

## **Hans Nielsen Hauge and Soren Kierkegaard: Activists for Christian Awakening and Social Change**

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### Abstract

Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824) and Soren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) were two powerful activists for Christian awakening and social change in their home countries and beyond. Just as the two countries were joined together governmentally until Norway's independence in 1814, both men were closely joined spiritually while living and working apart in their respective circles of societal influence. Both men had transformational religious awakenings of their Christian faith that propelled them into the public square. Both men were prolific writers whose works instigated church reform and societal influence. This article considers important similarities between Hauge and Kierkegaard and explores their shared roles as prophets, missionaries, and social reformers within the theoretical framework of communication theory for dialogue and social change.

Key words: Hauge, Kierkegaard, Pietism, Norway, Denmark, agonistic, activist, social change, reformer

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Hans Nielsen Hauge and Soren Aabye Kierkegaard were two of the most influential church reformers and activists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hauge, who began publishing his own books in 1796, inspired an unprecedented societal revolution in Norway, promoting literacy, personal piety and devotion to Christ, and social transformation that birthed a remarkable spiritual awakening, ushering in Norway's national independence in 1814. Kierkegaard, raised in the Pietist movement that Hauge inflamed, was born in 1813, two years after Hauge's release from his tenth and last imprisonment for preaching a message that challenged the state church. In the same activist spirit of Hauge, Kierkegaard continued the attack, exposing the intellectual roots of the impotent Christianity that the state church propagated. Despite important similarities between Hauge and Kierkegaard and their influence as activists and reformers, there is little scholarly work that explores the common attributes of these two great Scandinavian Christian leaders.

The purpose of the present article is to examine seven important similarities between Hauge and Kierkegaard, exploring their roles as influential Christian writers, prophets, and missionaries who advocated for societal change based on personal transformation. Although Hauge's reputation as a great reformer is well known, a misrepresentation of Kierkegaard by Albert Camus, who influenced Francis Schaeffer, has misinformed several generations of evangelical writers who never read accurate translations of Kierkegaard's scholarship (Evans, 2006, p. 6) We situate our analysis within communication theory, focusing on perspectives of dialogue and social change. First, we discuss the theoretical framework for our comparative analysis of these two influential 19<sup>th</sup> century reformers.

### **Agonistic Orientation of Dialogue and Social Change**

Communication theory on dialogue and social change provides a useful theoretical framework for making a comparative analysis of two influential activists. Both Hauge and Kierkegaard openly challenged the ecclesiastical and governmental power structure that they believed obfuscated the practice of true Christianity. Both men paid a high personal cost for their activism and success in dismantling the church-state monopoly on Christian thinking and praxis. Both men engaged in ongoing dialogue for social change during their adult lives.

The role of dialogue and activism in promoting democratic practices and social change has attracted numerous scholars, including Cissna and Anderson (1994), Dutta and Pal (2010), Fraser, Brown, Wright and Kiruswa (2012), Papa, Auwal, and Singhal (1997) and Rawlins (2009). Three primary theoretical perspectives on dialogue and social change are the collaborative, co-optive, and agonistic orientations used to examine how conflict, power, and difference play critical roles in the social change process (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 66).

Scholars who apply to collaborative orientation view dialogue as interpersonal communication and relationship building (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012) in organizational communication contexts (Schein, 2004) and in consensus building (Bokeno & Gantt, 2000). This dialogue perspective emphasizes a collaborative approach with the goal of finding common ground and consensus. Drawing from Martin Buber's I-Thou theory of dialogue, scholars focusing on a collaborative approach assume a willingness of those engaged in a conflict to give up their positions if they can discover mutual interests (Morgan & Guilherme, 2012).

A second approach to the study of dialogue and activism considers dialogue as co-optation, emphasizing the fragility of dialogue and its vulnerability to manipulation by the more powerful actors in the dialogue process (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 74). These scholars note the risks that activists take when seeking open dialogue with institutional powers that seek to manage conflicts without directly engaging the social change goals of activists (Rowell, 2002). One example of this approach is Moberg's study of Erin Brockovich's activism (Moberg, 2002).

