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*Inculturation of Christianity. The idea and
modern context .*



Questions of inculturation and the thought of Rev F. S. Grundtvig

A. Short introduction

to the religious context of the times and to the intellectual discussion in Denmark on the beginning of XIX century

B. Development of Cultures

The phenomenon of the cultural development Danish thinker compares to the periods of human life. This method was: allegorical way of illustrating the changes inward a culture, by the pictures of childhood, youth and adolescence. Building the link between the processes of human mind and historical being of nations was nothing new, but rather new was that the nonliterate cultures were described as whole, complete and mature. What was outstanding in Grundtvig's vision; Scandinavians, nations of the New World, local ethnics from the pre-Christian era are not barbarians or the "good innocent wilds" (in terms of Enlightenment) but these worlds are comparable with famous ancient peoples; Greeks or Hebrews. According to the Danish theologian cultures remote to the old centre of European civilization the (specially the peoples of the North of continent) are original, "natural", and authentic. Their strength they take exactly from this what is provincial, local, not sophisticated, alive what exist rather in the spoken legacy (myths) than in written laws and written historiography. (The example of nordmen culture writer extend on almost all provisional ethnics of the world). The process of rising, developing can provide to the situation where can (but not must) appear written literature in that community, but even than, this "high" or sophisticated culture still preserves connection with the roots, with "childhood" of the local culture. (There were of course some exceptions in Grundtvig's conception f.e.; however the Hebrew nation is an "artificial" one - retains ethical purity and own authenticity). I need add, that the thinker often introduce some categories like "natural" - "artificial", "original" - "secondary" replacing the terms: "civilised" - "barbarian".

A custom, and a myth is necessary for a proper development of societies, ethnics (Grundtvig used always a word nation) and – how it was already mentioned - for a growing up of a human person. The pre-Christian background is important for identity of nations and parallelly plays a fundamental role in education of children. Grundtvig stress an outstanding function of mother language and this is why he recalls a meaning of Reformation as the niveau for learning own ethnic languages and as a founder for the national self-consciousness. In his vision language, myth, old tale, saga recorded by medieval monks serves the development of (Scandinavian) nations and individuals. A pupil cannot avoid encounter with the roots of his own culture. Here

are present some characteristic ideas of Grundvig teaching: "who became a man can become a Christian". The Danish theologian sees in mythology a place for ethical heritage of autochthonic legacy (of course refusing polytheistic cult). These two phenomena: humanization and Christianization will dominate in work of his life as priest, thinker, politician, creator of Peoples Universities and translator of old Nordic literature.

C. Against the triumphalism and self-glorification

Back to the sources was a parole of the protestant Reformation. Grundvig's discussion with the legacy of his own Lutheran confession stressed the positive role of coming back to the Bible but also to the ancient pre-Christian Greek roots of mediterranean culture. (On the contrary to Israel and Greece he described Roman culture as a secondary one which was able only for imitating foreign models and patterns). But despite of Grundvig's fascination or antipathy towards some cultures, he perceived some kind of danger of cultural domination of great, passed cultural Powers on the field of modern education. As a child he participated in the Danish school system where own cultural identity was minimalised to the shallow role of a provincial tradition of minor meaning. The heritage of "Nordmen", this pre-Christian tradition was something less important, strange and even hidden in the shadow of the ancient mediterranean names: the Greece and the Rome. It was of course the famous model of classical education with ancient languages, but not the knowledge was questionable by Grundvig. The Danish school of that time "black school" was a place where Grundvig saw this "cultural" violence as a parallel to the real, physical violence represented by teachers. Today we know for instance that Christian mission and "europocentrism" (how we call similar phenomenon) are two different things but two hundred years ago it was not yet obvious. It was the pastor from Denmark who (150 years before a process of political and mental decolonization) as one of the true pioneers has opened a capital discussion about the relation between Christian mission and the "cultural" mission of the classical European legacy. If he tried any time to form a critic inward his own confession, he concentrated than on the fact of tragically un-independence of protestant education on the cultural field. Especially situation in German schools of that time (according to his words imitated in Denmark) was an object of critic formulated by Lutheran priest from Copenhagen. All this explains why the Danish thinker and theologian postulated a new Reformation: (in modern words a true "inculturation"). He proposed an educational reform and the egalitarian school free of cultural slavery or inferiority complex.

Here also arises a question of the local, Scandinavian mythological component in this new proposition. It is important to comment that visions of Lutheran priest were neither nationalistic nor "neopagan". Coming back to the Biblical from one hand, and to the Scandinavian epic tradition from the other, writer excludes blind fascination of Nordic gods. In times of romantic fashions the theologian denies that Scandinavian Thor could play a role of ideal man. That kind of idealization or glorification of mythological characters meets his strong constructed on the base of Christology. And devoted to the Christian truth - on the same emotional way - Grundvig flight the denominational complexes and stereotypes inward Christianity. Well known is filosemitic orientation of Danish priest and his positive attitude towards roman Catholics and represents of the protestant free churches in Denmark. It is necessary to mention, that thus Lutheran theologian playing in some period of his life a visible political role in parliament has

created a project of a bill for complete religious (confessional) freedom in Kingdom of Denmark. He was against national self glorification. However the pride of Scandinavian identity and historical achievements is visible, he declares himself against fanatical glorification of any culture. Original culture neither should be dominated nor should pretend to degradate another cultures to the minor role. Local culter is a self-born world among worlds.

D. Place of the Church, Nation, State and Culture

The nonconformistic attitude of Severin Grundvig was build on the base of free political and religious choice. This is why he (like his compatriot, colleague and sharp critic Soren Kirkegaard) provided lone struggle against the opinion of educated society that times. The model of Christian mission in western, already laicisated society (already than he realized that Europe will be a filed of Christian mission again) Grundvig understood as a presence of alive religious feelings in the local People-Church (rather than a State Church). Church should be a community of equal, free people, neither a straight reflexion of social levels nor an institution with comfortable status of state-religion. The Christian (and Nordic) tradition of souverenity should be visible in the Church and in the school.

What the thinker was fighting with, were:

- the synthesis of state and church
- the synthesis of school and (petrificated) social hierarchy
- the religious syncretism
- the cultural rooting out (by dominating civilisations)
- the blind glorification of the past
- the idealization of nonchristian legacy
- the confessional xenophobia

Especially the religious syncretism, cultural and linguistical rooting out were in Grundvig's opinion the enemies of Christian gospel. A point of view in this particular question was recorded in seven bands of his main historical work. But the problem of inculturation is also remarkable in the educational projects, and last but not least in lyrics and popular Lutheran church songs written by this extraordinary Danish pastor.

E. Modern and local Context

For me, in my researches interesting was polish context of the Grundtvig's thought, especially outrooting of our society in communistic times and modern possibilities for inculturation of Christianity in absolute new social and psychological conditions. Despite of some eccentric and old fashion elements, the thought of Danish historian and theologian is today not anachronistic one.