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Hymns and Hymnwriters of Denmark

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Foreword

This book deals with a subject which is new to most English readers. For though Danish hymnody long ago became favorably known in Northern Europe, no adequate presentation of the subject has appeared in English. Newer American Lutheran hymnals contain a number of Danish hymns, some of which have gained considerable popularity, but the subject as a whole has not been presented.

A hymn is a child both of its author and of the time in which he lived. A proper knowledge of the writer and the age that gave it birth will enhance our understanding both of the hymn and of the spiritual movement it represents. No other branches of literature furnish a more illuminating index to the inner life of Christendom than the great lyrics of the Church. Henry Ward Beecher said truly: “He who knows the way that hymns flowed, knows where the blood of true piety ran, and can trace its veins and arteries

to its very heart.”

Aside from whatever value they may have in themselves, the hymns presented on the following pages therefore should convey an impression of the main currents within the Danish church, and the men that helped to create them.

The names of Kingo, Brorson and Grundtvig are known to many, but so far no biographies of these men except of the sketchiest kind have appeared in English. It is hoped that the fairly comprehensive presentation of their life and work in the following pages may fill a timely need.

In selecting the hymns care has been taken to choose those that are most characteristic of their authors, their times and the movements out of which they were born. While the translator has sought to produce faithfully the metre, poetry and sentiment of the originals, he has attempted no slavishly literal reproduction. Many of the finest Danish hymns are frankly lyrical, a fact which greatly increases the difficulty of translation. But while the writer is conscious that his translations at times fail to reproduce the full beauty of the originals, he still hopes that they may convey a fair impression of these and constitute a not unworthy contribution to American hymnody.

An examination of any standard American church hymnal will prove that American church song has been greatly enriched by transplantations of hymns from many lands and languages. If the following contribution from a heretofore meagerly represented branch of hymnody adds even a little to that enrichment, the writer will feel amply rewarded for the many hours of concentrated labor he has spent upon it.

Most of the translations are by the writer himself. When translations by others have been used, credit has been given to them except where only parts of a hymn have been presented.

Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 21st, 1944.

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Chapter

Chapter One

Early Danish Hymnody

Danish hymnody, like that of other Protestant countries, is largely a child of the Reformation. The Northern peoples were from ancient times lovers of song. Much of their early history is preserved in poetry, and no one was more honored among them than the skjald who most skillfully presented their thoughts and deeds in song. Nor was this love of poetry lost with the transition from paganism to Christianity. The splendid folk songs of the Middle Ages prove conclusively that both the love of poetry and the skill in writing it survived into the new age. One can only wonder what fine songs the stirring advent of Christianity might have produced among a people so naturally gifted in poetry if the church had encouraged rather than discouraged this native gift.

But the Church of Rome evinced little interest in the ancient ways of the people among whom she took root. Her priests received their training in a foreign tongue; her services were conducted in Latin; and the native language and literature were neglected. Except for a few lawbooks, the seven hundred years of Catholic supremacy in Denmark did not produce a single book in the Danish language. The ordinances of the church, furthermore, expressly forbade congregational singing at the church services, holding that, since it was unlawful for the laity to preach, it was also impermissible for them to sing in the sanctuary. It is thus likely that a Danish hymn had never been sung, except on a few special occasions in a Danish church before the triumph of the Reformation.

It is not likely, however, that this prohibition of hymn singing could be effectively extended to the homes or occasional private gatherings. Hans Thomisson, who compiled the most important of the early Danish hymnals, thus includes five "old hymns" in his collection with the explanation that he had done so to show "that even during the recent times of error there were pious Christians who, by the grace of God, preserved the true Gospel. And though these songs were not sung in the churches—which were filled with songs in Latin that the people did not understand—they were sung in the homes and before the doors".

Most of these earlier hymns no doubt were songs to the Virgin Mary or legendary hymns, two types of songs which were then very common and popular throughout the church. Of the few real hymns in use, some were composed with alternating lines of Danish and Latin, indicating that they may have been sung responsively. Among these hymns we find the oldest known Danish Christmas hymn, which, in the beautiful recast of Grundtvig, is still one of the most favored Christmas songs in Danish.

Christmas with gladness sounds,
Joy abounds
When praising God, our Father,
We gather.
We were in bondage lying,
But He hath heard our prayer.
Our inmost need supplying,
He sent the Savior here.
Therefore with praises ringing,

Our hearts for joy are singing:
All Glory, praise and might
Be God's for Christmas night.

Right in a golden year,
Came He here.
Throughout a world confounded
Resounded
The tidings fraught with gladness
For every tribe of man
That He hath borne our sadness
And brought us joy again,
That He in death descended,
Like sun when day is ended,
And rose on Easter morn
With life and joy reborn.

He hath for every grief
Brought relief.
Each grateful heart His praises
Now raises.
With angels at the manger,
We sing the Savior's birth,
Who wrought release from danger
And peace to man on earth,
Who satisfies our yearning,
And grief to joy is turning
Till we with Him arise
And dwell in Paradise.

The earliest Danish texts were translations from the Latin. Of these the fine translations of the well known hymns, "Stabat Mater Dolorosa", and "Dies Est Laetitia in Ortu Regali", are still used, the latter especially in Grundtvig's beautiful recast "Joy is the Guest of Earth Today".

At a somewhat later period, but still well in advance of the Reformation, the first original Danish hymns must have appeared. Foremost among these, we may mention the splendid hymns, "I Will Now Hymn His Praises Who All My Sin Hath Borne", "On Mary, Virgin Undefiled, Did God Bestow His Favor", and the beautiful advent hymn, "O Bride of Christ, Rejoice", all hymns that breathe a truly Evangelical spirit and testify to a remarkable skill in the use of a language then so sorely neglected.

Best known of all Pre-Reformation songs in Danish is "The Old Christian Day Song"—the name under which it was printed by Hans Thomisson. Of the three manuscript copies of this song, which are preserved in the library of Upsala, Sweden, the oldest is commonly dated at "not later than 1450". The song itself, however, is thought to be much older, dating probably from the latter part of the 14th century. Its place of origin is uncertain, with both Sweden and Denmark contending for the honor. The fact that the text printed by Hans Thomisson is identical, except for minor variations in dialect, with that of the oldest Swedish manuscript proves, at least, that the same version was also current in Danish, and that no conclusion as to its origin can now be drawn from the chance preservation of its text in Sweden. The following translation is based on Grundtvig's splendid revision of the song for the thousand years' festival of the Danish church.[1]

With gladness we hail the blessed day
Now out of the sea ascending,
Illuming the earth upon its way
And cheer to all mortals lending.
God grant that His children everywhere
May prove that the night is ending.

How blest was that wondrous midnight hour
When Jesus was born of Mary!
Then dawned in the East with mighty power
The day that anew shall carry
The light of God's grace to every soul
That still with the Lord would tarry.

Should every creature in song rejoice,
And were every leaflet singing,
They could not His grace and glory voice,
Though earth with their praise were ringing,
For henceforth now shines the Light of Life,
Great joy to all mortals bringing.

Like gold is the blush of morning bright,
When day has from death arisen.
Blest comfort too holds the peaceful night
When skies in the sunset glisten.
So sparkle the eyes of those whose hearts
In peace for God's summons listen.

Then journey we to our fatherland,
Where summer reigns bright and vernal.
Where ready for us God's mansions stand
With thrones in their halls supernal.
So happily there with friends of light
We joy in the peace eternal.

In this imperishable song, Pre-Reformation hymnody reached its highest excellence, an excellence that later hymnody seldom has surpassed. "The Old Christian Day Song" shows, besides, that Northern hymnwriters even "during the time of popery" had caught the true spirit of Evangelical hymnody. Their songs were few, and they were often bandied about like homeless waifs, but they embodied the purest Christian ideals of that day and served in a measure to link the old church with the new.

[1]Other translations:
"O day full of grace, which we behold" by C. Doving in "Hymnal for Church and Home."
"The dawn from on high is on our shore" by S. D. Rodholm in "World of Song".

Chapter Two

Reformation Hymnody

The Danish Reformation began quietly about 1520, and culminated peacefully in the establishment of the Lutheran church as the church of the realm in 1536. The movement was not, as in some other countries, the work of a single outstanding reformer. It came rather as an almost spontaneous uprising of the people under several independent leaders, among whom men like Hans Tausen, Jorgen Sadolin, Claus Mortensen, Hans Spandemager and others merely stand out as the most prominent. And it was probably this very spontaneity which invested the movement with such an irresistible force that within in a few years it was able to overthrow an establishment that had exerted a powerful influence over the country for more than seven centuries.

In this accomplishment Evangelical hymnody played a prominent part. Though the Reformation gained little momentum before 1526, the Papists began as early as 1527, to preach against "the sacrilegious custom of roaring Danish ballads at the church service". As no collection of hymns had then been

published, the hymns thus used must have been circulated privately, showing the eagerness of the people to adopt the new custom. The leaders of the Reformation were quick to recognize the new interest and make use of it in the furtherance of their cause. The first Danish hymnal was published at Malmø in 1528 by Hans Mortensen. It contained ten hymns and a splendid liturgy for the morning service. This small collection proved so popular that it was soon enlarged by the addition of thirty new hymns and appropriate liturgies for the various other services, that were held on the Sabbath day. Independent collections were almost simultaneously published by Hans Tausen, Arvid Petersen and others. And, as these different collections all circulated throughout the country, the result was confusing. At a meeting in Copenhagen of Evangelical leaders from all parts of the country, it was decided to revise the various collections and to combine them into one hymnal. This first common hymnal for the Danish church appeared in 1531, and served as the hymnal of the church till 1544, when it was revised and enlarged by Hans Tausen. Tausen's hymnal was replaced in 1569 by **The Danish Psalmbook**, compiled by Hans Thomisson, a pastor of the Church of Our Lady at Copenhagen, and the ablest translator and hymnwriter of the Reformation period. **Hans Thomisson's Hymnal**—as it was popularly named—was beyond question the finest hymnal of the transition period. It was exceptionally well printed, contained 268 hymns, set to their appropriate tunes, and served through innumerable reprints as the hymnal of the Danish church for more than 150 years.

Den Danske Psalmebog

Thus the Reformation, in less than fifty years, had produced an acceptable hymnal and had established congregational singing as an indispensable part of the church service. The great upheaval had failed, nevertheless, to produce a single hymnwriter of outstanding merit. The leaders in the movement were able men, striving earnestly to satisfy a pressing need. But they were not poets. Their work consisted of passable translations, selections from Pre-Reformation material and a few original hymns by Claus Mortensen, Arvid Petersen, Hans Thomisson and others. It represented an honest effort, but failed to attain greatness. People loved their new hymns, however, and clung to them despite their halting metres and crude style, even when newer and much finer songs were available. But when these at last had gained acceptance, the old hymns gradually disappeared, and very few of them are now included in the Danish hymnal. The Reformation produced a worthy hymnal, but none of the great hymnwriters whose splendid work later won Danish hymnody an honorable place in the church.

Hans Chrestensen Sthen, the first notable hymnwriter of the Danish church, was already on the scene, however, when Hans Thomisson's Hymnal left the printers. He is thought to have been born at Roskilde about 1540; but neither the date nor the place of his birth is now known with certainty. He is reported to have been orphaned at an early age, and subsequently, to have been adopted and reared by the renowned Royal Chamberlain, Christopher Walkendorf. After receiving an excellent education, he became rector of a Latin school at Helsingør, the Elsinore of Shakespeare's **Hamlet**, and later was appointed to a pastorate in the same city. In this latter office he was singularly successful. Lysander, one of his biographers, says of him that he was exceptionally well educated, known as a fine orator and noted as a successful author and translator. His hymns prove that he was also an earnest and warm-hearted Christian. The peoples of Helsingør loved him dearly, and for many years, after he had left their city, continued to "remember him with gifts of love for his long and faithful service among them". In 1583, to the sorrow of his congregation he had accepted a call to Malmø, a city on the eastern shore of the Sound. But in this new field his earnest Evangelical preaching, provoked the resentment of a number of his most influential parishioners, who, motivated by a wish to blacken his name and secure his removal, instigated a suit against him for having mismanaged an inheritance left to his children by his first wife.

The children themselves appeared in his defence, however, and expressed their complete satisfaction with his administration of their property; and the trumped up charge was wholly disproved. But his enemies still wanted to have him removed and, choosing a new method of attack, forwarded a petition to the king in which they claimed that “Master Hans Chrestensen Sthen because of weakness and old age was incompetent to discharge his duties as a pastor”, and asked for his removal to the parishes of Tygelse and Klagstrup. Though the king is reported to have granted the petition, other things seem to have intervened to prevent its execution, and the ill-used pastor appears to have remained at Malmø until his death, the date of which is unknown.

Sthen’s fame as a poet and hymnwriter rests mainly on two thin volumes of poetry. **A Small Handbook, Containing Diverse Prayers and Songs Together with Some Rules for Life, Composed in Verse**, which appeared in 1578, and **A Small Wander Book**, published in 1591. The books contain both a number of translations and some original poems. In some of the latter Sthen readopts the style of the old folk songs with their free metre, native imagery and characteristic refrain. His most successful compositions in this style are his fine morning and evening hymns, one of which is given below.

The gloomy night to morning yields,
So brightly the day is breaking;
The sun ascends over hills and fields,
And birds are with song awaking.
Lord, lend us Thy counsel and speed our days,
The light of Thy grace surround us.

Our grateful thanks to God ascend,
Whose mercy guarded our slumber.
May ever His peace our days attend
And shield us from troubles somber.
Lord, lend us Thy counsel and speed our days,
The light of Thy grace surround us.

Redeem us, Master, from death’s strong hand,
Thy grace from sin us deliver;
Enlighten us till with Thine we stand,
And make us Thy servants ever.
Lord, lend us Thy counsel and speed our days,
The light of Thy grace surround us.

Then shall with praise we seek repose
When day unto night hath yielded,
And safe in Thine arms our eyelids close
To rest by Thy mercy shielded.
Lord, lend us Thy counsel and speed our days,
The light of Thy grace surround us.

Sthen’s hymns all breathe a meek and lowly spirit. They express in the simplest words the faith, hope and fears of a humble, earnest Christian. The following still beloved hymn thus presents a vivid picture of the meek and prayerful spirit of its author.

O Lord, my heart is turning
To Thee with ceaseless yearning
And praying for Thy grace.
Thou art my sole reliance
Against my foes’ defiance;
Be Thou my stay in every place.

I offer a confession
Of my severe transgression;

In me is nothing good.
But, Lord, Thou wilt not leave me
And, like the world, deceive me;
Thou hast redeemed me with Thy blood.

Blest Lord of Life most holy,
Thou wilt the sinner lowly
Not leave in sin and death;
Thine anger wilt not sever
The child from Thee forever
That pleads with Thee for life and breath.

O Holy Spirit, guide me!
With wisdom true provide me;
Help me my cross to bear.
Uphold me in my calling
And, when the night is falling,
Grant me Thy heavenly home to share.

Most widely known of all Sthen's hymns is his beloved "Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest". In its unabbreviated form this hymn contains eight stanzas of which the initial letters spell the words: "Hans Anno"; and it has become known therefore as "Sthen's Name Hymn". The method of thus affixing one's name to a song was frequently practiced by authors for the purpose of impressing people with their erudition. The meek and anxious spirit that pervades this hymn makes it unlikely, however, that Sthen would have employed his undoubted skill as a poet for such a purpose. The hymn is thought to have been written at Malmø at the time its author encountered his most severe trials there. And its intimate personal note makes it likely that he thus ineradicably affixed his name to his hymn in order to indicate its connection with his own faith and experience. "Sthen's Name Hymn" thus should be placed among the numerous great hymns of the church that have been born out of the sorrows and travails of their authors' believing but anxious hearts. The translation given below is from the abbreviated text now used in all Danish hymnals.

Lord Jesus Christ,
My Savior blest,
My refuge and salvation,
I trust in Thee,
Abide with me,
Thy word shall be
My shield and consolation.

I will confide,
Whate'er betide,
In Thy compassion tender.
When grief and stress
My heart oppress,
Thou wilt redress
And constant solace render.

When grief befalls
And woe appalls
Thy loving care enfolds me.
I have no fear
When Thou art near,
My Savior dear;
Thy saving hand upholds me.

Lord, I will be
Alway with Thee
Wherever Thou wilt have me.
Do Thou control

My heart and soul
And make me whole;
Thy grace alone can save me.

Yea, help us, Lord,
With one accord
To love and serve Thee solely,
That henceforth we
May dwell with Thee
Most happily
And see Thy presence holy.

With Sthen the fervid spirit of the Reformation period appears to have spent itself. The following century added nothing to Danish hymnody. Anders Chrestensen Arrebo, Bishop at Tronhjem, and an ardent lover and advocate of a richer cultivation of the Danish language and literature, published a versification of the Psalms of David and a few hymns in 1623. But the Danish church never became a psalm singing church, and his hymns have disappeared. Hans Thomisson's hymnal continued to be printed with occasional additions of new material, most of which possessed no permanent value. But the old hymns entered into the very heart and spirit of the people and held their affection so firmly that even Kingo lost much of his popularity when he attempted to revise them and remove some of their worst poetical and linguistic defects. They were no longer imprinted merely on the pages of a book but in the very heart and affection of a nation.