The present study of Hauge and Kierkegaard utilizes a third approach to the study of dialogue and activism for social change, referred to as an agonistic perspective. Agonism focuses on pluralistic views of dialogue and democratic debate that considers social conflict to be a necessary condition for social change (Mouffe, 1999). Mouffe's agonistic approach views dialogue as intricately tied to difference, conflict, disagreement, and polyvocality (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). This perspective argues that only "through the inclusion of a diverse body of subject positions" can a healthy and inclusive representative democracy be achieved (Jones, 2014, p. 14). This expansive view of dialogue opens up the possibilities that positive change can occur when authority is challenged through multiple viewpoints presented in a conflict (Gergen, Gergen, & Barrett, 2004).

Given that both Hauge and Kierkegaard were activists and reformers who engaged in open dialogue that criticized the authority of the church-state power structure of the Dano-Norwegian kingdom, the agonistic perspective is especially useful in guiding our comparative analysis.

### **Important Similarities Between Hauge and Kierkegaard**

#### **Humble Beginnings**

The first important similarity between Hauge and Kierkegaard is that both their families were peasant farmers with humble beginnings. Hauge was born the fifth of ten children on his family

farm in the county of Østfold, Norway, where his parents and siblings worked hard to meet their basic family needs. Despite low literacy rates among Norwegian peasants at that time, Hauge's parents taught him how to read and write, enabling him to read the Pietist writings of Moravian Christians and reformed Lutherans called Pietists who advocated a personal relationship with God.

Soren Kierkegaard also was born into a large family, the youngest of seven children with three older brothers and three older sisters. His home in the city of Copenhagen was a short walk to his local church, the Church of our Lady, and his family lived comfortably thanks to his father Michael's hard work and fortunate investments. Michael Kierkegaard, a self-made scholar often seen with a book in his hand, taught his children to read and write and often discussed the Pietist writings that brought a spiritual awakening to the Danish kingdom.

Although the Kierkegaards became prosperous, Michael and his wife Anne were both born of peasant stock, like Hauge's parents. Michael's family were sheep herders and Michael was a bonded peasant when he moved from his family farm into the capital city of Copenhagen at age 12 to work for his uncle in the wool merchant business (Backhouse, 2016, p. 45). In 1777 at age 21, he was released from bonded servitude and earned his citizenship three years later, saving him from a life of poverty (Backhouse, 2016, p. 45). Except for the fortuitous decision of government leaders to protect the value of Royal Bonds, which Michael Kierkegaard had invested heavily in, Soren's family could have easily fallen into financial ruin. His father's wise investment choices gave Soren all the financial support he needed to live the life of a scholar without having to earn income through other types of work.

The influence of the peasant class family backgrounds of both Hauge and Kierkegaard is important. They both emerged from places of little socioeconomic, political, and religious power. Their families were of the lowest class wholly subservient to the dominant power structure of the church-state. Even after they became economically successful, they were still considered on the outside of the powerful authorities they criticized, and they never lost their empathy and compassion for the common people, openly challenging the state church's parochial control and patriarchal mindset toward local communities and religious groups.

### **Personal Transcendent Encounters**

Both Hauge and Kierkegaard taught that genuine Christian faith was built on a personal encounter with God. Their belief that each individual believer could hear directly from God challenged the state church's control of religious thinking and practice. Hauge recounts a dramatic personal encounter with God on April 5, 1796, two days after his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, which changed his life. Hauge describes how he was singing one of his favorite hymns while plowing in a field when he had a supernatural encounter with God. Hauge describes the encounter with classic elements of mystical vocabulary, stating:

Now my mind was so lifted up to God that I did not mind, or could expose what was happening in my soul; For I was outside of myself, and the first of my understanding gathered, I regretted that I had not served the dear and above all good God, and that I now believed nothing in the world was to be considered. That my soul felt something supernatural, divine and blessed; that it was a glory that no tongue can glimpse, I remember this day as clearly as it should happen a few days ago. (Hauge, Bind II 1847-1954, pp. 126-127)

Hauge's experience was for him a type of baptism in the Spirit, which he only shared selectively. His unique preaching and teaching style, exhorting people to live a holy life and to confront sin in all areas of society, was motivated by that same supernatural encounter. He wrote:

It was as if I saw the world sunk down in evil, something about which I was gripped with grief. I prayed to God that he would withhold the last punishment so people could repent. I would now willingly serve God. I prayed he would tell me what I should do. Then I heard in my inner being, 'You shall confess my name before the people, exhort them to repent and seek me while I can be found, call on me while I am near and am touching their hearts, so they can turn from the darkness into the Light.' (Thorvaldsen, 2010, pp. 2-3)

Many of Hauge's converts had similar transcendent experiences that lead to repentance and a complete surrender to the Lordship of Christ (Brown & Simmones, 2018, pp. 134-140). Hauge's published accounts of his own encounters with God taught others that they could have their own transcendent experiences that could not be controlled by the state church.

