saved” represented the holy part of the temple on earth. Lastly, the most holy referred to the eternal bliss in heaven.¹⁹

Beck’s intention with this image was to state a direction. He wanted to lead the baptised members of the church from the outer court of the temple into the inner, most holy part, into heaven. It was not possible, however, to reach the most holy in heaven without passing through the holy on earth, where the small church of true believers resided. Therefore, his circles of Inner Mission represented a necessary step on the road to the heavenly Jerusalem. Only after the baptised had come to a

¹⁶ “I! Sydens Lande, med den kvalme Hede! / Som ynke Norden med sin Sne og Iis.” Begtrup, *Nik. Fred. Sev. Grundtvigs udvalgte skrifter*, Andet Bind, 701.

¹⁷ “Det skeer, naar kun du giver Ham Hans Ære, / Da vil igjen din faste Borg Han være, / Og du skal vorde Hans Jerusalem.” Begtrup, *Nik. Fred. Sev. Grundtvigs udvalgte skrifter*, Andet Bind, 709.

¹⁸ The Grundtvigians saw the Inner Mission as a movement that “had contempt for the Danish and regarded Denmark as a heathen nation.” Cf. P. G. Lindhardt, *Vækkelser og kirkelige retninger i Danmark* (Copenhagen: Det danske Forlag, 1951), 152–3. My translation.

¹⁹ Kurt E. Larsen, *Vilhelm Beck – missionspræsten* (Fredericia: Lohses Forlag, 2001), 213.

personal decision to receive nurture for their faith, found among the true believers, did they have the necessary requirements to reach the most holy. Hence, Beck proposed a movement within the church, so to speak. It went from the outer courts into the holy part of the temple on earth, which again made the believer fit to reach the most holy in heaven. Beck did not subscribe to the important article 7 in the Augsburg Confession. The Confession insisted that the church “is the assembly of all believers among who the Gospel is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.”²⁰ For Beck, however, there existed no oneness between the preached Gospel and the assembly of saints. According to Beck, Luther had been unclear by mixing the two elements in the Creed, namely “Church” and “assembly of saints.”²¹ Such a confusion placed the holy ones in a circle larger than the true converts. It included the outer court of his temple-analogy and jeopardised the place of the converted – those with a living faith – at the strategically important junction between the outer court and the most holy. Therefore, Luther’s teaching needed clarification in this matter, Beck claimed.

Far from Grundtvig’s romantic vision of a nation that in its historical process had tasted the first fruits of a kingdom to come, the parochial structure of the Church of Denmark represented for Beck merely a remote element of the temple. He wanted the church to break away from traditional popular belief and rationalism, as well as the synthesis of Christianity and culture. Instead, Beck’s idea was that the required holiness could be realised *inside* the established church by establishing a distinct and separate dignity of the converted within the church. This rapture of holiness within the church was not merely connected to the individual’s conversion, but had its institutional expression in activities connected to the Mission Houses and to gatherings in private homes. These persons were referred to as “holy,” a label both used by the mission people themselves and as a pejorative term by detractors. The culture associated with “the saints” [*de hellige*] implied both an ascetic lifestyle and close ties with the other converted.²² Although Beck served as a minister in the Danish folk church, it was the “loving ties between the saints” that formed his life.²³

The difference between the Inner Mission and the Grundtvigians had political implications. For example, the close ties between nationalism and holiness in Grundtvig’s thought, made the Grundtvigians hostile towards the new German political

²⁰ Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press, 1959), 32.

²¹ Larsen, *Vilhelm Beck – missionspræsten*, 214–5.

²² A letter from the 1880s is telling of this culture. A mother, living close to Vilhelm Beck’s group, was anxious to send her daughter away. The mother did not want to expose her daughter to the influence of Beck, “because if she wants to attend a ball or go out with us, she will turn holy, too, and not enjoy the moment of youth.” Cited from Carl Trock, “Under Vilh. Becks prædikestol,” *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* (1993), 99. My translation.

²³ Hans Aage, “Vilhelm Beck – omstridt gennem 133 år,” *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* (2002), 70.

authorities in Schleswig Holstein after Denmark's loss of the territory in 1864. The Inner Mission, however, underscored that the Christian identity was of prime importance, and they could therefore employ a German as a preacher.

The Church Centre – a Lutheran Jerusalem?