Thomas Kingo, the Easter Poet of Denmark

Chapter Three

Kingo's Childhood and Youth

Thomas Kingo, the first of the great Danish hymnwriters, grew forth as a root out of dry ground. There was nothing in the religious and secular life of the times to foreshadow the appearance of one of the great hymnwriters, not only of Denmark but of the world.

The latter part of the 16th and the first half of the 17th centuries mark a rather barren period in the religious and cultural life of Denmark. The spiritual ferment of the Reformation had subsided into a staid and uniform Lutheran orthodoxy. Jesper Brochman, a bishop of Sjælland and the most famous theologian of that age, praised king Christian IV for "the zeal with which from the beginning of his reign he had exerted himself to make all his subjects think and talk alike about divine things". That the foremost leader of the church thus should recommend an effort to impose uniformity upon the church by governmental action proves to what extent church life had become stagnant. Nor did such secular culture as there was present a better picture. The Reformation had uprooted much of the cultural life that had grown up during the long period of Catholic supremacy, but had produced no adequate substitute. Even the once refreshing springs of the folk-sings had dried up. Writers were laboriously endeavoring to master the newer and more artistic forms of poetry introduced from other countries, but when the forms had been achieved the spirit had often fled, leaving only an empty shell. Of all that was written during these years only one song of any consequence, "Denmark's Lovely Fields and Meadows", has survived.

Against this bleak background the work of Kingo stands out as an amazing achievement. Leaping all the impediments of an undeveloped language and an equally undeveloped form, Danish poetry by one miraculous sweep attained a perfection which later ages have scarcely surpassed.

Thomas Kingo

Thomas Kingo

Of this accomplishment, Grundtvig wrote two hundred years later: "Kingo's hymns represent not only the greatest miracle of the 17th century but such an exceptional phenomenon in the realm of poetry that it is explainable only by the fates who in their wisdom preserved the seed of an Easter Lily for a thousand years, and then returned it across the sea that it might flower in its original soil". Kingo's family on the paternal side had immigrated to Denmark from that part of Scotland which once had been settled by the poetic Northern sea rovers, and Grundtvig thus conceives the poetic genius of Kingo to be a revival of an ancestral gift, brought about by the return of his family to its original home and a new infusion of pure Northern blood. The conception, like so much that Grundtvig wrote is at least ingenious, and it is recommended by the fact that Kingo's poetry does convey a spirit of robust realism that is far more characteristic of the age of the Vikings than of his own.

Thomas Kingo, the grandfather of the poet, immigrated from Crail, Scotland, to Denmark about 1590, and settled at Helsingør, Sjælland, where he worked as a tapestry weaver. He seems to have attained a

position of some prominence, and it is related that King James IV of Scotland, during a visit to Helsingør, lodged at his home. His son, Hans Thomeson Kingo, who was about two years old when the family arrived in Denmark, does not appear to have prospered as well as his father. He learned the trade of linen and damask weaving, and established a modest business of his own at Slangerup, a town in the northern part of Sjælland and close to the famous royal castle of Frederiksborg. At the age of thirty-eight he married a young peasant girl, Karen Sørendatter, and built a modest but eminently respectable home. In this home, Thomas Kingo, the future hymnwriter, was born December 15, 1634.

It was an unusually cold and unfriendly world that greeted the advent of the coming poet. The winter of his birth was long remembered as one of the hardest ever experienced in Denmark. The country's unsuccessful participation in the Thirty Year's War had brought on a depression that threatened its very existence as a nation; and a terrible pestilence followed by new wars increased and prolonged the general misery, making the years of Kingo's childhood and youth one of the darkest periods in Danish history.

But although these conditions brought sorrow and ruin to thousands, even among the wealthy, the humble home of the Kingos somehow managed to survive. Beneath its roof industry and frugality worked hand in hand with piety and mutual love to brave the storms that wrecked so many and apparently far stronger establishments. Kingo always speaks with the greatest respect and gratitude of his "poor but honest parents". In a poetic description of his childhood years he vividly recalls their indulgent kindness to him.

I took my pilgrim staff in hand
Ere I attempted talking;
I had scarce left my swaddling-band
Before they set me walking.
They coached me onward with a smile
And suited me when tearful.
One step was farther than a mile,
For I was small and fearful.

But discipline was not forgotten. Parents in those days usually kept the rod close to the apple, often too close. And Kingo's parents, despite their kindness, made no exception to the rule. He was a lively, headstrong boy in need of a firm hand, and the hand was not wanting.

As a child my daily bread
I with rod and penance had,

he wrote later, adding that the fruits of that chastisement are now sweet to him. Nor do his parents ever appear to have treated him with the cold, almost loveless austerity that so many elders frequently felt it their duty to adopt toward their children. Their discipline was tempered by kindness and an earnest Christian faith. Although Hans Kingo seems to some extent to have been influenced by the strict Presbyterianism of his Scotch forebears, he does not appear, like so many followers of that stern faith, to have taught his children to believe in God as the strict judge rather than as the loving Father of Jesus Christ. In his later years the son at least gives us an attractive picture of his childhood faith:

I gratefully remember
God's loving care for me
Since from my nursery chamber
I toddled fearfully.
I lived contented in His care
And trusted in His children's prayer.

These bright years of his happy childhood were somewhat darkened, however, when, at the age of six, he entered the Danish and, two years later, the Latin school of his home town. Nothing could be more unsuited for a child of tender years than the average school of those days. The curriculum was meager, the teaching poor and the discipline cruel. Every day saw its whipping scenes. For a day's unexplained absence the punishment for the smaller boys was three lashes on their bare seats and for the larger an equal number on their bare backs. For graver offences up to twenty lashes might be administered. On entering the Latin school every boy had to adopt a new language. Only Latin could be spoken within its classical confines; and woe be to the tike who so far forgot himself as to speak a word in the native tongue anywhere upon the school premises. The only way anyone, discovered to have perpetrated such a crime, could escape the severest punishment was to report another culprit guilty of the same offense. Under such conditions one cannot wonder that Kingo complains:

> The daily round from home to school
> Was often hard and weary.
> It did my youthful ardour cool
> And made my childhood dreary.

At the age of fifteen Kingo, for reasons now unknown, was transferred from the school of his home town to that at the neighboring city of Hillerød. Here, on account of his outstanding ability, he was accepted into the home of his new rector, Albert Bartholin, a young man of distinguished family and conspicuous personal endowments.

Although the school at Hillerød was larger, it probably was not much better than that at Slangerup; but the close association of the humble weaver's son with his distinguished rector and his refined family, no doubt, was a distinct advantage to him. The location of Hillerød on the shores of the idyllic Frederiksborg Lake and close to the magnificent castle of the same name is one of the loveliest in Denmark. The castle had recently been rebuilt, and presented, together with its lovely surroundings, a most entrancing spectacle. Its famous builder, Christian IV, had just gone the way of all flesh; but the new king, Frederik, known for his fondness for royal pomp, frequently resided at the castle together with his court, and thus Kingo must often have enjoyed the opportunity to see both the king and the outstanding men of his government.

It is not unlikely that this near view of the beauty and splendor of his country, the finest that Denmark had to offer, served to awaken in Kingo that ardent love for all things Danish for which he is noticed. While still at Hillerød he, at any rate, commenced a comprehensive study of Danish literature, a most unusual thing for a young student to do at a time when German was the common language of all the upper classes and Danish was despised as the speech of traders and peasants. As neither his school nor the general sentiment of the intellectual classes did anything to encourage interest in native culture, some other influence must have aroused in the young Kingo what one of his early biographers calls "his peculiar inclination for his native tongue and Danish poetry". A few patriotic and forward looking men, it is true, had risen above the general indifference and sought to inspire a greater interest in the use and cultivation of the Danish language; but this work was still very much in its infancy, and it is not likely that the young Kingo knew much about it.

He graduated from Hillerød in the spring of 1654, and enrolled at the university of Copenhagen on May 6 of the same year. But a terrific outbreak of the plague forced the university to close on May 30, and Kingo returned to his home. The scourge raged for about eight months, carrying away one third of the city's population, and it was winter before Kingo returned to the school and enrolled in the department of theology. The rules of the university required each student, at the beginning of his course, to choose a

preceptor, a sort of guardian who should direct his charge in his studies and counsel him in his personal life and conduct. For this very important position Kingo wisely chose one of the most distinguished and respected teachers at the university, Prof. Bartholin, a brother of his former rector. Professor Bartholin was not only a learned man, known for his years of travel and study in foreign parts, but he was also a man of rare personal gifts and sincere piety. In his younger days he had spent four years at the castle of Rosenholm where the godly and scholarly nobleman, Holger Rosenkrans, then gathered groups of young nobles about him for study and meditation. Rosenkrans was a close friend of John Arndt, a leader in the early Pietist movement in Germany, to which the young Bartholin under his influence became deeply attached. Nor had this attachment lessened with the years. And Bartholin's influence upon Kingo was so strong that the latter, when entering upon his own work, lost no time in showing his adherence to the Arndt-Rosenkrans view of Christianity.

Meanwhile he applied himself diligently to his work at the university. Like other disciplines the study of theology at that time was affected by a considerable portion of dry-rust. Orthodoxy ruled the cathedra. With that as a weapon, the student must be trained to meet all the wiles of the devil and perversions of the heretics. Its greatest Danish exponent, Jesper Brochman, had just passed to his reward, but his monumental work, **The System of Danish Theology**, remained after him, and continued to serve as an authoritative textbook for many years to come. Though dry and devoted to hairsplitting as orthodoxy no doubt was, it probably was not quite as lifeless as later generations represent it to have been. Kingo is often named "The Singer of Orthodoxy", yet no one can read his soul-stirring hymns with their profound sense of sin and grace without feeling that he, at least, possessed a deeper knowledge of Christianity than a mere dogmatic training could give him.

Kingo's last months at the university were disturbed by a new war with Sweden that for a while threatened the independent existence of the country, a threat which was averted only by the ceding of some of its finest provinces. During these stirring events, Kingo had to prepare for his final examinations which he passed with highest honors in the spring of 1658.

Thus with considerable deprivation and sacrifice, the humble weaver's son had attained his membership in the academic world, an unusual accomplishment for a man of his standing in those days. His good parents had reason to be proud of their promising and well educated son who now, after his many years of study, returned to the parental home. His stay there was short, however, for he obtained almost immediate employment as a private tutor, first with the family of Jørgen Sørensen, the overseer at Frederiksborg castle, and later, with the Baroness Lena Rud of Vedby Manor, a position which to an impecunious but ambitious young man like Kingo must have appeared especially desirable. Lena Rud belonged to what at that time was one of the wealthiest and most influential families in the country. Many of her relatives occupied neighboring estates, a circumstance which enabled Kingo to become personally acquainted with a number of them; and with one of them, the worthy Karsten Atke, he soon formed a close and lasting friendship. He also appears to have made a very favorable impression upon his influential patrons and, despite his subordinate position, to have become something of a social leader, especially among the younger members of the group.

Meanwhile the country once again had been plunged into a desperate struggle. The Swedish king, Gustav X, soon repented of the peace he had made when the whole country was apparently at his mercy, and renewed the war in the hope of affixing the Danish crown to his own. This hope vanished in the desperate battle of Copenhagen in 1659, where the Swedish army suffered a decisive defeat by the hand of an aroused citizenry. But detachments of the defeated army still occupied large sections of the

country districts where they, like all armies of that day, robbed, pillaged and murdered at will, driving thousands of people away from their homes and forcing them to roam homeless and destitute through the wasted countryside. Acts of robbery and violence belonged to the order of the day. Even Kingo received a bullet through his mouth in a fight with a Swedish dragoon, whom he boldly attempted to stop from stealing one of his employer's horses. When the country finally emerged from the conflict, her resources were depleted, her trade destroyed, and large sections of her country districts laid waste, losses which it required years for her to regain. But youth must be served. Despite the gravity and hardships of the day, the young people from Vedby managed to have their parties and other youthful diversions. And at these, Kingo soon became a welcome and valued guest. His attractive personality, sprightly humor and distinct social gifts caused his highly placed friends to accept him with delight.

This popularity, if he had cared to exploit it, might have carried him far. In those days the usual road to fame and fortune for an obscure young man was to attach himself to some wealthy patron and acquire a position through him. With the aid of his wealthy friends Kingo could easily enough have obtained employment as a companion to some young noble going abroad for travel and study. It came, therefore, as a surprise to all when he accepted a call as assistant to the Reverend Jacobsen Worm at Kirkehelsinge, a country parish a few miles from Vedby. The position was so far short of what a young man of Kingo's undoubted ability and excellent connections might have obtained, that one may well ask for his motive in accepting it. And although Kingo himself has left no direct explanation of his action, the following verses, which he is thought to have written about this time, may furnish a key.

Wherever in the world I went
Upon my work or pleasure bent,
I everywhere my Lord did find,
He so absorbed my heart and mind
That I His blessed image traced
In everything I saw or faced.

My thoughts on heaven ever dwelt,
For earth I but aversion felt.
My heart exalted Jesus' name,
His kingdom was my constant theme;
My prayer was, by repentance true,
All carnal passions to subdue.

It is understandable, at least, that a young man with such sentiments should forego the prospect of worldly honor for a chance to serve his Master.

Kingo was ordained in the Church of Our Lady at Copenhagen in September, 1661, and was installed in his new office a few weeks later. The seven years that he spent in the obscure parish were, no doubt, among the most fruitful years of Kingo's life, proving the truth of the old adage that it is better that a man should confer honor on his position than that the position should confer honor upon him. His fiery, forceful eloquence made him known as an exceptionally able and earnest pastor, and his literary work established his fame as one of the foremost Danish poets of his day.

While still at Vedby, Kingo had written a number of poems which, widely circulated in manuscripts, had gained him a local fame. But he now published a number of new works that attained nation-wide recognition. These latter works compare well with the best poetry of the period and contain passages that still may be read with interest. The style is vigorous, the imagery striking and at times beautiful, but the Danish language was too little cultivated and contemporary taste too uncertain to sustain a work of consistent excellence. Most successful of Kingo's early poems are "Karsten Atke's Farewell to Lion

County", a truly felt and finely expressed greeting to his friends, the Atkes, on their departure from their former home, and "Chrysillis", a lovesong, written in a popular French style that was then very much admired in Denmark. Both poems contain parts that are surprisingly fine, and they attained an immense popularity. But although Kingo throughout his life continued to write secular poetry that won him the highest praise, that part of his work is now well nigh forgotten. It is truly interesting to compare the faded beauty of his secular poems with the perennial freshness of his hymns.

It was inevitable that Kingo, with his high ambitions and undoubted ability should desire a larger field of labor. His salary was so small that he had to live in the home of his employer, a circumstance that for various reasons was not always pleasant. Pastor Worm had married thrice and had a large family of children of all ages from a babe in arms to a son at the university. This son, Jacob Worm, was a brilliant but irascible and excessively proud youth only a few years younger than Kingo. From what we know about him in later years, it is likely that Kingo's contact with him during his vacations at home must have proved exceedingly trying. The bitter enmity that later existed between the two men probably had its inception at this time. In 1666, Kingo, therefore, applied for a waiting appointment to his home church at Slangerup, where the pastor was growing old and, in the course of nature, could be expected ere long to be called to his reward. The application was granted, and when the pastor did die two years later, Kingo at once was installed as his successor.

Slangerup was only a small city, but it had a new and very beautiful church, which still stands almost unchanged. One may still sit in the same pews and see the same elaborately carved pulpit and altar which graced its lofty chancel during the pastorate of the great hymnwriter. A beautiful chandelier, which he donated and inscribed, still adorns the arched nave. In this splendid sanctuary it must have been inspiring to listen to the known eloquence of its most famous pastor as he preached the gospel or, with his fine musical voice, chanted the liturgy before the altar. The church was always well attended when Kingo conducted the service. People soon recognized his exceptional ability and showed their appreciation of his devoted ministry. The position of a pastor was then much more prominent than it is now. He was the official head of numerous enterprises, both spiritual and civic, and the social equal of the best people in the community. With many people the custom of calling him "Father" was then by no means an empty phrase. Parishioners sought their pastor and accepted his counsel in numerous affairs that are now considered to be outside of his domain. In view of Kingo's humble antecedents, a position of such prominence might well have proved difficult to maintain among a people that knew his former station. But of such difficulties the record of his pastorate gives no indication. He was, it appears, one exception to the rule that a prophet is not respected in his own country.

When he moved to Slangerup, Kingo was still unmarried. But about two years later he married the widow of his former superior, Pastor Worm, becoming at once the head of a large family consisting of the children of his wife and those of her first husband by his previous marriage. It was a serious responsibility to assume, both morally and financially. The parish was quite large, but his income was considerably reduced by the payment of a pension to the widow of the former pastor and the salary to an assistant. With such a drain on his income and with a large family to support, Kingo's economic circumstances must have been strained. But he was happy with his wife and proved himself a kind and conscientious stepfather to her children who, even after their maturity, maintained a close relationship with him.