Like Hauge, Kierkegaard also believed that true Christians could have personal experiences with God. David Lappano refers to Kierkegaard's theology as a "theology of encounter" that describes how an individual Christian encounters himself or herself before God, and also how Christians encounter their neighbors and the Church (Lappano, 2017, p. 11). As with Hauge, one of Kierkegaard's most striking encounters with God occurred just after his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. Two weeks after Kierkegaard's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, on May 19, 1838, he wrote:

There is an indescribable joy that glows all through us just as inexplicably as the apostle's exclamation breaks forth for no apparent reason: "Rejoice, and again I say rejoice." Not a joy over this or that, but the soul's full outcry "with tongue and mouth from the bottom of the heart" ... a heavenly refrain which, as it were, suddenly interrupts our other singing, a joy which cools and refreshes like a breath of air ... (Backhouse, 2016, p. 85)

Kierkegaard's account also employs classical elements of mystical vocabulary as he described a transcendent experience that transformed him within, coincidentally, interrupting the very activity Hauge was engaged in during his encounter, singing to the Lord. The parallels between the transcendent encounters of Hauge and Kierkegaard with God at the same age are remarkable.

A couple of months after Kierkegaard recorded this encounter in his journal, he described its effect on his life, explaining:

I am going to work toward a far more inward relation to Christianity, for up until now I have been in a way standing completely outside of it while fighting for its truth; like Simon of Cyrene (Luke 23:26), I have carried Christ's cross in a purely external way. (Backhouse, 2016, p. 86)

Not long after these journal entries, Kierkegaard's struggles with his personal relationship with his father and with his calling to be a serious scholar dramatically changed. First, Kierkegaard fully reconciled with his father Michael, who had put considerable pressure on his son to pursue his Ph.D. and become a scholar. Second, Kierkegaard published his first book, embracing his father's encouragement to pursue the life of a scholar. Third, Kierkegaard completed his doctoral studies with the successful defense of his doctoral dissertation on the concept of irony, published in 1841.

These academic achievements launched Kierkegaard's life-time work as a great Christian thinker, writer, philosopher, scholar and theologian who profoundly influenced the leaders of Denmark.

### **Pietists**

The third important similarity between Hauge and Kierkegaard is their deep spiritual roots into the Pietist movement that transformed the spiritual climate of Norway and Denmark during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Granquist, 2015, p. 7). Pietism encouraged common people of religious faith to meet on a regular basis in their homes for informal religious meetings that were independent of the formal meetings of the state church. These meetings were supported by some church leaders but opposed by others who used the inconsistently enforced Conventual Acts of 1741 to forbid such activities (Granquist, 2015, p. 8). Hauge ignored these restrictions and taught pietism to the common people of Norway, establishing its practices of gathering in homes for singing, preaching, Bible teaching and prayer as a common way of life (Breistein, 2012, pp. 314-315).

Like Norway, the Pietist movement took root in Denmark and became firmly established among Christians throughout Scandinavia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, creating a bulwark of resistance to the rationalism and modernism of the Enlightenment thinkers that influenced many intellectuals and church leaders. Awakened Christians met together in private homes for devotional purposes throughout Denmark, and although some church leaders sought to shut down these meetings, King Christian VIII curtailed such heavy-handedness and allowed the people to meet together for devotional activities that posed no threat to the State (Stidson, 2012, pp. 269-270).

During the 1740s, the Moravians established their presence in Denmark, introducing Moravian pietism and creating Copenhagen's *Brødresocietet* that held religious gatherings that Kierkegaard attended with his father (Barnett, 2011, p. 52). The Moravian movement had emerged from the 15<sup>th</sup> century work and subsequent martyrdom of John Huss, a charismatic Catholic priest and religious reformer in Bohemia (Hutton, 1895, pp. 8-10). Fleeing persecution from the Catholics, the Moravians, also known as the Brethren's Church, established a thriving congregation in Hernhut, Germany on the property of Count Zinzendorf, a devout Christian and wealthy aristocrat (Hutton, 1895, pp. 129-130).