For the pastors who neither adhered to the religious-national vision of Grundtvig, nor to the small-church holiness of Beck and the Inner Mission, a third option emerged: They could join the Church Centre [*Kirkeligt centrum*]. The Church Centre was originally a pastoral convent, and from 1904 onwards, it was an organisation within the state Church of Denmark. In a sense, its vision of the Danish church was not connected to physical buildings, to folk high schools or Mission houses, as in the case of Grundtvig or the Inner Mission. The Church Centre took the concrete Danish congregation [*menigheden*] as their vantage point, accentuating liturgical worship in the church as the centre of the life of the folk church.²⁴

The attempt was to reinvigorate the tradition from such personalities as the Zealand bishops Jacob Peter Mynster (1775–1854) and Hans Lassen Martensen (1808–1884). Martensen had been critical towards both Grundtvigians and the Inner Mission, because he regarded them as closed and exclusive movements. His understanding of the church as an organic body was linked to a vision of society where Christianity played a leading role, but he also underlined the church's identity as a community of faith. Martensen gave the heavenly Jerusalem an indirect role in his vision for the church and its role in society: It was not directly applicable as Grundtvig's national Jerusalem or Beck's understanding of holiness; Martensen's Jerusalem was rather framed as a meta-perspective on issues of importance for society.

One example of how Martensen employed such a meta-perspective is in his analysis of the social problems of the nineteenth century. In the 1870's, Martensen published several books treating ethical questions, among them a small booklet entitled *Socialism and Christianity* [*Socialisme og Christendom*] (1874).²⁵ His reasoning in this booklet followed the well-known dialectic argumentative structure from Hegel of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

Martensen saw the emancipation from what he called the heathen slave-mentality as an important effect or implication of the Christian church's presence in people's

²⁴ Kaj Bollmann, "At pege på centrum," in *Udfordringer til kirken. En debatbog*, ed. Henning Nørhøj (Copenhagen: Eksistensen, 2019), 10.

²⁵ Hans L. Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom. Et Brudstykke af den specielle Ethik* (Copenhagen: Thiele, 1874).

lives. For a Christian, his or her main identity was not qualified by wealth or rank, but by the designation of *citizen of heaven*.²⁶ By placing the church in the hereafter, however, its present critical function was often lost in *quietism* (thesis).²⁷ Martensen argued that if the worker was reduced to a machine or a means of gain for the rich, as Martensen claimed that Adam Smith's work *The Wealth of Nations* did, then the Christian understanding of being *spiritually* determined for an eternal life in heaven was lost. In such a system, the essential elements from the old slave system are still present and working people instrumentalised.²⁸ Hence, he shared the critique of the socialists: the miserable social conditions were created by human beings and was not the result of a natural state.²⁹ However, Martensen added another element to the critique of the material conditions of the poor: In light of man's true destination – the heavenly Jerusalem – the poor should also be considered as a *spiritual* beings. Spiritual aspects made work noble, Martensen claimed, even if it did not directly feed the hungry.³⁰

On the other hand, Martensen criticised the *utopic* understanding of the projected communist society (antithesis) as formulated for example by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.³¹ "Christianity gives us no utopias, there is no state of perfection on earth," Martensen wrote; "perfection awaits on the other side."³² His defence of private property rested on the earthly conditions of this life, as opposed to the heavenly conditions of the Kingdom to come.³³ In addition, he argued that the godless agitation of communism dissolved the ethical and religious life of the workers.

Martensen's own intention was to balance liberalism and socialism (synthesis), albeit with a Christian qualification. One cannot appeal – as the agnostic political economists, such as John Stuart Mill – to frugality and moderation alone. Christianity has a vocation [*et kall*] to solve the concrete social challenges, Martensen argued. He complained about the church's lack of resources and its dependence on the state, but underlined that the Word was more than preaching. Jesus did not only give the 5000

26 Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom*, 14.

27 Martensen suggested the Church's failing response – and its acceptance of liberal *laissez-faire* theory – by referring to Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834) and his theory of population and food supply. For Martensen, it was difficult to accept that the cleric Malthus "who once had preached the gospel for the poor," could claim that society should refrain from helping the poor and "make obstacles to how nature handles overpopulation." Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom*, 29–30. My translation.

28 Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom*, 30.

29 Martensen cited Friedrich Engels description of the housing conditions of the workers in London, Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom*, 25–6.

30 Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom*, 14.

31 Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom*, 26.

32 Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom*, 44.

33 Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom*, 40.

people in the desert words; he fed them, too.³⁴ Martensen did not provide clear-cut answers to solve the social problems he observed in his society, but he used his theological resources to describe the problem and to point to some possible responses from the church. The Church Centre sought to promote this kind of reasoning which saw faith as including social commitment.

Conclusion

Three of the most influential parties in the nineteenth-century Church of Denmark employed the Jerusalem code with three different accentuations. The visionary Grundtvig charged his grand idea of the nation with parallels to Jerusalem, Beck used the temple metaphor to explain the strategic importance of the inner circle of true believers, whereas Martensen let the idea of the Christian as a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem shed light on problems in society. The manifold uses of the Jerusalem code demonstrate the metaphor's elastic quality, but also its centripetal force, which enabled it to hold together very different outlooks in the same church.

³⁴ Martensen, *Socialisme og Christendom*, 53.