Kingo's happiness proved, however, to be but a brief interlude to a period of intense sorrows and disappointments. His wife died less than a year after their marriage; his father, whom he loved and

revered, passed away the same year; and the conduct of his stepson, the formerly mentioned Jacob Worm, caused him bitter trouble and humiliation. The bright prospect of this brilliant but erratic youth had quickly faded. After a number of failures, he had been forced to accept a position as rector of the small and insignificant Latin school at Slangerup, thus coming under the immediate authority of Kingo, who, as pastor, supervised the educational institutions of the parish. Worm always seems to have thought of Kingo as a former assistant to his father, and his position as an inferior to a former inferior in his own home, therefore, bitterly wounded his pride. Seeking an outlet for his bitterness, he wrote a number of extremely abusive poems about his stepfather and circulated them among the people of the parish. This unwarranted abuse aroused the anger of Kingo and provoked him to answer in kind. The ensuing battle of vituperation and name-calling brought no honor to either side. Worm's conduct toward his superior, the man who was unselfishly caring for his minor sisters and brothers, deserves nothing but condemnation; but it is painful, nevertheless, to behold the great hymnwriter himself employing the abusive language of his worthless opponent. The times were violent, however, and Kingo possessed his share of their temper. Kingo's last act in this drama between himself and his stepson throws a somewhat softening light upon his conduct. Embittered by persistent failures, Worm continued to pour out his bitterness not only upon his stepfather, but upon other and much higher placed persons until at last he was caught and sentenced to die on the gallows for "having written and circulated grossly defamatory poems about the royal family". In this extremity, he appealed to Kingo, who successfully exerted his then great influence to have the sentence commuted to banishment for life to the Danish colony in India.

Chapter Four

Kingo, the Hymnwriter

Kingo's first hymns appeared shortly before Christmas, 1673, in a small volume entitled **Spiritual Song-Choir, Part I**. The book contained fifteen morning and evening hymns and seven paraphrases of the psalms. Later editions were enlarged by seven "Morning and Evening Sighs" short hymns that belong to the very best in the collection.

In a foreword addressed to the king, Kingo states that "he has written these hymns with the hope that they might serve to edify his fellow Christians, advance the teaching of the Gospel and benefit the royal household at those daily devotions which it is the duty of every Christian home to practice". He prays, therefore, he continues, that "the king will graciously bestow the same approval upon this work that he has so kindly given to his previous efforts, and thereby encourage him to continue his endeavor until the Danes shall possess a hymnody that they have neither begged nor borrowed from other nations. For the Danish spirit," he concludes, "is assuredly neither so weak nor so poor that it cannot fly as high toward heaven as that of other peoples without being borne upon strange and foreign wings".

Spiritual Song-Choir, Part I

Commenting on the content of the book, Kingo further explains that he expects sensitive readers will discover imperfections in his work which he himself has failed to see, and that it would please him to have such blemishes called to his attention so that they might be corrected in future issues. His choice of tunes will, he fears, provoke criticism. He has set a number of hymns to the melodies of popular songs in order that "those, who for the sake of its tune, now gladly listen to a song of Sodom may, if they be Christians, with the more pleasure use it with a hymn about Zion. By examining the work of other hymnwriters possible critics might assure themselves, however, that he had in this matter only followed

their example.” But Kingo need not have apologized for his choice of tunes, for they were on the whole fine and were received without objection.

It would be difficult to overstate the enthusiasm with which Kingo’s hymns were received. Within a few years they were printed in numerous editions and translated into several foreign languages. Their enthusiastic reception was well deserved. Viewed against the background of literary mediocrity that characterized the period, Kingo’s hymns stand out with amazing perfection. Danish hymnody contained nothing that could compare with them, and other countries, as far as morning and evening hymns were concerned, were in the same position. Paul Gerhardt’s fine hymn, “Now Rests Beneath Night’s Shadow”, which was written twenty years earlier, had been ridiculed into disuse; Ken’s famous morning hymn dates from twenty years later; and none of these are as fine as the best of Kingo’s.

As might be expected, the hymns are not all of the same merit. Some of them are exceedingly fine; others show the defects of an imperfectly developed language and a deficient literary taste. In the matter of style and form the author had almost nothing to guide him. It is not surprising, therefore, that his work shows crudities which no present day writer would commit, but that it should contain so much that is truly beautiful, even when measured by the standards of today.

Kingo had the true poet’s ability to see things poetically. To him the rays of the rising sun were not only shining but “laughing on the roof” of his home. His imagery is rich and skillfully applied. Many of his hymns abound in striking similes. Their outstanding characteristic, however, is a distinctive, forceful realism. Kingo, when he chose to do so, could touch the lyre with enhancing gentleness, but he preferred the strong note and searched always for the most graphic expression, sometimes too graphic, as when he speaks of the “frothing wrath of God” and “the oozy slime of sin”. Yet it is this trait of robust reality that invests his hymns with a large part of their enduring merit. “When Kingo sings of God, one feels as though He were right there with him”, one of his commentators exclaims. Nor is that realism a mere literary pose. Like most great hymns, his best hymns are reflections of his own experiences. Kingo never attained a state of saintly serenity. Whatever peace he found was gained only through a continuous struggle with his own fiery and passionate nature. Few hymns convey a more vivid impression of a believing, struggling soul than Kingo’s.

His morning hymns are among his best. He loved light and gloried in the birth of each new day. The sun is his favorite symbol. Its rising signifies to him the final triumph of life over death, and the new day is a token thereof. It sounds a joyful call to wake and resume life anew.

> “Awake, my soul, the sun is risen,
> Upon my roof its rays now laugh,—”

Every Christian should rejoice in the newborn day and thank God for it:

> Break now forth in Jesus’ name,
> Blessed morn, in all thy splendor!
> I will sweetest music render
> And thy wondrous gifts proclaim.
> All my spirit with rejoicing
> Thanks the Lord for rest and care
> And, His grace and goodness voicing,
> Wings its way to Him in prayer.

But the commencing day also calls for consecration lest its hours be wasted and its opportunities lost:

Grant me, Lord, that on this day
Now with light and grace beginning,
I shall not submit to sinning
Nor Thy word and way betray.
Blessed Jesus, hover ever
Over me, my Sun and Shield,
That I firm may stand and never
Unto sin and Satan yield.

And the passing hours must admonish the Christian to work while it is day and to prepare for the evening that is coming:

Let each fleeting hour of grace
And the chiming bells remind me
That to earth I must not bind me
But Thy life and gifts embrace.
And when dawns my final morrow,
Let me go to Thee for aye,
Let my sin and care and sorrow
With my dust be put away.

Finest of all Kingo's morning hymns is the splendid "The Sun Arises Now in Light and Glory". This hymn presents all the finest traits of Kingo's poetry, its vivid imagery, forceful style and robust faith. The following translation is by the Rev. P. C. Paulsen.

The sun arises now
In light and glory
And gilds the rugged brow
Of mountains hoary.
Rejoice, my soul, and lift
Thy voice in singing
To God from earth below,
Thy song with joy aglow
And praises ringing.

As countless as the sand
And beyond measure,
As wide as sea and land
So is the treasure
Of grace which God each day
Anew bestoweth
And which, like pouring rain,
Into my soul again
Each morning floweth.

Preserve my soul today
From sin and blindness;
Surround me on my way
With loving kindness.
Embue my heart, O Lord,
With joy from heaven;
I then shall ask no more
Than what Thou hast of yore
In wisdom given.

Thou knowest best my needs,
My sighs Thou heedest,
Thy hand Thy children leads,
Thine own Thou feedest.
What should I more desire,
With Thee deciding

The course that I must take,
Than follow in the wake
Where Thou art guiding.

Evening naturally inspires a different sentiment than morning. The rising sun calls for activity, the setting sun for reflection. As the sun sets, as work ceases and the busy day merges into the quiet night the soul begins to take account of its gains and losses, its assets and liabilities. The dying day also conveys a sense of insecurity, of approaching death and the need for pardon and protection. All these sentiments, so different from the hopes and prospects of the morning, are wonderfully portrayed in Kingo's evening hymns, as for instance:

Vanish now all sinful dreaming,
Let the joy from heaven streaming
Occupy my soul and mind.
Watch, my spirit, and prepare thee,
Lest the cunning foe ensnare thee
When repose hath made thee blind.

Sleep now in God's care appeasing.
While the noise of day is ceasing,
Lean upon thy Savior's breast.
He will guard thee through the somber
Night and make thy final slumber
Quiet, peaceful, happy, blest.

In the last line with its crescendo of peace and happiness one almost sees the night merge into the final rest.

Among his evening hymns now available in English, the following, perhaps, is the best known.

Softly now the day is ending,
Night o'er hill and vale descending,
I will kneel before Thee, Lord.
Unto Thee my thanks I render
That Thou didst in mercy tender
Life and peace to me accord.

May Thy church Thy peace inherit,
Guide our leaders by Thy spirit,
Grant our country strength and peace.
To the straying, sad and dreary,
To each Christian faint or weary
Grant Thou solace and surcease.

Keep me, Jesus, while I slumber!
From my perils without number,
Shield me, Master, in Thy might,
That, released from sin and sorrow,
I may sing this song tomorrow:
Jesus was my Sun this night.

The publication of these hymns firmly established Kingo's reputation as the foremost poet of his country. Expressions of appreciation poured in upon him from high and low. The king, to whom the hymns were dedicated, so greatly appreciated the gift that, only three years later, he called their otherwise obscure author to become bishop of Fyn, one of the largest and most important dioceses of the country.

Kingo was only forty-two years old when he assumed his new position. His quick elevation from an obscure parish to one of the highest offices within the church might well have strained the abilities of an older and more experienced man. But there can be no doubt that he filled his high position with signal ability. He was both able and earnest, both practical and spiritual. His diocese prospered under his care and his work as a bishop, aside from his renown as a poet, was outstanding enough to give him an enviable reputation in his own generation.

But since his permanent fame and importance rest upon his achievement as a hymnwriter, his appointment as bishop probably must be counted as a loss, both to himself and to the church. His new responsibilities and the multifarious duties of his high office naturally left him less time for other pursuits. He traveled, visited and preached almost continuously throughout his large charge, and it appears like a miracle that under these circumstances, he still found time to write hymns. But in 1684, only two years after his consecration as bishop, he published the second part of **Spiritual Song-Choir**.

This book bears a dedication to the queen, Charlotte Amalia. She was German by birth and a pious, able and distinguished woman in her own right. Kingo praises her especially for her effort to learn and speak the Danish language. In this respect, he declares, “Her Majesty put many to shame who have eaten the king’s bread for thirty years without learning to speak thirty words of Danish, because they hold it to be a homespun language, too coarse for their silky tongues”.

Spiritual Song-Choir, Part II contains twenty hymns and seventeen “sighs”, thus outwardly following the arrangement of Part I. But the content is very different. The hymns are songs of penitence, repentance and faith. They show mastery of form, a wealth of imagery, a facility for concentrated expression and a range of sentiment from stark despair to the most confident trust that is, perhaps, unequalled in Danish poetry. It is an embattled soul that speaks through these hymns, a soul that has faced the abyss and clung heroically, but not always successfully, to the pinnacle of faith. One feels that the man who penned the following lines has not merely imagined the nearness of the pit but felt himself standing on the very brink of it.

Mountains of transgressions press
On my evil burdened shoulders,
Guilt bestrews my path with boulders,
Sin pollutes both soul and flesh,
Law and justice are proclaiming
Judgment on my guilty head,
Hell’s eternal fires are flaming,
Filling all my soul with dread.

Of an even darker mood is the great hymn: “Sorrow and Unhappiness”, with the searching verse:

Is there then no one that cares,
Is there no redress for sorrow,
Is there no relief to borrow,
Is there no response to prayers,
Is the fount of mercy closing,
Is the soul to bondage sold,
Is the Lord my plea opposing,
Is His heart to sinners cold?

The poet answers his questions in the following stanzas by assuring himself that the Sun of God’s grace can and will pierce even his “cloud of despair”, and that he must wait therefore in quietness and trust:

O my soul, be quiet then!
Jesus will redress thy sadness,
Jesus will restore thy gladness,
Jesus will thy help remain.
Jesus is thy solace ever
And thy hope in life and death;
Jesus will thee soon deliver;
Thou must cling to that blest faith.

The uncertainty of life and its fortunes furnished a favored theme for many of his hymns, as for instance in the splendid—

Sorrow and gladness oft journey together,
Trouble and happiness swift company keep;
Luck and misfortune change like the weather;
Sunshine and clouds quickly vary their sweep.

which is, poetically at least, one of his finest compositions. The poet's own career so far had been one of continuous and rather swift advancement. But there was, if not in his own outward fortune, then in the fortunes of other notables of his day, enough to remind him of the inconstancy of worldly honor and glory. Only a few months before the publication of his hymns, Leonora Christine Ulfeldt, the once beautiful, admired and talented daughter of Christian IV, had been released from twenty-two years of imprisonment in a bare and almost lightless prison-cell; Peder Griffenfeldt, a man who from humble antecedents swiftly had risen to become the most powerful man in the kingdom, had been stript even more swiftly of all his honors and thrown into a dismal prison on a rocky isle by the coast of Norway; and there were other and well known instances of swift changes in the fortunes of men in those days when they were subject not only to the ordinary vicissitudes of human existence but to the fickle humor of an absolute monarch. It is, therefore, as though Kingo at the height of his own fortune would remind himself of the quickness with which it might vanish, of the evanescense and vanity of all worldly glory. That idea is strikingly emphasized in the following famous hymn:

Vain world, fare thee well!
I purpose no more in thy bondage to dwell;
The burdens which thou hast enticed me to bear,
I cast now aside with their troubles and care.
I spurn thy allurements, which tempt and appall;
'Tis vanity all!

What merit and worth
Hath all that the world puts so temptingly forth!
It is naught but bubbles and tinctured glass,
Loud clamoring cymbals and shrill sounding brass.
What are their seductions which lure and enthrall;
'Tis vanity all!

O honor and gold,
Vain idols which many with worship behold!
False are your affluence, your pleasure and fame;
Your wages are envy, deception and shame,
Your garlands soon wither, your kingdom shall fall;
'Tis vanity all!

O carnal desire,
Thou tempting, consuming and treacherous fire,
That catches like tinder and scorches like flame,
Consigning the victim to sorrow and shame,
Thy honeyest potion is wormwood and gall;
'Tis vanity all!

Then, fare thee farewell,
Vain world, with thy tempting and glamorous spell!
Thy wiles shall no longer my spirit enslave,
Thy splendor and joy are designed for the grave
I yearn for the solace from sorrows and harm
Of Abraham's arm!

There shall all my years
I bloom like the lily when summer appears;
There day is not ruled by the course of the sun
Nor night by the silvery light of the moon;
Lord Jesus shall shine as my sun every day
In heaven for aye.

This is an eloquent farewell, clothed in all the expressive wealth of language and imagery of which Kingo was such a master. One cannot repress the feeling, however, that it presents a challenge rather than a farewell. A man that so passionately avows his repudiation of the world must have felt its attraction, its power to tempt and enthrall. He fights against it; the spirit contends with the flesh, but the fight is not easy. And it is in part this very human trait in Kingo that endears his song to us. What Christian does not recognize some of his own experiences in the following characteristic song:

Ever trouble walks beside me,[2]
Ever God with grace provides me,
Ever have I fear and grief,
Ever Jesus brings relief.

Ever sin my heart accuses,
Ever Jesus help induces,
Ever am I weighed with care,
Ever full of praise and prayer.

So is joy by grief attended,
Fortune with misfortune blended;
Blessings mixed with grief and strife
Is the measure of my life.

But, O Jesus, I am crying:
Help that faith, on Thee relying,
Over sin and grief alway
Shall prevail and gain the day.

Some statements in this hymn have frequently been criticized as contradictory, for how can one be "always" full of care and "always" full of praise and prayer? The terms cancel each other. But are not such contradictions expressive of life itself? Few—if any—are wholly one thing or wholly another. People are complex. Their joys struggle with their sorrows, their most earnest faith with their doubts and fears. It brings Kingo nearer to us to know that he shared that struggle. His songs have appealed to millions because they are both so spiritual and so human. How expressive of human need and Christian trust are not the following brief lines:

Lord, though I may
The whole long day
Find no relief from sorrow,
Yea, should the night
Afford no light
To ease my plight—
Thou comest on the morrow.

[2] Another translation:

"Ever is a peril near me" by C. Doving in "Hymnal for Church and Home".

Chapter Five

Kingo's Psalmbook

After the publication of **Spiritual Song-Choir II**, Kingo stood at the very height of his fame. His hymns were sung everywhere, and nobles and commoners vied with each other in chanting his praises. But a much more difficult task now awaited him—that of preparing a new hymnal.

Hans Thomisson's hymnal had become antiquated after serving the church for nearly one hundred and twenty-five years. It had served its purpose well. Its hymns had been sung by high and low until they had entered into the thoughts and conscience of all. A changing language and a fast developing literary taste long ago had shown their need for revision; but the people so far had opposed all attempts to change their beloved old songs. Their defects by now had become so conspicuous, however, that even the more conservative admitted the desirability of at least a limited revision. And the only man for the undertaking of such a task was, of course, Kingo.

In March, 1683, King Christian V, therefore, commissioned Thomas Kingo to prepare and publish a new church hymnal for the kingdom of Denmark and Norway. The carefully prepared instructions of his commission directed him to eliminate undesirable hymns; to revise antiquated rhymes and expressions; to adopt at least two new hymns by himself or another for every pericope and epistle of the church year, but under no circumstances to make any changes in Luther's hymns that would alter their meaning.