The Moravian Pietist Movement was encouraged by the preaching and teaching of both the Moravians and of Hauge (Von Eijnatten & Yates, 2010, p. 233). Both Hauge and Zinzendorf were powerfully influenced by the life and writings of Philipp Jakob Spener, a Lutheran minister and theologian who pastored in Frankfurt am Main, where he spearheaded the Pietist movement and revival that spread across Europe (Von Eijnatten & Yates, 2010, p. 234). When Zinzendorf traveled to Copenhagen in 1739, he established the Moravian Society in Denmark, received the Order of the Dannebrog (Bøytler, 2000, pp. 73-81), leading three decades later to the founding of a Moravian colony in Christiansfeld.

Michael Kierkegaard had a lifelong involvement with the Moravians, who "had a strong hold on the rural and peasant population of Denmark" and who strongly opposed "the high-minded philosophical liberalism" infiltrating the Lutheran clergy (Backhouse, 2016, p. 56). Michael brought his children to Moravian prayer meetings on Sunday evenings in Copenhagen after attending their local Lutheran church on Sunday mornings (Backhouse, 2016, p. 56). Like Hauge taught throughout Norway, the Pietists in Denmark taught that lay people could read and interpret the Bible on their own "according to the literal reading common to traditional Lutheranism" and were free to meet in small groups for Bible study and prayer (Von Eijnatten & Yates, 2010, p.

233). Like Hauge, Kierkegaard's "spiritual vision" grew from his involvement with Pietists (Barnett, 2014, p. 3).

### **Prolific Christian Writers**

Although the lives of Hauge and Kierkegaard overlapped by only about 12 years, their lives were spiritually woven together from the same cloth and it is probable that Hauge and the Haugean Movement in Norway had an important influence on Michael Kierkegaard and his son Soren. Consider that Kierkegaard's life at home was saturated with his father's reading and discussing Pietist devotional literature with his family.

It is improbable that Michael Kierkegaard would not have been familiar with the Pietist writings of one of the most prolific Pietist writers of the Dano-Norwegian Kingdom (1660-1814). During an 18-year period, Hauge published 40 texts, including 14 books available throughout Norway and Denmark in the koiné language common in the 16th and 17th centuries (Haukland, 2014, pp. 539-559). An estimated 100,000 copies of Hauge's first four books were distributed and the number of Hauge's writings published totaled 250,000 copies by 1814 (Selmer, 1923, p. 3). Given that the population of Norway was an estimated 900 thousand people at this time, there was roughly one book by Hauge published for every four people in the country, making Hauge one of the most widely read authors in Norway (Haukland, 2014, p. 539). With the possible exception of Martin Luther's extensive work to distribute Scripture and related print material, Hauge and his followers' use of mass communication to further the gospel was unprecedented, resulting in a spiritual awakening in Norway that influenced church life for the next 150 years (Breistein, 2012, p. 315).

Given Michael Kierkegaard's participation in Moravian-led home meetings and his penchant for reading and discussing Pietist literature with his family, it is reasonable to conclude that Michael Kierkegaard and his son Soren were familiar with the Pietist writings of Hauge. Hauge and the Kierkegaard household shared a Pietist approach to their Christian faith that extended beyond the dogma of the state church, which was increasingly being influenced by rationalism. Kierkegaard's involvement with Pietism, strongly influenced by his interaction with Moravian Pietists in Copenhagen, was unmistakable (Barnett, 2011, pp. 47-51).

Kierkegaard's authorship was equally prolific, as he published at least 50 major works, including 34 original books, in a 16-year period of his relatively short life (Kierkegaard, 1946). In addition, some 7000 pages of Kierkegaard's journal notes have been published in 22 volumes of works, providing additional insight into his musings, experiences, theories, and treatises (Kierkegaard, 1978). In contrast to Hauge, whose readership was primarily working class Scandinavians living in Norway, Denmark, and the United States, Kierkegaard's readers were and are today academics, first in Scandinavia, and then throughout Europe and the world as his works have been translated into many languages (Backhouse, 2016, p. 189). It is important to note that academic scholars like Kierkegaard cite other scholars; therefore, there is no expectation that Kierkegaard would actually cite a devotional Pietistic writer like Hauge in his scholarly works.

### **Prophets**

A fifth important similarity between Hauge and Kierkegaard is that they were both prophets. When Hauge first began to travel and preach, some people tried to dissuade him due to his lack of formal education. He struggled with the rejection he knew would come, especially from the clergy that

was already resisting him and trying to shut down his revival meetings, so he asked God to release him from his commission and wrote what he believed to be God's reply to him to be as follows:

You have indeed promised to serve Me; and know this; that I have often used those considered insignificant in the world to spread my Kingdom. I have called shepherds, fishermen and tax collectors to follow my plough (1 Kings 19, Amos 1 & 7:14-15, Matt. 4:18-19 and 9:9). I shall give you power and wisdom that your enemies will not be able to stand against. Only be faithful to your call and continue in all patience. (Thorvaldsen, 2010, p. 4)

Shortly after this encounter with God, Hauge wrote a short book entitled, *A Meditation on the Folly of the World*, and published it in Christiania, the capital of Norway (now Oslo), in the summer of 1796 along with a pamphlet on his revival meetings, and a third book entitled *Evangelical Rules of Life*, A Danish translation of a short German text with an unknown author (Pettersen, 1921, pp. 66-67). These three small books launched what would eventually become an extensive publishing network and put Hauge in the crosshairs of leaders in the state church offended by some of his statements.

Hauge's status as an emerging prophet became clear when he wrote the following criticism of what he considered to be ungodly members of the clergy:

You search the Scriptures and think that you have eternal life in them, and therefore you will get all the more strict judgment in the torment of hell because you are like the man who knows the Lord's will, but doesn't follow it. Whenever one goes to church to hear the Word of God such as it is expounded by the learned, the road to heaven becomes broad. It is said that Christ has redeemed us, but the consequences are not spoken about. (Thorvaldsen, 2010, p. 6)

These were bold words in a country where freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press did not exist. However, as Hauge travelled extensively across Norway, preaching, teaching, and building printing houses, he found many common and affluent people, including land and business owners, receptive to the gospel message he communicated, creating a national Haugean movement that kept printing presses busy publishing his books (Pettersen, 1921, pp. 84-85). Hauge's success threatened clergy, leading to the first of many arrests for preaching during Christmas of 1797 in Fredrikstad, where he nearly froze to death in the "Iron Cage," a solitary confinement cell with no heat and an open window.

Hauge's harsh treatment did not surprise him as he described in his journal that his preaching is explained by a Bible passage from the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:4): *I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north - an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light* (Thorvaldsen, 2010, p. 8). From late December of 1797 to late December of 1814, Hauge was imprisoned much of the time, often in extremely harsh conditions, taking a terrible toll on him physically (Pettersen, 1921, p. 159).

In Alison Stebbe's doctoral dissertation on Hauge, she presents four conceptions of Hauge the prophet, showing him to be a foreteller of the future, an apocalyptic visionary, a charismatic leader, and a proclaimer of the gospel (Stibbe, 2007, pp. 56-61). Hauge's descriptions of how he received inspiration and guidance from God indicated that Hauge believed "prophecy as proclamation is not a matter of the rational expounding of a principle that requires only the use of

cognitive response, but to be effective it requires the inspiration of the Spirit on the part of the messenger and the stirring of the Spirit on the part of the receiver” (Stibbe, 2007, p. 78).

Like Hauge, Kierkegaard had a strong prophetic ministry that put him in much conflict with the ecclesiastical leadership of the state church, although he managed to stay out of prison because of his academic credentials. Certainly, many church authorities would have liked to have locked up Kierkegaard as they did Hauge, as freedom of speech and religion were not protected in Denmark until the Constitutional Act of 1849. Kierkegaard waited until the end of his life to publish his greatest prophetic works, *Attack on ‘Christendom’* and *The Moment and Late Writings*, where he presents a devastating treatise against the state church in Denmark. He expressed similar criticism of religious hypocrisy in the journal *Fædrelandet* and in his journals and papers, arguing that “the Church, in its attempt to become comfortable, had changed into an elite institution” and “not the place where one should seek reconciliation with God” (Kralik & Torok, 2016, pp. 50-51).

In an unmistakable prophetic voice, Kierkegaard challenged church leaders just as Hauge did, identifying the “defect of the age” as the lack of character and lamenting that “the Christianity of the New Testament” does not exist in Denmark (Kierkegaard, 1998, pp. 93,95). Kierkegaard excoriated the clergy for not living out the humility and suffering of true Christians, observing that “By means of dogmas, they protected themselves against anything that with any semblance of truth could Christianity be called a prototype, and then under full sail went in the direction of - perfectibility” (Kierkegaard, 1998, p. 182).