Kingo would undoubtedly have saved himself a great deal of disappointment if he had conscientiously followed his instructions. But the draft of the first half of the hymnal, which was sent to the king six years later, showed that, intentionally or otherwise, he had ignored them almost completely. The draft contained 267 hymns of which 137 were his own and the remainder those of various authors, both old and new. Though Kingo might reasonably have been criticized for adopting such a proportionally large number of his own compositions, it was not, however, his selection of new hymns but his treatment of the old hymns that provoked the greatest opposition. For he had not contented himself with merely revising the latter but in many instances had rewritten them so completely that they were unrecognizable. And it mattered not that the new texts were on the whole much finer than the old, for people were not yet ready to relinquish these. The opposition grew so strong that the king, though he had already approved the proposed hymnal, a few weeks later revoked not only his approval but Kingo's commission.

This summary action came as an almost stunning blow to Kingo, affecting seriously both his pride and his finances. On the strength of the king's approval, he had already bought a printing press, acquired large quantities of material and printed a large edition of the book. And these investments, which represented a large part of his private fortune, were now apparently lost. It helped but little that the king, in order to salve the wound he had inflicted upon one of his most distinguished subjects, elevated him to the nobility, for the hurt was too deep to be healed by a mere gesture.

One cannot deny, however, that the monarch had serious reason for his action. Not only had Kingo violated his instructions but he had planned a book that hardly could have proved satisfactory. It would have been both too large and too expensive for common use. He himself, on the other hand, had reason to complain that he had not been consulted before the work, on which he had spent so much of his time

and substance, was summarily rejected. No doubt the king had acted with unseemly haste and lack of consideration.

The work was now held in abeyance for a few years. But the need for a new hymnal was too pressing to be permanently ignored. The king, therefore, appointed Søren Jonasson, a provost at the cathedral of Roskilde, to undertake the work. Jonasson was known as an excellent translator of German hymns, and the choice appeared reasonable. He worked fast and in less than two years was able to present a draft of his work. This contained a well balanced selection of the old hymns and about twenty new hymns by himself and various German authors, but not a single hymn by Kingo. The omission no doubt reflects the envy that the poet's quick rise to fame had stirred up against him in certain influential circles. His enemies, however, had overshot their mark. Even the king realized that it would be impossible at this time to publish a hymnal that ignored the work of the country's greatest hymnwriter. And so Jonasson's work promptly shared the fate of his predecessor's.

The troublesome problem now rested again for a few years until it was revived by the zealous efforts of the king's chaplain, Peter Jespersen, a close friend of the Norwegian hymnwriter, Peter Dass and himself a native of the northern country.

A committee was appointed to prepare and publish a new hymnal "that should give due recognition" to the work of Kingo. Although it was not specifically directed to do so, the committee proved its good will toward the harshly treated poet by entering into correspondence with him and asking him to forward the material he already possessed, and to write the additional hymns that might be needed to complete the hymnal. With this request Kingo gladly complied, hoping that thus after all the greater part of his work would be put to use. In this, however, he was disappointed. When the hymnal finally appeared it contained 297 hymns of which only 85 were by Kingo. This represented, it is true, a great change from Jonasson's proposal, but when it is remembered that the first half of the work, proposed by himself, contained 136 of his own hymns, and that he had written an additional number by the request of the committee, it will be seen that even now less than half of his hymns found a place in the hymnal.

Aside from this deplorable loss, it must be conceded that the committee had done an excellent work and that its hymnal was much better suited for general use than Kingo's proposed hymnal would have been. The committee also had shown its fairness toward Kingo by commissioning him to print the hymnal and to enjoy exclusive rights of its distribution for ten years, so that he might recoup some of the losses he had sustained by the rejection of his own book. He repaid the favor by turning out a most excellent piece of work; and the book, both in content and appearance undoubtedly rated as the finest hymnal the Danish church had so far produced. It served the church for more than a hundred years, and was always known as "Kingo's Hymnal", for, after all, his great hymns were what gave it permanent value.

Chapter Six

Kingo's Church Hymns

Kingo's church hymns naturally differ from his spiritual songs. They are more objective in form and less fiery in spirit. Most of them follow their themes quite closely, reproducing in many instances even the words of their text. Kingo is too vital, however, to confine himself wholly to an objective presentation. Usually the last stanzas of his hymns are devoted to a brief and often striking application of their text. He possessed to a singular degree the ability to express a thought tersely, as for instance in the following stanza, the last of a hymn on the baptism of the Lord:

Our Lord is then our brother
In whom we may confide,
The Church of God our mother,
The Holy Ghost our guide;
Our blest baptismal dower
The bands of hell has riven
And opened us God's heaven,
This is our faith each hour.

The hymns may be classed under four headings: Festival Hymns, Sacramental Hymns, Historical Hymns and Hymns on the Gospels and Epistles.

With the exception of his Easter anthem, his festival hymns cannot compare with those of later authors. Some of his Pentecost hymns, such as the hymns given below, are, however, still favorites.

The day of Pentecost draws nigh;
Come, Holy Spirit from on high,
Who with the Father and the Son
Is God eternal, three in one.

O God triune, Thy grace impart
Into my carnal, sinful heart,
That it a temple blest may be
Prepared and set aside for Thee.

Come, Holy Ghost, and witness bear
That I the life of Christ do share,
And that I know no other name
To save my soul from guilt and shame.

O Counselor of truth and light,
Teach me to know my Lord aright,
That from the way of faith I may
Not even for a moment stray.

Blest Spirit of my God and Lord,
Preserve me in Thy way and word,
Imbue me with Thy life and breath,
Console me in the hour of death.

Kingo frequently is referred to as "the Easter Singer of Denmark". His claim to this title rests mainly on one song. Easter with its story of triumphant victory appealed especially to him; and he wrote several excellent hymns on the theme, but they are all overshadowed by the splendid anthem presented below.

Like the golden sun ascending
In the darkly clouded sky
And on earth its glory spending
Until clouds and darkness fly,
So my Jesus from the grave,
From death's dark, abysmal cave,
Rose triumphant Easter morning,
Brighter than the sun returning.

Thanks, O thanks, to Thee arisen
Lord and God Immanuel,
That the foe could not imprison
Thee within his hell-dark cell.
Thanks that Thou didst meet our foe
And his kingdom overthrow.
Jubilant my spirit raises
New Thy never ending praises.

Sin and death and every arrow
Satan hence may point at me
Fall now broken at the narrow
Tomb that saw Thy victory;
There Thou didst them all destroy
Giving me the cup of joy
That Thou glorious resurrection
Wrought my pardon and protection.

Thou wilt hence to life awake me
By Thy resurrection power;
Death may wound and overtake me,
Worms my flesh and bones devour,
But I face the threat of death
With the sure and joyful faith
That its fearful reign was ended
When Thy might its portal rended.

Blessed Jesus, let the Spirit
So imbue my heart with grace
That I walk by Thy blest merit
And no more the way retrace
To the vile and miry pit
Where I lay condemned, unfit,
Till redeemed to life victorious
By Thy resurrection glorious.

In this rugged hymn Kingo is at his best—fiery, vital, a master of imagery and graphic expression.

His hymns on the sacraments faithfully reflect the doctrines of the Lutheran Church. Here he most clearly shows his ability to present objective truths in a devotional spirit. We meet in these a Christian who humbly and prayerfully accepts the whole mystery of God. For centuries these rugged songs have served to express the sentiments of millions as they met at the baptismal font or knelt before the altar. The following is one of the most favored baptismal hymns both in the Danish and Norwegian churches:

Whoso believes and is baptized[3]
God's kingdom shall inherit,
For he is cleansed by Jesus Christ
Who, by His grace and merit,
Adopts him as His child and heir,
Grants him in heaven's bliss to share
And seals him with His Spirit.

We ask with earnest faith of Thee,
Our Lord and blest Defender,
That Thou wilt guide us constantly
And, in Thy mercy tender,
Keep us in our baptismal grace
Until at last we take our place
With Thee 'midst heaven's splendor.

Kingo's communion hymns have to a large extent been superseded by later hymns of Grundtvig and others. But some of them are still in common use. The following characteristic hymn is frequently used before the communion.

Lord Jesus Christ receive me now
As with a heart contrite I bow
Before Thine altar, blessed Lamb,
Who bore my sorrow, sin and shame.

I am today my Saviour's guest.
Bethink, my soul, the honor blest,
That He, Thy Lord, will sup with thee
And will Himself Thy nurture be.

He offers to thee with the bread
His body riven for thy aid,
And with the wine His precious blood,
The price of thy eternal good.

How this can be, I cannot tell;
He did not on the mystery dwell;
No mind the secret can perceive,
It is enough that I believe.

Rejoice, then, O my soul today
That God's appointed servant may
Now offer thee the gift so free
Through which thy Lord unites with thee.

O Lord, I offer Thee my soul
To nourish, strengthen and make whole.
Uphold me by Thy means of grace
Until I see Thee face to face.

The short hymn given below is a favorite after the communion in numerous Danish and Norwegian churches.

O dearest Lord, receive from me
The heartfelt thanks I offer Thee,
Who through Thy body and Thy blood
Hast wrought my soul's eternal good.

Break forth, my soul, in joy and praise;
What wealth is mine this day of days!
My Jesus dwells within my soul;
Let every tongue His grace extol.

Kingo's historical hymns, that is, his hymns on the stories of the Gospels, usually are not counted among the best. Yet there are many fine hymns among them, such as the annunciation hymn, "There Came a Message from the Sky"; the hymn about the wedding at Cana, "How Blessed Was that Wedding Feast"; and the splendid hymn on the transfiguration of the Lord, "I Lift My Eyes and Spirit Up unto the Hallowed Mountain Top Where Jesus Once Ascended". Best known among this group of hymns is, however, his great sequence of songs on our Lord's passion. In these inspired hymns we meet again the Kingo that we know from his spiritual songs, fiery, eloquent, imaginative, seeking to picture every detail and mood of the Savior's suffering from the garden to the cross. Though it is difficult to choose among hymns so universally fine, the one given below is, at least, fairly representative of the group.

Over Kedron Jesus passes
Ready for His passion day,
While the Prince of Darkness masses
All his legions for the fray.
Wily foes with evil hearts
Bend their bows and point their darts,
Aiming at the Savior solely,
As the world forsakes Him wholly.

David once in great affliction
Crossed the Kedron's narrow stream,
While his foes without restriction

Hatched their vile and cunning scheme.
Darker far the shadows now
Bend about the Savior's brow
As He hastens to His passion
For the sinful world's salvation.

See Him, torn by woe appalling,
Kneeling in the garden still,
And upon His Father calling
That, if possible, He will
Take the bitter cup away.
But how meekly He doth pray!
What the Father shall Him offer,
He obediently will suffer.

See, what agony assails Him
In that dark and fearful hour;
Every friend deserts or fails Him;
Satan strikes with all his power;
And the flowers beneath Him grow
Crimson with the purple flow
From His anguished frame distilling
As His cup of woe is filling.

But, O flower, whose tender blossom
Caught that precious, purple dew
From the Saviour's riven bosom,
In a blessed hour you grew!
Eden's flowers did not bear
Fruits that could with yours compare:
By the blood your petals staining,
I am now salvation gaining.

When I like the flower must wither,
When I wilt and fade like grass,
When the hour of death draws hither,
When I from this world shall pass,
When my heart has ceased to beat
When I face God's judgment seat,
Then His blood, which stained the garden,
Shall procure my lasting pardon.

Kingo's hymns on the pericopes have proved less resistant to time than most of his other work. They are in reality brief commentaries, presenting a practical rather than a poetical exposition and application of their texts. But even so, the singular freshness of their thought and style has preserved many of them until our day. The following hymn on Matthew 8, 23-27, the stilling of the storm, furnishes a characteristic example of this group of hymns.

What vessel is that passing
Across the boundless deep,
On which the billows massing
In foaming fury sweep?
She seems in sore distress
As though she soon would founder
Upon the shoals around her
And sink without redress.

It is the storm-tossed vessel
Of God's own church on earth,
With which the world doth wrestle,
And send its fury forth,
While Jesus oft appears

As though He still were sleeping,
With His disciples weeping
And crying out in fears.

But let the world with fury
Against the church but rave,
And spend its might to bury
Her in the roaring wave!
It only takes a word
To hush the wild commotion
And show the mighty ocean
Her Lord is still aboard.

Kingo is often called the singer of orthodoxy. His hymns faithfully present the accepted doctrines of his church. No hymnwriter is more staunchly Lutheran than he. But he was too vital to become a mere doctrinaire. With him orthodoxy was only a means to an end, a more vigorous Christian life. Many of his hymns present a forceful and straightforward appeal for a real personal life with God. The following hymn may be called an orthodox revival hymn. It was a favorite with the great Norwegian lay preacher, Hans Nielsen Hauge.

The power of sin no longer
Within my heart shall reign;
Faith must grow ever stronger
And carnal lust be slain;
For when I was baptized,
The bonds of sin were severed
And I by grace delivered
To live for Jesus Christ.

Would I accept the merit
Of my baptismal grace
And with my faith and spirit
The Savior's cross embrace,
How great would be my blame
Should I abide in evil
And not renounce the devil
In Christ my Savior's name.

It can bestow no treasure
On me that Christ arose.
If I will not with pleasure
The power of death oppose,
And with my heart embrace
The Savior, who is risen
And has from error's prison
Redeemed me by His grace.

Lord Jesus, help me ever
To fight "the old man" so
That he shall not deliver
Me to eternal woe,
But that I here may die
From sin and all offences
And, by the blood that cleanses,
Attain my home on high.

Thus, the permanent value of Kingo's hymns rests not only on their rugged and expressive poetry but on the earnest and warm-hearted Christian spirit that breathes through them. In the perennial freshness of this spirit succeeding generations have experienced their kinship with the poet and found expression for their own hope and faith. The following ageless prayer expresses not only the spirit of the poet but that

of earnest Christians everywhere and of every age.

Print Thine image pure and holy[4]
On my heart, O Lord of Grace;
So that nothing high nor lowly
Thy blest likeness can efface.
Let the clear inscription be:
Jesus, crucified for me,
And the Lord of all creation,
Is my refuge and salvation.

[3] Another translation: “He that believes and is baptized” by G. T. Rygh in “Hymnal for Church and Home”.

[4] Another translation: “On my heart imprint thine image” by P. O. Stromme in “Hymnal for Church and Home”.

Chapter Seven

Kingo’s Later Years

Kingo’s work with the hymnal had brought him much disappointment and some loss of popularity. He felt not without justification that he had been ill treated. He did not sulk in his tent, however, but pursued his work with unabated zeal. His diocese was large, comprising not only Fyn but a large number of smaller islands besides. The work of making periodical visits to all parishes within such a far-flung charge was, considering the then available means of transportation, not only strenuous but hazardous. Roads were bad and vessels weak and slow. Hardships and danger beset his almost continuous voyages and journeys. A number of poems relating the adventures of the traveler are reminiscenses of his own experiences.

But his work of visiting the churches constituted, of course, only a part of his duties. He had to preach in the cathedral at Odense at least every Wednesday in Lent and on all festival Sundays; examine the work and conduct of all pastors within the diocese; act as an arbiter in disputes between them and their parishioners; make sure that the financial affairs of the church and its institutions were honestly conducted; attend to the collection of church taxes; and superintend all schools, hospitals and institutions of charity. The efficient accomplishment of all these tasks might well test the strength and ability of any man.

His manifold duties also engendered numerous occasions for friction, especially with the civil authorities, whose rights and duties often overlapped his own. And he did not escape the danger of such bickerings with their resultant ill-feeling. There is nothing to indicate that he was contentious by nature. But he was no doubt zealous in defending the prerogatives of his office. His temper was quick and somewhat martial. “One could very well,” one of his biographers declares, “envision him as a knight in full armor leading a troop in the charge.” With the exception of his active enemies, most of his contemporaries agree, however, that he was commonly more than patient in his dealings with others.

Kingo was an able administrator, and the institutions and finances of the diocese prospered under his care. But it was as an earnest Christian and a tireless worker for the spiritual improvement of his people that he won their respect. He was known as an “eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures.” One of his contemporaries said of him: “Were we not forced after hearing him preach to say with the disciples,

‘Did not our hearts burn within us when he opened the Scriptures to us and, like a son of thunder, published the sins of the house of Jacob, or, like Barnabas, the son of comfort, bound up our wounds and comforted us with the comfort with which he had himself been so richly comforted by God.’” The few extracts of his sermons that have come down to us verify the truth of this statement. They show us a man firmly grounded in his own faith and zealous in impressing its truth upon others. His preaching was strictly orthodox and yet fiery and practical. The poetical language and forceful eloquence of his sermons remind one of the best of his spiritual songs.