Kierkegaard challenged those in the pew as well, stating “There is really just one thing Kierkegaard wants us to understand, and that is that most of us are sleepwalking our way through life” (Ferguson, 2015, p. 9). He reminds every Christian seeking to live out the Apostle James’ command (James 1:22) to be a doer of the word, explaining that to be completely sober, “your understanding must *immediately* be action. Immediately!” (Kierkegaard, 1990, p. 120).

Hauge’s pronouncements also warned Christians about the lack of inward transformation that is brought about by complete surrender to the Holy Spirit, which results in outward behavioral change. As did Kierkegaard, Hauge challenged baptized Christians who simply maintained an outward appearance of being a Christian, stating:

Yes, we here in our time are all baptized and receive the Name of Christ. But people chase the anointing Spirit away from themselves. Not only do they stand against His power in their hearts, but they also disrespect the truths of the Word in their outer nature such that nothing manages to enlighten and lead them. (Thorvaldsen, 2010, p. 10)

From an agonistic perspective of dialogue and social change, it is clear that as prophets, Hauge and Kierkegaard did not negotiate their positions when faced with opposing viewpoints. Instead, they brought an uncompromising perspective that they regarded as being grounded in the Word of God.

### **Missionaries to the Church**

A sixth recognizable similarity between Hauge and Kierkegaard is that they were both missionaries to members of the state church who thought they were Christians. They both spoke as laymen “without authority,” as Kierkegaard often noted (Kierkegaard, 1997). At the time of both Hauge and Kierkegaard, people in the Dano-Norwegian Kingdom assumed they were Christians if they

agreed with the basic teachings of the Christian faith and if they attended the state church. Hauge and Kierkegaard both challenged this thinking in their written texts.

Reflecting on his first few books, Hauge stated, “At the beginning of my published writings ... I consider the most necessary and most useful thing is to call them repentance and teach them God's way to walk” (Hauge, *Bind II 1847-1954*, p. 219). Hauge’s extensive use of the *Woe Oracle*, a form of prophetic speech in both the Old and New Testaments which he repeatedly used to attack the preaching of the clergy and their misplaced priorities, illustrates his focus on living a true Christian life (Stibbe, 2007, pp. 185-186). In one confrontation, an angry church leader said, “You, Hauge, have torn down all that I have been building for forty years,” to which Hauge replied, “How have you built, since it could fall so quickly? You cannot have built upon the Rock” (Pettersen, 1921, p. 141).

Like Hauge, Kierkegaard also made it harder to be a Christian. Kierkegaard thought of himself as a Christian missionary to Christians, claiming that what his contemporaries believed was the gospel was not the gospel, but rather “some religious-sounding, speculative, philosophy-infused religious pep talk” (Tietjen, 2016, p. 52). Kierkegaard lamented that the self-identified Christians of his day did not understand fundamental Christian truths, writing in his journal:

Every Christian concept has become so volatized, so completely dissolved in a mass of fog, that it is beyond all recognition. To the concepts of faith, incarnation, tradition, inspiration, which in the Christian sphere are to lead to a particular historical fact, the philosophers choose to give an entirely different, ordinary meaning, ... (Kierkegaard, 1967-1978, p. 81)

Kierkegaard’s message to Christians is that participation in Christendom does not make one a Christian. Simply knowing about God and agreeing with objective doctrinal truth cannot substitute for internalizing subjective truth by knowing and following Christ. Kierkegaard explains Christianity as “a form of existence in which truth is made inward by the person of faith, and this occurs largely through self-denial and through the expression of pathos – resignation, suffering, guilt, sin-consciousness” (Tietjen, 2013, p. 233).

### **Activists for Social Change**

Finally, the seventh important similarity between Hauge and Kierkegaard is that they both became activists for social change. Hauge’s influence was much more targeted on Norway, and immediate, whereas Kierkegaard’s influence was more international and long-term. Nevertheless, their activism was consequential and supported the democratic movements in their countries that transformed the monarchy of the Dano-Norwegian kingdom into two strong European democracies.