Kingo’s writings and frequent travels brought him into contact with most of the outstanding personages of his country in his day. His charming personality, lively conversation and fine sense of humor made him a welcome guest wherever he appeared. On the island of Taasinge, he was a frequent and beloved guest in the stately castle of the famous, pious and revered admiral, Niels Juul, and his equally beloved wife, Birgitte Ulfeldt. His friendship with this worthy couple was intimate and lasting. When admiral Juul died, Kingo wrote the beautiful epitaph that still adorns his tomb in the Holmen church at Copenhagen. On the island of Falster he often visited the proud and domineering ex-queen, Carolina Amalia. He was likewise a frequent visitor at the neighboring estate of the once beautiful and adored daughter of king Christian IV, Leonora Ulfeldt, whom the pride and hatred of the ex-queen had consigned for twenty-two years to a dark and lonely prison cell. Years of suffering, as we learn from her still famous book *Memories of Misery*, had made the princess a deeply religious woman. Imprisonment had aged her body, but had neither dulled her brilliant mind nor hardened her heart. She spent her remaining years in doing good, and she was a great admirer of Kingo.

Thus duty and inclination alike brought him in contact with people of very different stations and conditions in life. His position and high personal endowments made him a notable figure wherever he went. But he had his enemies and detractors as well as his friends. It was not everyone who could see why a poor weaver’s son should be raised to such a high position. Kingo was accused of being greedy, vain, over-ambitious and self-seeking, all of which probably contained at least a grain of truth. We should have missed some of his greatest hymns, if he had been a saint, and not a man of flesh and blood, of passionate feelings and desires, a man who knew from his own experiences that without Christ he could do nothing.

Despite certain peculiar complications, Kingo’s private life was quite happy. Four years after the death of his first wife, he entered into marriage with Johanne Lund, a widow many years older than he. She brought with her a daughter from her former marriage. And Kingo thus had the exceptional experience of being stepfather to three sets of children, the daughter of his second wife and the children and stepchildren of his first. To be the head of such a family must inevitably have presented confusing problems to a man who had no children of his own. But with the exception of his stepson, all the children appear to have loved him and maintained their relation to him as long as he lived.

His second wife died in 1694, when she was seventy-six and he sixty years old. During the later years of her life she had been a helpless invalid, demanding a great deal of patience and care of her busy husband. Contemporaries comment on the frequent sight of the famous bishop good-humoredly carrying his wife about like a helpless child. Less than a year after her death, Kingo entered into a new marriage, this time with an attractive young lady of the nobility, Birgitte Balslev, his junior by more than thirty years. This new marriage provoked a great deal of gossip and many predictions of disaster on account of the great disparity in years of the contracting parties. But the predictions proved wholly unfounded, and the marriage singularly happy. Kingo and Birgitte, a contemporary tells us, were

“inseparable as heart and soul.” She was an accomplished and highly intelligent woman, and Kingo found in her, perhaps for the first time in his life, a woman with whom he could share fully the rich treasure of his own heart and mind. He is credited with the remark that he had done what all ought to do: married an elderly woman in his young days, whom he could care for when she grew old, and a young woman in his later years, who could comfort him in his old age.

But Kingo did not show the effect of his years. He was still as energetic and vigorous as ever in the prosecution of his manifold duties. For a number of years after his marriage, he even continued his strenuous visits to all parts of his see, now always accompanied by his wife. His leisure hours were usually spent on a beautiful estate a few miles from Odense, which belonged to his wife. At this favored retreat and in the company of friends, he still could relax and become the liveliest of them all.

The years, however, would not be denied. At the turn of the century, he suffered a first attack of the illness, a bladder complaint, that later laid him in his grave. He made light of it and refused to ease his strenuous activity. But the attack returned with increasing frequency and, on a visit to Copenhagen in the fall of 1702, he was compelled to take to his bed. He recovered somewhat and was able to return home. But it was now clear to all that the days of the great bishop were numbered. Early in the new year he became bedfast and suffered excruciatingly at times. “But he submitted himself wholly to God’s will and bore his terrible suffering with true Christian patience,” one of his biographers tells us. To those who asked about his condition, his invariable answer was, that all was well with him. If anyone expressed sympathy with him, he usually smiled and said that “it could not be expected that the two old friends, soul and body, should part from each other without pain.” When someone prayed or sang for him he followed him eagerly, expressing his interest with his eyes, hands and whole being.

A week before his death he called the members of his family to his bed, shared the Holy Communion with them and thanked them and especially his wife, for their great kindness to him during his illness. On October 13, a Saturday, he slept throughout the day, but awoke in the evening and exclaimed: “Lord God, tomorrow we shall hear wonderful music!” And on the morning of October 14, 1703, just as the great bells of the cathedral of St. Knud called people to the service, his soul departed peacefully to join the Church above. God had heard at last the earnest prayer of his own great hymns:

> But, O Jesus, I am crying:
> Help that faith, on Thee relying,
> Over sin and sorrow may
> Ever rise and win the day.

His body was laid to rest in a small village church a few miles outside of Odense. There one still may see the stone of his tomb, bearing an inscription that likens him to a sun which, although it has set, still lights the way for all true lovers of virtue. Other monuments to his memory have been raised at Slangerup, Odense and other places. But his finest and most lasting memorials are his own great hymns. In these his warm, passionate spirit still speaks to a larger audience than he ever reached in his own day. The years have served only to emphasize the truth of Grundtvig’s beautiful epitaph to him on his monument at Odense:

> Thomas Kingo is the psalmist
> Of the Danish temple choir.
> This his people will remember
> Long as song their hearts inspire.

Hans Adolph Brorson, the Christmas Singer of Denmark

Chapter Eight

Brorson's Childhood and Youth

Hans Adolph Brorson came from Schleswig, the border province between Denmark and Germany which for centuries has constituted a battleground between the two countries and cost the Danes so much in blood and tears. His family was old in the district and presented an unbroken line of substantial farmers until his grandfather, Broder Pedersen, broke it by studying for the ministry and becoming pastor at Randrup, a small country parish on the west coast of the province.

Broder Pedersen remained at Randrup till his death in 1646, and was then succeeded by his son, Broder Brodersen, a young man only twenty-three years old, who shortly before his installation had married Catherine Margaret Clausen, a daughter of the manager of Trojborg manor, the estate to which the church at Randrup belonged. Catherine Clausen bore her husband three sons, Nicolaj Brodersen, born July 23, 1690, Broder Brodersen, born September 12, 1692, and Hans Adolph Brodersen—or Brorson—as his name was later written—born June 20, 1694.

Broder Brodersen was a quiet, serious-minded man, anxious to give his boys the best possible training for life. Although his income was small, he managed somehow to provide private tutors for them. Both he and his wife were earnest Christians, and the fine example of their own lives was no doubt of greater value to their boys than the formal instruction they received from hired teachers. Thus an early biographer of the Brorsons writes: "Their good parents earnestly instructed their boys in all that was good, but especially in the fear and knowledge of God. Knowing that a good example is more productive of good than the best precept, they were not content with merely teaching them what is good, but strove earnestly to live so that their own daily lives might present a worthy pattern for their sons to follow."

Broder Brodersen was not granted the privilege of seeing his sons attain their honored manhood. He died in 1704, when the eldest of them was fourteen and the youngest only ten years old. Upon realizing that he must leave them, he is said to have comforted himself with the words of Kingo:

> If for my children I
> Would weep and sorrow
> And every moment cry:
> Who shall tomorrow
> With needful counsel, home and care provide them?
> The Lord still reigns above,
> He will with changeless love
> Sustain and guide them.

Nor was the faith of the dying pastor put to shame. A year after his death, his widow married his successor in the pastorate, Pastor Ole Holbeck, who proved himself a most excellent stepfather to his adopted sons.

Reverend Holbeck personally taught the boys until Nicolaj, and a year later, Broder and Hans Adolph were prepared to enter the Latin school at Ribe. This old and once famous school was then in a state of

decay. The town itself had declined from a proud city, a favored residence of kings and nobles, to an insignificant village of about fifteen hundred inhabitants. Of its former glory only a few old buildings and, especially, the beautiful cathedral still remained. And the Latin school had shared the fate of the city. Its once fine buildings were decaying; its faculty, which in former times included some of the best known savants of the country, was poorly paid and poorly equipped; and the number of its students had shrunk from about 1200 to less than a score. Only the course of study remained unchanged from the Middle Ages. Latin and religion were still the main subjects of instruction. It mattered little if the student could neither speak nor write Danish correctly, but he must be able to define the finest points in a Latin grammar of more than 1200 pages. Attendance at religious services was compulsory; but the services were cold and spiritless, offering little attraction to an adolescent youth.

The boys completed their course at Ribe and entered the university of Copenhagen, Nicolaj in the fall of 1710 and the younger brothers a year later. But the change offered them little improvement. The whole country suffered from a severe spiritual decline. Signs of an awakening were here and there, but not at the university where Lutheran orthodoxy still maintained its undisputed reign of more than a hundred years, though it had now become more dry and spiritless than ever.

The brothers all intended to prepare for the ministry. But after two years Nicolaj for various reasons left the University of Copenhagen to complete his course at the University of Kiel. Broder remained at Copenhagen, completing his course there in the spring of 1715. Hans Adolph studied for three years more and, even then, failed to complete his course.

Hans Adolph Brorson

Hans Adolph Brorson

It was a period of transition and spiritual unrest. The spiritual revival now clearly discernible throughout the country had at last reached the university. For the first time in many years the prevailing orthodoxy with its settled answers to every question of faith and conduct was meeting an effective challenge. Many turned definitely away from religion, seeking in other fields such as history, philosophy and especially the natural sciences for a more adequate answer to their problems than religion appeared to offer. Others searched for a solution of their difficulty in new approaches to the old faith. The result was a spiritual confusion such as often precedes the dawn of a new awakening. And Brorson appears to have been caught in it. His failure to complete his course was by no means caused by indolence. He had, on the contrary, broadened his studies to include a number of subjects foreign to his course, and he had worked so hard that he had seriously impaired his health. But he had lost his direction, and also, for the time being, all interest in theology.

It was, therefore, as a somewhat spiritually confused and physically broken young man that he gave up his studies and returned to his home at Randrup. His brothers were already well started upon their conspicuously successful careers, while he was still drifting, confused and uncertain, a failure, as some no doubt would call him. His good stepfather, nevertheless, received him with the utmost kindness. If he harbored any disappointment in him, he does not appear to have shown it. His stepson remained with him for about a year, assisting him with whatever he could, and had then so far recovered that he was able to accept a position as tutor in the family of his maternal uncle, Nicolaj Clausen, at Løgum Kloster.

Løgum Kloster had once been a large and powerful institution and a center of great historic events. The magnificent building of the cloister itself had been turned into a county courthouse, at which Nicolaj

Clausen served as county president, but the splendid old church of the cloister still remained, serving as the parish church. In these interesting surroundings and in the quiet family circle of his uncle, Brorson made further progress toward normal health. But his full recovery came only after a sincere spiritual awakening in 1720.

The strong revival movement that was sweeping the country and displacing the old orthodoxy, was engendered by the German Pietist movement, entering Denmark through Slesvig. The two conceptions of Christianity differed, it has been said, only in their emphasis. Orthodoxy emphasized doctrine and Pietism, life. Both conceptions were one-sided. If orthodoxy had resulted in a lifeless formalism, Pietism soon lost its effectiveness in a sentimental subjectivism. Its neglect of sound doctrine eventually gave birth to Rationalism. But for the moment Pietism appeared to supply what orthodoxy lacked: an urgent call to Christians to live what they professed to believe.

A number of the early leaders of the movement in Denmark lived in the neighborhood of Løgum Kloster, and were personally known to Brorson. But whether or not any of these leaders was instrumental in his awakening is now unknown. One of his contemporaries simply states that “Brorson at this time sought to employ his solitude in a closer walk with God in Christ and, in so doing, received a perfect assurance of the Lord’s faithfulness to those that trust in Him.” Thus whatever influence neighboring Pietists may have contributed to the great change in his life, the change itself seems to have been brought about through his own Jacob-like struggle with God. And it was a complete change. If he had formerly been troubled by many things, he henceforth evinced but one desire to know Christ and to be known by Him.

A first fruit of his awakening was an eager desire to enter the ministry. He was offered a position as rector of a Latin school, but his stepfather’s death, just as he was considering the offer, caused him to refuse the appointment and instead to apply for the pastorate at Randrup. His application granted, he at once hastened back to the university to finish his formerly uncompleted course and obtain his degree. Having accomplished this in the fall of the same year, on April 6, 1722, he was ordained to the ministry together with his brother, Broder Brorson, who had resigned a position as rector of a Latin school to become pastor at Mjolden, a parish adjoining Randrup. As his brother, Nicolaj Brorson, shortly before had accepted the pastorate of another adjoining parish, the three brothers thus enjoyed the unusual privilege of living and working together in the same neighborhood.

The eight years that Brorson spent at Randrup where his father and grandfather had worked before him were probably the happiest in his life. The parish is located in a low, treeless plain bordering the North Sea. Its climate, except for a few months of summer, is raw and blustery. In stormy weather the sea frequently floods its lower fields, causing severe losses in crops, stocks and even in human life. Thus Brorson’s stepfather died from a cold caught during a flight from a flood that threatened the parsonage. The severe climate and constant threat of the sea, however, fosters a hardy race. From this region the Jutes together with their neighbors, the Angles and Saxons, once set out to conquer and settle the British Isles. And the hardihood of the old sea-rovers was not wholly lost in their descendants when Brorson settled among them, although it had long been directed into other and more peaceful channels.

The parsonage in which the Brorsons lived stood on a low ridge, rising gently above its surroundings and affording a splendid view over far reaches of fields, meadows and the ever changing sea. The view was especially beautiful in early summer when wild flowers carpeted the meadows in a profusion of colors, countless birds soared and sang above the meadows and shoals of fish played in the reed

bordered streams. It was without doubt this scene that inspired the splendid hymn “Arise, All Things that God Hath Made.”

Brorson was happy to return to Randrup. The parish was just then the center of all that was dearest to him in this world. His beloved mother still lived there, his brothers were close neighbors, and he brought with him his young wife, Catherine Clausen, whom he had married a few days before his installation.

Nicolaj and Broder Brorson had, like him, joined the Pietist movement, and the three brothers, therefore, could work together in complete harmony for the spiritual revival of their parishes. And they did not spare themselves. Both separately and cooperatively, they labored zealously to increase church attendance, revive family devotions, encourage Bible reading and hymn singing, and minimize the many worldly and doubtful amusements that, then as now, caused many Christians to fall. They also began to hold private assemblies in the homes, a work for which they were bitterly condemned by many and severely reprimanded by the authorities. It could not be expected, of course, that a work so devoted to the furtherance of a new conception of the Christian life would be tolerated without opposition. But their work, nevertheless, was blest with abundant fruit, both in their own parishes and throughout neighboring districts. Churches were refilled with worshippers, family altars rebuilt, and a new song was born in thousands of homes. People expressed their love for the three brothers by naming them “The Rare Three-Leafed Clover from Randrup.” It is said that the revival inspired by the Brorsons even now, more than two hundred years later, is plainly evident in the spiritual life of the district.

Thus the years passed fruitfully for the young pastor at Randrup. He rejoiced in his home, his work and the warm devotion of his people. It came, therefore, as a signal disappointment to all that he was the first to break the happy circle by accepting a call as assistant pastor at Christ church in Tønder, a small city a few miles south of Randrup.

Chapter Nine

The Singer of Pietism

The city of Tønder, when Brorson located there, had about two thousand inhabitants. At one time it had belonged to the German Dukes of Gottorp, and it was still largely German speaking. Its splendid church had three pastors, two of whom preached in German and the third, Brorson, in Danish.

The parish Pastor, Johan Herman Schraeder, was an outstanding and highly respected man. Born at Hamburg in 1684, he had in his younger days served as a tutor for the children of King Frederick IV, Princess Charlotte Amalia and Prince Christian, now reigning as King Christian VI.

Pastor Schraeder was a zealous Pietist and a leader of the Pietist movement in Tønder and its neighboring territory. Like the Brorsons he sought to encourage family devotions, Bible reading and, especially, hymn singing. People are said to have become so interested in the latter that they brought their hymnals with them to work so that they might sing from them during lunch hours. He himself was a noted hymnwriter and hymn collector, who, shortly after Brorson became his assistant, published a German hymnal, containing no less than 1157 hymns.

Schraeder, we are told, had been personally active in inducing Brorson to leave his beloved Randrup and accept the call to Tønder. As Brorson was known as an ardent Pietist, Schraeder’s interest in

bringing him to Tønder may have originated in a natural wish to secure a congenial co-worker, but it may also have sprung from an acquaintance with his work as a hymnwriter. For although there is no direct evidence that any of Brorson's hymns were written at Randrup, a number of circumstances make it highly probable that some of them were composed there and that Schraeder was acquainted with them. Such a mutual interest also helps to explain why Brorson should leave his fruitful work at Randrup for an inferior position in a new field. It is certain that the change brought him no outward advantages, and his position as a Danish pastor in a largely German speaking community must have presented certain unavoidable difficulties.

Although Brorson to our knowledge took no part in the endless contest between German and Danish, his personal preference was, no doubt, for the latter. It is thus significant that, although he must have been about equally familiar with both languages, he did not write a single hymn in German. He showed no ill will toward his German speaking compatriots, however, and worked harmoniously with his German speaking co-workers. But this strongly German atmosphere does constitute a peculiar setting for one of the greatest hymnwriters of the Danish church.

The congregation at Tønder had formed the peculiar custom of singing in German—even at the Danish service. It is self-evident, however, that such a custom could not be satisfactory to Brorson. He was a Pietist with the fervent longing of that movement for a real spiritual communion with his fellow Christians. But a custom that compelled the pastor and his congregation to speak in different tongues was, of necessity, a hindrance to the consummation of such a desire. And now Christmas was drawing near, that joyful season which Brorson, as his hymns prove, loved so well and must heartily have desired to share with his hearers, a desire which this mixture of tongues to a certain extent, made impossible. He and his congregation had to be one in language before they could wholly be one in spirit.

And so, shortly before the great festival in 1732, he published a small and unpretentious booklet entitled: **Some Christmas Hymns, Composed to the Honor of God, the Edification of Christian Souls and, in Particular, of My Beloved Congregation during the Approaching Joyful Christmastide, Humbly and Hastily Written by Hans Adolph Brorson**.

This simple appearing booklet at once places Brorson among the great hymnwriters of the Christian church. It contains ten hymns, seven of which are for the Christmas season. Nearly every one of them is now counted among the classics of Danish hymnody.

Brorson seems at once to have reached the height of his ability as a hymnwriter. His Christmas hymns present an intensity of sentiment, a mastery of form and a perfection of poetical skill that he rarely attained in his later work. They are frankly lyrical. Unlike his great English contemporary, Isaac Watts, who held that a hymn should not be a lyrical poem and deliberately reduced the poetical quality of his work, Brorson believed that a Christian should use "all his thought and skill to magnify the grace of God". The opinion of an English literary critic "that hymns cannot be considered as poetry" is disproved by Brorson's work. Some of his hymns contain poetry of the highest merit. Their phrasing is in parts extremely lyrical, utilizing to the fullest extent the softness and flexibility that is supposed to be an outstanding characteristic of the Danish tongue; their metres are most skillfully blended and their rhymes exceedingly varied. His masterly use of what was often considered an inconsequential appendage to poetry is extraordinarily skillful. Thus he frequently chooses a harsh or a soft rhyme to emphasize the predominating sentiment of his verse.

Brorson is without doubt the most lyrical of all Danish hymnwriters. Literary critics have rated some of his hymns with the finest lyrics in the Danish language. Yet his poetry seldom degenerates to a mere form. His fervid lyrical style usually serves as an admirable vehicle for the warm religious sentiment of his song.

In their warm spirit and fervid style Brorson's hymns in some ways strikingly resemble the work of his great English contemporaries, the Wesleys. Nor is this similarity a mere chance. The Wesleys, as we know, were strongly influenced first by the Moravians and later by the German Pietists. Besides a number of Moravian hymns, John Wesley also translated several hymns from the hymnbook compiled by the well-known Pietist, Johan Freylinghausen. The fervid style and varied metres of these hymns introduced a new type of church song into the English and American churches. But Freylinghausen's **Gesang-Buch** also formed the basis of the hymnal compiled by Johan Herman Schraeder from which Brorson chose most of the originals of his translations. Thus both he and the Wesleys in a measure drew their inspiration from the same source. The Danish poet and his English contemporaries worked independently and mediated their inspiration in their own way, but the resemblance of their work is unmistakable. In poetical merit, however, the work of Brorson far excels that of the Wesleys. But his Christmas hymns also surpass most earlier Danish hymns and even the greater part of his own later work.

One's first impression of the booklet that so greatly has enriched the Christmas festival of Denmark and Norway, is likely to be disappointing. At the time of Brorson the festival was frequently desecrated by a ceaseless round of worldly amusements. People attended the festival services of the church and spent the remainder of the season in a whirl of secular and far from innocent pleasures. With his Pietistic views Brorson naturally deplored such a misuse of the season. And his first hymn, therefore, sounds an earnest call to cease these unseemly pleasures and to use the festival in a Christian way.

Cast out all worldly pleasure
This blessed Christmastide,
And seek the boundless treasure
That Jesus doth provide.

But although such a warning may have been timely, then as now, it hardly expresses the real Christmas spirit. In the next hymn, however, he at once strikes the true festival note in one of the most triumphant Christmas anthems in the Danish or any other language.

This blessed Christmastide we will,
With heart and mind rejoicing,
Employ our every thought and skill,
God's grace and honor voicing.
In Him that in the manger lay
We will with all our might today
Exult in heart and spirit,
And hail Him as our Lord and King
Till earth's remotest bounds shall ring
With praises of His merit.

A little Child of Jesse's stem,
And Son of God in heaven,
To earth from heaven's glory came
And was for sinners given.
It so distressed His loving heart
To see the world from God depart
And in transgression languish,
That He forsook His home above

And came to earth in tender love
To bear our grief and anguish.

Therefore we hymn His praises here
And though we are but lowly,
Our loud hosannas everywhere
Shall voice His mercy holy.
The tent of God is now with man,
And He will dwell with us again
When in His name assembling.
And we shall shout His name anew
Till hell itself must listen to
Our Christmas song with trembling.

And though our song of joy be fraught
With strains of lamentation,
The burden of our cross shall not
Subdue our jubilation.
For when the heart is most distressed,
The harp of joy is tuned so best
Its chords of joy are ringing,
And broken hearts best comprehend
The boundless joy our Lord and Friend
This Christmas day is bringing.

Hallelujah, our strife is o'er!
Who would henceforth with sadness
Repine and weep in sorrow sore
This blessed day of gladness.
Rejoice, rejoice, ye saints on earth,
And sing the wonders of His birth
Whose glory none can measure.
Hallelujah, the Lord is mine,
And I am now by grace divine
The heir of all His treasure!

Equally fine but more quietly contemplative is the next hymn in the collection which takes us right to the focal point of Christmas worship, the stable at Bethlehem.

My heart remains in wonder
Before that lowly bed
Within the stable yonder
Where Christ, my Lord, was laid.
My faith finds there its treasure,
My soul its pure delight,
Its joy beyond all measure,
The Lord of Christmas night.

But Oh! my heart is riven
With grief and sore dismay
To see the Lord of heaven
Must rest on straw and hay,
That He whom angels offer
Their worship and acclaim
From sinful man must suffer
Such scorn, neglect and shame.

Why should not castles royal
Before Him open stand,
And kings, as servants loyal,
Obey His least command?
Why came He not in splendor
Arrayed in robes of light

And called the world to render
Its homage to His might?

The sparrow finds a gable
Where it may build its nest,
The oxen know a stable
For shelter, food and rest;
Must then my Lord and Savior
A homeless stranger be,
Denied the simplest favor
His lowly creatures see.

O come, my Lord, I pray Thee,
And be my honored guest.
I will in love array Thee
A home within my breast.
It cannot be a stranger
To Thee, who made it free.
Thou shalt find there a manger
Warmed by my love to Thee.

Far different from this song of quiet contemplation is the searching hymn that follows it.

How do we exalt the Father
That He sent His Son to earth.
Many with indifference gather
At His gift of boundless worth.

This is followed by another hymn of praise.

Lift up your voice once more
The Savior to adore.
Let all unite in spirit
And praise the grace and merit
Of Jesus Christ, the Holy,
Our joy and glory solely.

And then comes “The Fairest of Roses”, which a distinguished critic calls “one of the most perfect lyrics in the Danish language”. This hymn is inspired by a text from the Song of Songs “I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley”. It is written as an allegory, a somewhat subdued form of expression that in this case serves admirably to convey an impression of restrained fire. Its style is reminiscent of the folk songs, with the first stanza introducing the general theme of the song, the appearance of the rose, that is, of the Savior in a lost and indifferent world. The remainder of the verses are naturally divided into three parts: a description of the dying world in which God causes the rose to appear, a lament over the world’s indifference to the gift which it should have received with joy and gratitude, and a glowing declaration of what the rose means to the poet himself.

Many chapters have been written about the poetic excellencies of this hymn, such as the perfect balance of its parts, the admirable treatment of the contrast between the rose and the thorns, and the skillful choice of rhymes to underscore the predominating sentiment of each verse. But some of these excellencies have no doubt been lost in the translation and can be appreciated only by a study of the original. English translations of the hymn have been made by German-, Swedish-, and Norwegian-American writers, indicating its wide popularity. The following is but another attempt to produce a more adequate rendering of this beautiful song.

Now found is the fairest of roses,

Midst briars it sweetly reposes.
My Jesus, unsullied and holy,
Abode among sinners most lowly.

Since man his Creator deserted,
And wholly His image perverted,
The world like a desert was lying,
And all in transgressions were dying.

But God, as His promises granted,
A rose in the desert hath planted,
Which now with its sweetness endoweth
The race that in sinfulness groweth.

All people should now with sweet savor
Give praise unto God for His favor;
But many have ne'er comprehended
The rose to the world hath descended.

Ye sinners as vile in behavior
As thorns in the crown of the Savior,
Why are ye so prideful in spirit,
Content with your self-righteous merit?

O seek ye the places more lowly,
And weep before Jesus, the Holy,
Then come ye His likeness the nearest;
The rose in the valley grows fairest.

My Jesus, Thou ever remainest
My wonderful rose who sustainest
My heart in the fullness of pleasure;
Thy sweetness alone I will treasure.

The world may of all things bereave me,
Its thorns may assail and aggrieve me,
The foe may great anguish engender:
My rose I will never surrender.

The last Christmas hymn of the collection is printed under the heading: "A Little Hymn for the Children", and is composed from the text "Have ye not read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise". Said to be the oldest children's hymn in Danish, it is still one of the finest. It is written as a processional. The children come hastening on to Bethlehem to find the new-born Lord and offer Him their homage. One almost hears their pattering feet and happy voices as they rush forward singing:

Here come Thy little ones, O Lord,
To Thee in Bethlehem adored.
Enlighten now our heart and mind
That we the way to Thee may find.

We hasten with a song to greet
And kneel before Thee at Thy feet.
O blessed hour, O sacred night,
When Thou wert born, our soul's Delight!

Be welcome from Thy heavenly home
Unto this vale of tears and gloom,
Where man to Thee no honor gave
But stable, manger, cross and grave.

But Jesus, oh! how can it be

That but so few will think of Thee
And of that tender, wondrous love
Which drew Thee to us from above?

O draw us little children near
To Thee, our Friend and Brother dear,
That each of us so heartily
In faith and love may cling to Thee.

Let not the world lead us astray
That we our Christian faith betray,
But grant that all our longings be
Directed always unto Thee.

Then shall the happy day once come
When we shall gather in Thy home
And join the angels' joyful throng
In praising Thee with triumph song.

We gather now about Thee close
Like leaves around the budding rose,
O grant us, Savior, that we may
Thus cluster round Thy throne for aye.

His Christmas hymns were so well received that Brorson was encouraged to continue his writing. During the following year he published no less than five collections bearing the titles: **Some Advent Hymns**, **Some Passion Hymns**, **Some Easter Hymns**, **Some Pentecost Hymns**, and **Hymns for the Minor Festivals**. All of these hymns were likewise kindly received and therefore he continued to send out new collections, publishing during the following years a whole series of hymns on various phases of Christian faith and life. In 1739, all these hymns were collected into one volume and published under the title: **The Rare Clenod of Faith**.

This now famous book contains in all 67 original and 216 translated hymns. The arrangement of the hymns follows in the main the order of the Lutheran catechism, covering not only every division but almost every subdivision of the book. Brorson, it appears, must have written his hymns after a preconceived plan, a rather unusual method for a hymnwriter to follow.

The Rare Clenod of Faith fails as a whole to maintain the high standard of the Christmas hymns. Although the language, as in all that Brorson wrote, is pure and melodious, the poetic flight and fresh sentiment of his earlier work is lacking to some extent in the latter part of the collection. One reason for this is thought to be that Brorson, on locating at Tønder, had come into closer contact with the more extreme views of Pietism. The imprint of that movement, at least, is more distinct upon his later than upon his earlier work. The great preponderance of his translated over his original hymns also affects the spirit of the collection. He was not always fortunate in the selection of the original material for his translations. Some of these express the excessive Pietistic contemplation of the Savior's blood and wounds; others are rhymed sermons rather than songs of praise.

Despite these defects, **The Rare Clenod of Faith**, still ranks with the great books of hymnody. It contains a wealth of hymns that will never die. Even the less successful of its compositions present a true Evangelical message, a message that, at times, sounds a stern call to awake and "shake off that sinful sleep before to you is closed the open door" and, at others, pleads softly for a closer walk with God, a deeper understanding of His ways and a firmer trust in His grace. There are many strings on Brorson's harp, but they all sound a note of vital faith.

Judging Brorson's original hymns to be far superior to his translations, some have deplored that he should have spent so much of his time in transferring the work of others. And it is, no doubt, true that his original hymns are as a whole superior to his translations. But many of these are so fine that their elimination would now appear like an irreplaceable loss to Danish hymnody. The constant love with which many of them have been used for more than two hundred years should silence the claim that a translated hymn must of necessity be less valuable than an original. A considerable number of the originals of Brorson's most favored translations have long been forgotten.

As a translator Brorson is usually quite faithful to the originals, following them as closely as the differences in language and mode of expression permit. He is not slavishly bound, however, to his text. His constant aim is to reproduce his text in a pure and idiomatic Danish. And as his own poetic skill in most cases was superior to that of the original writer, his translations are often greatly superior to their originals in poetical merit.

Although the translation of a translation of necessity presents a very unreliable yard-stick of a man's work, the following translation of Brorson's version of the well-known German hymn, "Ich Will Dich Lieben, Meine Starke" may at least indicate the nature of his work as a translator.

Thee will I love, my strength, my Treasure;
My heart in Thee finds peace and joy.
Thee will I love in fullest measure,
And in Thy cause my life employ.
Thee will I love and serve alone.
Lord, take me as Thine own.

Thee will I love, my Life Eternal,
My Guide and Shepherd on Life's way.
Thou leadest me to pastures vernal,
And to the light of endless day.
Thee will I love, Whose blood was spilt
To cleanse my soul from guilt.

Long, long wert Thou to me a stranger,
Though Thou didst love me first of all,
I strayed afar in sin and danger
And heeded not Thy loving call
Until I found that peace of heart
Thou canst alone impart.

Lord, cast not out Thy child, returning
A wanderer, naked and forlorn.
The tempting world, I sought with yearning,
Had naught to give but grief and scorn.
In Thee alone for all its grief
My heart now finds relief.

Thee will I love and worship ever,
My Lord, my God and Brother dear!
Must every earthly tie I sever
And naught but sorrow suffer here,
Thee will I love, my Lord divine;
O Jesus, call me Thine.

Equally characteristic of his work is his translation of the less-known but appealing German hymn "Der Schmale Weg Ist Breit Genug zum Leben".

The narrow way is wide enough to heaven

For those who walk straight-forward and with care
And take each step with watchfulness and prayer.
When we are by the Spirit driven,
The narrow way is wide enough to heaven.

The way of God is full of grace and beauty
For those who unto Him in faith have turned
And have His way with love and ardor learned.
When we accept His call and duty,
The way of God is full of grace and beauty.

The yoke of God is not too hard to carry
For those who love His blessed will and way
And shall their carnal pride in meekness slay.
When we with Him in faith will tarry,
The yoke of God is not too hard to carry.

O Jesus, help me Thy blest way to follow.
Thou knowest best my weak and fainting heart
And must not let me from Thy way depart.
I shall Thy name with praises hallow,
If Thou wilt help me Thy blest way to follow.

But fine as many of his translations are, Brorson's main claim to fame must rest, of course, upon his original compositions. These are of varying merit. His Christmas hymns were followed by a number of hymns for the festivals of the church year. While some of these are excellent, others are merely rhymed meditations upon the meaning of the season and lack the freshness of his Christmas anthems. The triumphant Easter hymn given below belongs to the finest of the group.

Christians, who with sorrow
On this Easter morrow
Watch the Savior's tomb,
Banish all your sadness,
On this day of gladness
Joy must vanquish gloom.
Christ this hour
With mighty power
Crushed the foe who would detain Him;
Nothing could restrain Him.

Rise, ye feeble-hearted,
Who have pined and smarted,
Vexed by sin and dread.
He has burst the prison
And with might arisen,
Jesus, Who was dead.
And His bride
For whom He died,
He from sin and death now raises;
Hail Him then with praises.

When our sins aggrieve us,
Jesus will receive us,
All our debt He paid.
We, who were transgressors
Are now blest possessors
Of His grace and aid.
When in death
He gave His breath
To the cruel foe He yielded
That we should be shielded.

Earth! where are thy wonders!
Hell! where are thy thunders!
Death, where is thy sting!
Jesus rose victorious,
Reigns in heaven glorious
As our Lord and King.
Him, the Lord,
Who did accord
Us so great a joy and favor,
We will praise forever.

Brorson's other hymns are too numerous to permit a more than cursory review. Beginning with the subject of creation, he wrote a number of excellent hymns on the work and providence of God. Best known among these is the hymn given below, which is said to have so pleased the king that he chose its author to become bishop. The hymn is thought to have been written while Brorson was still at Randrup. But whether this be so or not, it is evidently inspired by the natural scenery of that locality.

Arise, all things that God hath made[5]
And praise His name and glory;
Great is the least His hand arrayed,
And tells a wondrous story.

Would all the kings of earth display
Their utmost pomp and power,
They could not make a leaflet stay
And grow upon a flower.

How could the wisdom I compass
To show the grace and wonder
Of but the smallest blade of grass
On which the mind would ponder.

What shall I say when I admire
The verdant meadows blooming,
And listen to the joyful choir
Of birds above them zooming.