Scholars have generated a considerable amount of evidence showing the close relationship between Protestant revival movements and the emergence of representative European democracies during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Woodberry & Shah, 2004). At the time of Hauge’s birth in 1771, people of Norway had very little political and religious freedom. Peasants had few rights and very little power, especially those who owned no land. Indentured and bonded servitude allowed wealthy landowners and business owners to control the populace.

By the time of Hauge’s death in 1824, Norway had dramatically changed. Hauge and his followers had established core social values, fundamental literacy and education, and an entrepreneurial infrastructure that became the foundation of what we all now regard as modern

Norway. Haugeans were active in the political, cultural, religious, business and industrial life of the nation and were pioneers in building a functioning democracy with the due process of law, liberalism, welfare, entrepreneurship and social reforms (Brown & Simonnes, 2018, p. 140). Haugeans opposed centralized power, privileges of the rich, and monopolies of political and religious power (Sjursen, 1997). Haugeans played a key role in the political process leading to the formulation of a Norwegian Constitution in 1814, including three prominent Haugeans who took part in the national assembly at Eidsvoll which passed it (Aarflot, 1967, p. 288). Haugeans became political leaders on a local, regional and a national level, including 35 serving as Members of Parliament between 1815 and 1860 (Pryser, 2006, p. 263).

Hauge's dual passion for spiritual transformation and social change encouraged his followers to be good stewards of the natural talents and resources God had given them. His activism was so effective that the authorities charged him with seeking "to create a separate, independent religious and economic community within the Norwegian state" (Semningsen, 1983, pp. 4-5). However, Hauge never advocated for his own autonomous religious or political organization and encouraged his followers to stay within the Lutheran Church as he did.

The church-state war against Hauge resulted in one of the longest court trials in Norwegian history. During Hauge's last imprisonment from the summer of 1804 to December of 1814, including two years of solitary confinement, he was only released for a short period from February 17 to August 23, 1809, to help the Government of Norway establish saltworks at several places on the west coast during the Napoleonic War. Not until December 23, 1814, was Hauge's trial concluded when he was found guilty of "having preached the Word of God" and having "encouraged others to do the same" while heaving "scorn on the ministry" but "not due to any ill will" (Pettersen, 1921, p. 158). The Court of Norway had practically declared Hauge's innocence and admitted its barbaric treatment of a man who had transformed Norway.

Kierkegaard's activism was no less radical, although he escaped imprisonment. He advocated that people think for themselves and radically live out their religious faith. After his death, many of his works were translated into different languages, finding readers in Norway, Sweden, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Great Britain, Canada and the United States in a first wave of dissemination; and Mexico, Brazil, China, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Bosnia, Turkey, Japan and beyond in subsequent waves (Backhouse, 2016, p. 189).

In the United States, during the past 25 years, there has been growing scholarly interest in Kierkegaard, exemplified by the extensive bibliographies of many of the books cited in this article. There is a Kierkegaard House Foundation that annually provides fellowships for full-time scholarly study of Kierkegaard (Kierkegaard House Foundation Fellowship, 2020). Many scholars have sought to document Kierkegaard's influence on various academic areas of study, including social-political thought (Stewart, 2011), politics (Ryan, 2014), theology (Westphal, 2014), philosophy (McDonald, 2012), communication (Tietjen, 2013), and the social sciences (Stewart, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the religious reforms and social change central to Hauge and Kierkegaard's activism directly challenged the State Church of the Dano-Norwegian Kingdom and helped to usher in two democracies that valued humility, dialogue, religious and political freedom, and equal justice for all people. Hauge and Kierkegaard both taught that the life of faith is a lifetime endeavor characterized by living out ones' beliefs. They both understood that Jesus was serious when he

called his followers to imitate him. They both knew that seeking to follow the inward voice of God may place the gospel in opposition to business as usual in a state, church, or community.

We hope that this comparative analysis of Hauge and Kierkegaard might inspire further comparative examinations of their lives and works. We also hope the use of an agonistic theoretical framework might lead to future consideration of the important relationship between dialogue and activism for social change. Given the current debates about activism for social justice in western nations where minority populations have suffered abuse from police and inequitable justice systems, activists like Hauge and Kierkegaard still speak to us today. Finally, we hope communication scholars will continue to study the direct and indirect communication strategies employed by Christian activists and reformers as they consider how to effectively bring about social change to overcome power structures that suppress individual freedoms.

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