What shall I say when I descry
Deep in the restless ocean
The myriad creatures passing by
In swift and ceaseless motion.

What shall I say when I behold
The stars in countless numbers
Display their light and charm untold
While nature sweetly slumbers.

What shall I say when I ascend
To Him Who made creation,
And see the angel host attend
His throne with adoration.

What shall I say—vain are my words
And humble my opinion!
Great is Thy wisdom, Lord of lords,
Thy glory and dominion!

Lift up your voice with one accord
Now, every tribe and nation:
Hallelujah, great is our Lord
And wondrous His creation!

The Pietist movement is known for its fervid glorification of the Savior, and particularly of His blood and wounds, a glorification which at times appears objectionable because of the too-familiar and realistic terms in which it is expressed. Brorson did not wholly escape the excesses of the movement in this respect, especially in his translations. In his original hymns the excesses are less apparent. However faithful he might be to the movement he possessed a wholesome restraint which, when he was not following others, caused him to moderate its most inappropriate extravagances. What can be more reverent than this beautiful tribute to the Savior:

Jesus, name of wondrous grace,
Fount of mercy and salvation,
First fruit of the new creation,
Weary sinners' resting place,
Banner of the faith victorious,
Anchor of our hope and love,
Guide us in Thy footsteps glorious,
Bear us to Thy home above.

Or more expressive than this jubilant hymn of adoration:

O Thou blest Immanuel!
What exceeding joy from heaven
Hast Thou caused in me to dwell
By Thy life for sinners given.
Thou hast broke the bands at last
Which my yearning soul held fast.

In Thine arms I find relief,
Soon Thy home I shall inherit,
Sin and sorrow, death and grief
Nevermore shall vex my spirit.
For Thy word confirms the pledge
Of my lasting heritage.

Lord, my praise ascends to Thee
For these days of joy and sorrow;
They shall end in jubilee
On that blest eternal morrow
When the Sun of Paradise
Shall for me in splendor rise.

Rise in joyful faith, my soul!
Banish all thy grief and sadness.
Strong the stream of life shall roll
Through my heart with constant gladness.
Jesus, Who mine anguish bore,
Be now praised for evermore.

Most beautiful is also his hymn to the Lamb of God, translated by Pastor D. G. M. Bach.

I see Thee stand, O Lamb of God,
On Zion's mountain peak.
But Oh the way that Thou hast trod,
So long, so hard, so bleak!
What Thou didst suffer for our woe,
No man can ever know.

Though Brorson made a number of excellent translations of hymns to the Spirit such as the beautiful, "Come, Rains from the Heavens, to Strengthen and Nourish the Languishing Field," he wrote no outstanding Pentecost hymns of his own composition. It remained for Grundtvig to supply the Danish

church with a wealth of unexcelled hymns on the Holy Ghost.

Aside from his Christmas hymns, Brorson's greatest contribution to hymnody is perhaps his revival hymns, a type in which the Lutheran church is rather poor. The special message of the Pietist movement was an earnest call to awake, and Brorson repeated that call with an appealing insistence and earnestness. The word of God has been sown, but where are its fruits?

O Father, may Thy word prevail
Against the power of Hell!
Behold the vineyard Thou hast tilled
With thorns and thistles filled.
'Tis true, the plants are there,
But ah, how weak and rare,
How slight the power and evidence
Of word and sacraments.

It is, therefore, time for all Christians to awake.

Awaken from your idle dreaming!
Ye lukewarm Christians, now arise.
Behold, the light from heaven streaming
Proclaims the day of mercy flies.
Throw off that sinful sleep before
To you is closed the open door.

Many are heedless, taking no thought of the day when all shall appear before the judgment of God. Such people should arouse themselves and prepare for the rendering of their account.

O heart, prepare to give account
Of all thy sore transgression.
To God, of grace and love the Fount,
Make thou a full confession.
What hast thou done these many years
The Lord hath thee afforded.
Nothing but sin and earthly cares
Is in God's book recorded.

He realizes that many continue in their sin because of ignorance, and with these he pleads so softly:

If thou but knew the life that thou are leading
In sin and shame is Satan's tyranny,
Thou wouldest kneel and with the Lord be pleading
That He thy soul from bondage would set free.
Oh, how the Saviour would rejoice
If thou today should'st listen to His voice!

And the day of salvation is now at hand.

O, seek the Lord today,
Today He hath salvation.
Approach Him while He may
Still hear thy supplication.
Repent and seek His grace
While yet His call doth sound,
Yea turn to Him thy face
While still He may be found.

Orthodoxy had instilled a formal, but often spiritless faith. Pietism aimed to awaken the great mass of

formal believers to a new life, a living and active faith. This is strongly expressed in the very popular hymn below.

The faith that Christ embraces[6]
And purifies the hearts
The faith that boldly faces
The devil's fiery darts,
That faith is strong and must
Withstand the world's temptation
And in all tribulation,
In Christ, the Saviour, trust.

The faith that knows no struggle
Against the power of sin,
The faith that sounds no bugle
To waken, fight and win,
That faith is dead and vain,
Its sacred name disgracing,
And impotent when facing
The devil's mighty reign.

A Christian wears his armor
To wage the war of faith
Against the crafty charmer,
His foe in life and death.
With Jesus he must stand
Undaunted and victorious,
If he would win his glorious
Reward at God's right hand.

It is a comfort pleasing
In our embattled life,
To feel our strength increasing
In trying days of strife.
And as our days shall be
The Lord will help accord us
And with His gifts reward us
When striving faithfully.

O Lord, my hope most fervent,
My refuge in all woe,
I will hence be Thy servant
Through all my days below.
Let come whatever may,
I will exalt Thee ever,
And ask no other favor
Than live with Thee for aye.

Although Brorson knew that—

The cost is greater than at first expected
To be in God's unbounded gifts perfected.

he holds that

It does not cost too hard a strife
To be a Christian, pure and heaven-minded,—

But a Christian must be steadfast and persevering, as he admonishes himself and others in the following very popular hymn. The translation is by Pastor P. C. Paulsen.

Stand fast, my soul, stand fast
In Christ, thy Saviour!
Lose not the war at last
By faint behaviour.
It is of no avail
That thou hast known Him
If when thy foes assail,
Thou shalt His banner fail,
And thus disown Him.

To brandish high thy sword,
With calm assurance,
And face the devil's horde
With brave endurance,
Is meet and well begun,
And merits praising.
But from the strife to run,
When blows thy courage stun,
Is most disgracing.

Let Satan rave and rage
By hosts attended,
The war for Christ I wage
Until it's ended.
When leaning on His arm
With firm reliance,
I need not take alarm,
To me can come no harm
From Hell's defiance.

When Jesus' love I see,
It me constraineth,
So that from carnal glee
My soul abstaineth.
When heaven to me is dear,
Its joys attractive,
Of hell I have no fear,
For Christ, my Lord, is near,
In battle active.

In just a little while
The strife is ended,
And I from Satan's guile
For aye defended.
Then I, where all is well,
In heaven's glory,
Among the saints shall dwell,
And with rejoicing tell
Salvation's story.

Therefore children of God should rejoice.

Children of God, born again by His Spirit,
Never ye cease in His name to rejoice;
Jesus believing and saved by His merit,
Come we to Him with a jubilant voice.

But even a child of God must not expect to escape from the common trials and perils of life. God promises assistance but not exemption to those who love Him. In the following striking hymn, Brorson vividly pictures both the trials and the comfort of a child of God.

I walk in danger everywhere,[7]

The thought must never leave me,
That Satan watches to ensnare
And with his guile deceive me.
His cunning pitfalls may
Make me an easy prey
Unless I guard myself with care;
I walk in danger everywhere.

I walk through trials everywhere;
The world no help can offer.
The burdens I am called to bear
I must with patience suffer;
Though often I discern
No place where I may turn
When clouds surround me far and near;
Death walks beside me everywhere.

Death walks besides me everywhere;
Its shadows oft appall me.
I know not when the hour is here
When God from earth shall call me.
A moment's failing breath,
And I am cold in death,
Faced with eternity fore'er;
Death walks besides me everywhere.

I walk 'mongst angels everywhere;
They are my sure defenders;
The hordes of hell in vain prepare
Against such strong contenders.
All doubts and fears must flee,
With angels guarding me;
No foe can harm me in their care;
I walk 'mongst angels everywhere.

I walk with Jesus everywhere;
His goodness never fails me.
I rest beneath His shielding care
When trouble sore assails me.
And by His footsteps led,
My path I safely tread.
Despite all ills my foes prepare:
I walk with Jesus everywhere.

I walk to heaven everywhere,
Preparing for the morrow
When God shall hear my anxious prayer
And banish all my sorrow.
Be quiet then, my soul,
Press onward to thy goal.
All carnal pleasures thou forswear,
And walk to heaven everywhere.

Unlike Kingo and Grundtvig, Brorson wrote no outstanding hymns on the sacraments. Pietism was in the main a revival movement and placed no special emphasis on the means of grace. And although Brorson remained a loyal son of the established church, he wrote his finest hymns on those phases of Christianity most earnestly emphasized by the movement to which he belonged. While this is only what could be expected, it indicates both his strength and limitation as a hymnwriter. He was above all the sweet singer of Pietism.

The hymns of Brorson that appeared during his lifetime were all written within the space of four years.

In that brief period he composed a volume of songs that rank with the finest in the Christian church, and just as he might have been expected to produce his finest work, he discontinued his effort. The hymns of the **Swan-Song**—which we shall discuss later—though written for his own edification, indicate what he might have attained if he had continued to write for publication. His reason for thus putting aside the lyre, which for a little while he had played so appealingly, is unknown. Some have suggested that he wrote his hymns according to a preconceived plan, which, when completed, he felt no inclination to enlarge; others have surmised that the new and ardent duties, bestowed upon him about this time, deprived him of the leisure to write. But as Brorson himself expressed no reason for his action, no one really knows why this sweet singer of Pietism so suddenly ceased to sing.

[5] Another translation with the same first line by A. M. Andersen in “Hymnal for Church and Home”.
[6] Another translation: “The faith that God believeth” by P. C. Paulsen in “Hymnal for Church and Home”.
[7] Another translation: “I walk in danger all the way” by D. G. Ristad in “Hymnal for Church and Home”.

Chapter Ten

Brorson’s SWAN-SONG

The Pietist movement, new and numerically small when the Brorsons aligned themselves with it, made such sweeping progress that within a few years it became the most powerful movement within the Danish church. And in 1739, it ascended the throne in the persons of King Christian VI and his consort, Queen Sophia Magdalene of Kulmbach, an event of great significance to the fortunes of the Brorsons.

In Denmark the king is officially the head of the church. At the time of Brorson all church appointments belonged to him, and King Christian VI, if he had so wanted, could thus have filled all vacancies with adherents of the movement in which he sincerely believed. He was, however, no fanatic. Earnestly concerned, as he no doubt was, to further the spiritual welfare of his subjects, his only desire was to supply all church positions at his disposal with good and able men. And as such the Brorsons were recommended to him by his old tutor and adviser in church affairs, John Herman Schraeder. On this recommendation, he successively invited the brothers to preach at court. Their impression upon him was so favorable that within a few years he appointed Nicolaj to become pastor of Nicolaj church in Copenhagen, one of the largest churches in the capital, Broder to become Provost of the cathedral at Ribe and, two years later, Bishop of Aalborg, and Hans Adolph to succeed his brother at Ribe and, four years later, to become bishop of that large and historically famous bishopric. Thus the brothers in a few years had been elevated from obscurity to leading positions within their church.

Contemporaries express highly different estimates of Brorson as a bishop. While praised by some, he is severely criticized by others as unfit both by ability and temperament for the high office he occupied. This last estimate now is generally held to be unjust and, to some extent at least, inspired by jealousy of his quick rise to fame and by antagonism to his pietistic views. A close examination of church records and his official correspondence proves him to have been both efficient in the administration of his office and moderate in his dealings with others. He was by all accounts an eloquent and effective speaker. Although Ribe was a small city, its large cathedral was usually crowded whenever it was known that Brorson would conduct the service. People came from far away to hear him. And his preaching at home and on his frequent visits to all parts of his large bishopric bore fruit in a signal quickening of the

Christian life in many of the parishes under his charge. He was, we are told, as happy as a child when he found pastors and their people working faithfully together for the upbuilding of the kingdom. But his own zeal caused him to look for the same earnestness in others. And he was usually stern and, at times, implacable, in his judgment of neglect and slothfulness, especially in the pastors.

His private life was by all accounts exceptionally pure and simple, a true expression of his sincere faith and earnest piety. A domestic, who for many years served in his home has furnished us with a most interesting account of his home life. Brorson, she testifies, was an exceptionally kind and friendly man, always gentle and considerate in his dealing with others except when they had provoked him by some gross neglect or inattention to right and duty. He was generous to a fault toward others, but very frugal, even parsimonious in his home and in his personal habits. Only at Christmas or on other special occasion would he urge his household to spare nothing. He was a ceaseless and industrious worker, giving close personal attention to the multiple duties of his important position and office. His daily life bore eloquent witness of his sincere piety. When at home, no matter how busy, he always gathered his whole household for daily devotions. Music constituted his sole diversion. He enjoyed an evening spent in playing and singing with his family and servants. If he chanced to hear a popular song with a pleasing tune, he often adopted it to his own words, and sang it in the family circle. Many of the hymns in his Swan-Song are said to have been composed and sung in that way.

His life was rich in trials and suffering. His first wife died just as he was preparing to go to Copenhagen for his consecration as a bishop, and the loss affected him so deeply that only the pleading of his friends prevented him from resigning the office. He later married a most excellent woman, Johanne Riese, but could never forget the wife of his youth. Several of his children preceded him in death, some of them while still in their infancy, and others in the prime of their youth. His own health was always delicate and he passed through several severe illnesses from which his recovery was considered miraculous. His heaviest cross was, perhaps, the hopeless insanity of his first-born son, who throughout his life had to be confined to a locked and barred room as a hopeless and dangerous lunatic. A visitor in the bishop’s palace, it is related, once remarked: “You speak so often about sorrows and trials, Bishop Brorson, but you have your ample income and live comfortably in this fine mansion, so how can you know about these things?” Without answering, Brorson beckoned his visitor to follow him to the graveyard where he showed him the grave of his wife and several of his children, and into the palace where he showed him the sad spectacle of his insane son. Then the visitor understood that position and material comfort are no guaranty against sorrow.

A very sensitive man, Brorson was often deeply afflicted by his trials, but though cast down, he was not downcast. The words of his own beloved hymn, “Whatever I am called to bear, I must in patience suffer,” no doubt express his own attitude toward the burdens of his life. His trials engendered in him, however, an intense yearning for release, especially during his later years. The hymns of his **Swan-Song** are eloquent testimonies of his desire to depart and be at home with God.

With the passing years his health became progressively poorer and his weakening body less able to support the strain of his exacting office. He would listen to no plea for relaxation, however, until his decreasing strength clearly made it impossible for him to continue. Even then he refused to rest and planned to publish a series of weekly sermons that he might thus continue to speak to his people. But his strength waned so quickly that he was able to complete only one of the sermons.

On May 29, 1764, he begged a government official to complete a case before him at his earliest

convenience “for I am now seventy years old, feeble, bedridden and praying for release from this unhappy world.” Only a day later, his illness took a grave turn for the worse. He sank into a stupor that lasted until dusk when he awoke and said clearly, “My Jesus is praying for me in heaven. I see it by faith and am anxious to go. Come quickly, my Lord, and take me home!” He lingered until the morning of June 3, when he passed away peacefully just as the great bells of the cathedral announced the morning service.

Several fine memorials have been raised to his memory, among them an excellent statue at the entrance to the cathedral at Ribe, and a tablet on the inside wall of the building right beside a similar remembrance of Hans Tausen, the leader of the Danish reformation and a former bishop of the diocese. But the finest memorial was raised to him by his son through the publication of **Hans Adolph Brorson’s Swan-Song**, a collection of hymns and songs selected from his unpublished writings.

The songs of the **Swan-Song** were evidently written for the poet’s own consolation and diversion. They are of very different types and merit, and a number of them might without loss have been left out of the collection. A few of them stand unexcelled, however, for beauty, sentiment and poetic excellence. There are songs of patience such as the inimitable:

Her vil ties, her vil bies,
Her vil bies, o svage Sind.
Vist skal du hente, kun ved at vente,
Kun ved at vente, vor Sommer ind.
Her vil ties, her vil bies,
Her vil bies, o svage Sind.

which one can hardly transfer to another language without marring its tender beauty. And there are songs of yearning such as the greatly favored,

O Holy Ghost, my spirit
With yearning longs to see
Jerusalem
That precious gem,
Where I shall soon inherit
The home prepared for me.

But O the stormy waters!
How shall I find my way
Mid hidden shoals,
Where darkness rolls,
And join thy sons and daughters
Who dwell in thee for aye.

Lord, strengthen my assurance
Of dwelling soon with Thee,
That I may brave
The threatening wave
With firm and calm endurance;
Thyself my pilot be.

And there is “The Great White Host”, most beloved of all Brorson’s hymns, which Dr. Ryden, a Swedish-American Hymnologist, calls the most popular Scandinavian hymn in the English language. Several English translations of this song are available. The translation presented below is from the new English hymnal of the Danish Lutheran churches in America.

Behold the mighty, whiterobed band[8]

Like thousand snowclad mountains stand
With waving palms
And swelling psalms
Above at God's right hand.
These are the heroes brave that came
Through tribulation, war and flame
And in the flood
Of Jesus' blood
Were cleansed from sin and shame.
Now with the ransomed, heavenly Throng
They praise the Lord in every tongue,
And anthems swell
Where God doth dwell
Amidst the angels' song.

They braved the world's contempt and might,
But see them now in glory bright
With golden crowns,
In priestly gowns
Before the throne of light.
The world oft weighed them with dismay.
And tears would flow without allay,
But there above
The Saviour's love
Has wiped their tears away.
Theirs is henceforth the Sabbath rest,
The Paschal banquet of the blest,
Where fountains play
And Christ for aye
Is host as well as guest.

All hail to you, blest heroes, then!
A thousand fold is now your gain
That ye stood fast
Unto the last
And did your goal attain.
Ye spurned all worldly joy and fame,
And harvest now in Jesus' name
What ye have sown
With tears unknown
Mid angels' glad acclaim.
Lift up your voice, wave high your palm,
Compass the heavens with your psalm:
All glory be
Eternally
To God and to the Lamb.

Brorson's hymns were received with immediate favor. **The Rare Clenod of Faith** passed through six editions before the death of its author, and a new church hymnal published in 1740 contained ninety of his hymns. Pietism swept the country and adopted Brorson as its poet. But its reign was surprisingly short. King Christian VI died in 1746, and the new king, a luxury-loving worldling, showed little interest in religion and none at all in Pietism. Under his influence the movement quickly waned. During the latter part of the eighteenth century it was overpowered by a wave of religious rationalism which engulfed the greater part of the intellectual classes and the younger clergy. The intelligentsia adopted Voltaire and Rousseau as their prophets and talked endlessly of the new age of enlightenment in which religion was to be shorn of its mysteries and people were to be delivered from the bonds of superstition.

In such an atmosphere the old hymns and, least of all, Brorson's hymns with their mystic contemplation of the Saviour's blood and wounds could not survive. The leading spirits in the movement demanded a

new hymnal that expressed the spirit of the new age. The preparation of such a book was undertaken by a committee of popular writers, many of whom openly mocked Evangelical Christianity. Their work was published under the title **The Evangelical Christian Hymnal**, a peculiar name for a book which, as has been justly said, was neither Evangelical nor Christian. The compilers had eliminated many of the finest hymns of Kingo and Brorson and ruthlessly altered others so that they were irrecognizable. To compensate for this loss, a great number of "poetically perfect hymns" by newer writers—nearly all of whom have happily been forgotten—were adopted.

But while would-be leaders discarded or mutilated the old hymns and, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, sought to force their new songs upon the congregations, many of these clung tenaciously to their old hymnal and stoutly refused to accept the new. In places the controversy even developed into a singing contest, with the congregations singing the numbers from the old hymnal and the deacons from the new. And these contests were, of course, expressive of an even greater controversy than the choice of hymns. They represented the struggle between pastors, working for the spread of the new gospel, and congregations still clinging to the old. With the highest authorities actively supporting the new movement, the result of the contest was, however, a foregone conclusion. The new enlightenment triumphed, and thousands of Evangelical Christians became homeless in their own church.

During the subsequent period of triumphant Rationalism, groups of Evangelical laymen began to hold private assemblies in their own homes and to provide for their own spiritual nourishment by reading Luther's sermons and singing the old hymns. In these assemblies Brorson's hymns retained their favor until a new Evangelical awakening during the middle part of the nineteenth century produced a new appreciation of the old hymns and restored them to their rightful place in the worship of the church. And the songs of the Sweet Singer of Pietism have, perhaps, never enjoyed a greater favor in his church than they do today.

[8] Another translation: "Like thousand mountains brightly crowned" by S. D. Rodholm in "World of Song".

Nicolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig
the Singer of Pentecost

Chapter Eleven

Grundtvig's Early Years

The latter part of the eighteenth and the earlier part of the nineteenth century produced a number of great changes in the spiritual, intellectual and economic life of Denmark. The strong Pietist movement at the time of Brorson, as we have seen, lost much of its momentum with the death of King Christian VI, and within a few years was overwhelmed by a wave of the intellectual and religious Rationalism then engulfing a large part of Europe. Religion, it was claimed, should be divested of its mysteries and reason made supreme. Whatever could not justify itself before the bar of the human intellect should be discarded as outworn conceptions of a less enlightened age. The movement, however, comprised all shades of opinions from pure agnosticism to an idealistic belief in God, virtue and immortality.

Although firmly opposed by some of the most influential Danish leaders of that day, such as the valiant bishop of Sjælland, Johan Edinger Balle, Rationalism swept the country with irresistible force. Invested in the attractive robe of human enlightenment and appealing to man's natural intellectual vanity, the movement attracted the majority of the upper classes and a large proportion of the clergy. Its adherents studied Rousseau and Voltaire, talked resoundingly of human enlightenment, organized endless numbers of clubs, and—in some instances—worked zealously for the social and economic uplift of the depressed classes.

In this latter endeavor many pastors assumed a commendable part. Having lost the old Gospel, the men of the cloth became eager exponents of the "social gospel" of that day. While we may not approve their Christmas sermons "on improved methods of stable feeding," or their Easter sermons "on the profitable cultivation of buckwheat," we cannot but recognize their devoted labor for the educational and economic uplift, especially of the hard-pressed peasants.

Their well-meant efforts, however, bore little fruit. The great majority of the people had sunk into a slough of spiritual apathy from which neither the work of the Rationalists nor the stirring events of the time could arouse them.

The nineteenth century began threateningly for Denmark, heaping calamity after calamity upon her. England attacked her in 1801 and 1807, robbing her of her fine fleet and forcing her to enter the European war on the side of Napoleon. The war wrecked her trade, bankrupted her finances and ended with the severance of her long union with Norway in 1814. But through it all Holger Danske slept peacefully, apparently unaware that the very existence of the nation was threatened.

It is against this background of spiritual and national indifference that the towering figure of Grundtvig must be seen. For it was he, more than any other, who awakened his people from their lethargic indifference and started them upon the road toward a happier day spiritually and nationally.

Nicolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig, like so many of Denmark's greatest men, was the son of a parson. He was born September 8, 1783, at Udby, a country parish in the south-eastern part of Sjælland. His

father, Johan Ottesen Grundtvig, was a pastor of the old school, an upright, earnest and staunch supporter of the Evangelical Lutheran faith. His mother, Catherine Marie Bang, was a high-minded, finely educated woman with an ardent love for her country, its history, traditions and culture. Her son claimed that he had inherited his love of “song and saga” from her.

The Grundtvigs on both sides of the family were descendants of a long line of distinguished forebears, the most famous of whom was Archbishop Absalon, the founder of Copenhagen and one of the most powerful figures in 13th Century Denmark. And they still had relatives in high places. Thus Johan Edinger Balle, the formerly mentioned bishop of Sjælland, was a brother-in-law of Johan Grundtvig; Cathrine Grundtvig’s brother, Dr. Johan Frederik Bang, was a well-known professor of medicine and the stepfather of Jacob Peter Mynster; and her younger sister, Susanna Kristine Steffens, was the mother of Henrik Steffens, a professor at the universities of Halle and Breslau, a friend of Goethe and Schiller, and a leader of the early Romantic movement, both in Germany and Denmark.

Cathrine Grundtvig bore her husband five children, of whom Nicolaj was the youngest. But even with such a large household to manage, she found time to supervise the early schooling of her youngest son. She taught him to read, told him the sagas of his people and gave him his first lessons in the history and literature, both of his own and of other nations.

It was a period of stirring events. Wars and revolutions raged in many parts of Europe. And these events were eagerly followed and discussed in the parsonage. Listening to his elders, Grundtvig saw, as it were, history in its making and acquired an interest in the subject that produced rich fruits in later years. The wholesome Christian life of his home and the devotional spirit of the services in his father’s church also made a deep impression upon him, an impression that even the scepticism of his youth could not eradicate.

But his happy childhood years ended all too quickly. At the age of nine he left his home to continue his studies under a former tutor, Pastor L. Feld of Thyregod, a country parish in Jylland. There he spent six lonely but quite fruitful years, receiving among other things a solid training in the classical languages. In 1798, he completed his studies with Rev. Feld and enrolled in the Latin school at Aarhus, the principal city of Jylland. But the change proved most unfortunate for young Grundtvig. Under the wise and kindly guidance of Rev. Feld he had preserved the wholesome, eager spirit of his childhood, but the lifeless teaching, the compulsory religious exercises and the whole spiritless atmosphere of his new school soon changed him into an indifferent, sophisticated and self-satisfied cynic with little interest in his studies, and none at all in religion.

At the completion of his course, however, this attitude did not deter him from enrolling at the University of Copenhagen with the intention of studying for the ministry. A university education was then considered almost indispensable to a man of his social position, and his parents earnestly wished him to enter the church. Nor was his attitude toward Christianity greatly different from that of his fellow students or even from that of many pastors already preaching the emasculated gospel of God, Virtue, and Immortality which the Rationalists held to be the true essence of the Christian religion. Believing the important part of the Gospel to be its ethical precepts, Grundtvig, furthermore, prided himself upon the correctness of his own moral conduct and his ability to control all unworthy passions. “I was at that time,” he later complained, “nothing but an insufferably vain and narrow-minded Pharisee.”

From this spirit of superior self-sufficiency, only two things momentarily aroused him during his university years—the English attacks upon Copenhagen; and a series of lectures by his cousin, Henrik

Steffens.

Steffens, as a student at Jena, had met and become an enthusiastic disciple of Schelling, the father of natural philosophy, a pantheistic colored conception of life, opposed to the narrowly materialistic views of most Rationalists. Lecturing at the university during the years 1802-1803, Steffens aroused a tremendous enthusiasm, both among the students and some of the older intellectuals. “He was a fiery speaker,” Grundtvig remarks later, “and his lectures both shocked and inspired us although I often laughed at him afterward.”

Despite his attempt to laugh away the impression of the fiery speaker, Grundtvig, nevertheless, retained at least two lasting memories from the lectures—the power of the spoken word, a power that even against his will could arouse him from his cynical indifference, and the reverence with which Steffens spoke of Christ as “the center of history.” The human race, he contended, had sunk progressively lower and lower from the fall of man until the time of Nero, when the process had been reversed and man had begun the slow upward climb that was still continuing. And of this progress the speaker in glowing terms pictured Christ as the living center.

Grundtvig was graduated from the university in the spring of 1803. He wished to remain in Copenhagen but could find no employment and was forced, therefore, to return to his home. Here he remained for about a year, after which he succeeded in obtaining a position as tutor for the son of Lieutenant Steensen Leth of Egelykke, a large estate on the island of Langeland.

Except for the fact that Egelykke was far from Copenhagen, Grundtvig soon became quite satisfied with his new position. Both the manor and its surroundings were extremely beautiful, and his work was congenial. His employer, a former naval officer, proved to be a rough, hard-drinking worldling; but his hostess, Constance Leth, was a charming, well-educated woman whose cultural interests made the manor a favored gathering place for a group of like-minded ladies from the neighborhood. And with these cultured women, Grundtvig soon felt himself much more at home than with his rough-spoken employer and hard-drinking companions.

But if Grundtvig unexpectedly was beginning to enjoy his stay at Egelykke, this enjoyment vanished like a dream when he suddenly discovered that he was falling passionately in love with his attractive hostess. It availed him nothing that others as he well knew might have accepted such a situation with complacence; to him it appeared an unpardonable reproach both to his intelligence and his honor. Having proudly asserted the ability of any intelligent man to master his passions, he was both horrified and humiliated to discover that he could not control his own.

Nicolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig

Nicolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig

Grundtvig never consciously revealed his true sentiment to Constance Leth. At the cost of an intense struggle, he managed outwardly to maintain his code of honorable conduct. But he still felt humbled and shaken by his inability to suppress his inner and as he saw it guilty passion. And under this blow to his proud self-sufficiency, he felt, perhaps for the first time in his life, the need for a power greater than his own. “To win in this struggle,” he wrote in his diary, “lies beyond my own power. I must look for help from above or sink as the stone sinks while the lightly floating leaves mock it and wonder why it cannot float as they do.”

The struggle against his passion engendered a need for work. “In order to quiet the storm within me,” he writes, “I forced my mind to occupy itself with the most difficult labor.” Although he had paid small attention to the suggestion at the time, he now remembered and began to read some of the authors Steffens had recommended in his lectures: Goethe, Schiller, Schelling, Fichte, Shakespeare and others. He also studied the work of newer Danish writers, such as Prof. Jens Møller, a writer on Northern mythology, and Adam Oehlenschlaeger, a young man who, inspired by Steffens, was becoming the foremost dramatic poet of Denmark. He even renewed the study of his long neglected Bible. The motive of his extensive reading was, no doubt, ethical rather than esthetic, a search for that outside power of which the battle within him revealed his urgent need. Thus he wrote:

> My spirit opened its eyes,
> Saw itself on the brink of the abyss,
> Searched with trembling and fear
> Everywhere for a power to save,
> And found God in all things,
> Found Him in the songs of the poets,
> Found Him in the work of the sages,
> Found Him in the myths of the North,
> Found Him in the records of history,
> But clearest of all it still
> Found Him in the Book of Books.

The fate that appears to crush a man may also exalt him. And so it was with Grundtvig. His suffering crushed the stony shell of cynical indifference in which he had long enclosed his naturally warm and impetuous spirit and released the great latent forces within him. In the midst of his struggle, new ideas germinated springlike in his mind. He read, thought and wrote, especially on the subject that was always near to his heart, the mythology and early traditions of the Northern peoples. And after three years of struggle, he was at last ready to break away from Egelykke. If he had not yet conquered his passion, he had so far mastered it that he could aspire to other things.

Thus ended what a modern Danish writer, Skovgaard-Petersen, calls “the finest love story in Danish history.” The event had caused Grundtvig much pain, but it left no festering wounds. His firm refusal to permit his passion to sully himself or degrade the woman he loved had, on the contrary, made it one of the greatest incitations to good in his whole life.

On his return to Copenhagen Grundtvig almost at once obtained a position as teacher in history at Borch’s Collegium for boys. His new position satisfied him eminently by affording him a chance to work with his favorite subject and to expand his other intellectual interests. He soon made friends with a number of promising young intellectuals who, in turn, introduced him to some of the outstanding intellectual and literary lights of the country, and within a short while the list of his acquaintances read like a Blue Book of the city’s intelligentsia.

Although Grundtvig was still quite unknown except for a few articles in a current magazine, there was something about him, an originality of view, an arresting way of phrasing his thoughts, a quiet sense of humor, that commanded attention. His young friends willingly acknowledged his leadership, and the older watched him with expectation. Nor were they disappointed. His **Northern Mythology** appeared in 1808, and **Episodes from the Decay of Northern Heroism** only a year later. And these strikingly original and finely written works immediately established his reputation as one of the foremost writers of Denmark. There were even those who in their enthusiasm compared him with the revered Oehlenschlaeger. A satirical poem, “The Masquerade Ball of Denmark,” inspired by the frivolous

indifference with which many people had reacted to the English bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807, showed his power of burning scorn and biting satire.

In the midst of this success and the preparation of plans for new and more ambitious works, Grundtvig received a request from his old father to come home and assist him with his parish work. The request was not at all pleasing to him. His personal attitude toward Christianity was still uncertain, and his removal from the capital would interfere with his literary career. But as the wish of his good parents could not be ignored, he reluctantly applied for ordination and began to prepare his probation sermon.

This now famous sermon was delivered before the proper officials March 17, 1810. Knowing that few besides the censors would be present to hear him and feeling that an ordinary sermon would be out of place before such an audience, Grundtvig prepared his sermon as an historical survey of the present state of the church rather than as an Evangelical discourse.

His study of history had convinced him of the mighty influence Christianity had once exerted upon the nations, and he, therefore, posed the question why this influence was now in decline. “Are the glad tidings,” he asked, “which through seventeen hundred years passed from confessing lips to listening ears still not preached?” And the answer is “no”. Even the very name of Jesus is now without significance and worth to most people of the younger generation, “for the Word of God has departed from His house and that which is preached there is not the Word of God, but the earth-bound speculations of men. The holy men of old believed in the message they were called to preach, but the human spirit has now become so proud that it feels itself capable of discovering the truth without the light of the Gospel, and so faith has died. My Brethren!” he exclaims, “Let us not, if we share this blindness and contempt for the heavenly light, be false and shameless enough to desecrate the Holy Place by appearing there as preachers of a Christianity in which we ourselves do not believe!”

The sermon was delivered with much force and eloquence. Grundtvig felt himself stirred by the strength of his own argument; and a comparison of the warm devotional spirit of a church service, as he remembered it from his childhood, with the cold indifference of later days moved him to sentimental tears, the first pious tears that he had shed for many years, he said later. Even the censors were so impressed that they unanimously awarded him the mark of excellent, a generosity they bitterly regretted a few weeks later. For Grundtvig, contrary to his promise—as the censors asserted but Grundtvig denied—published his sermon. And it was warmly received by the Evangelicals as the first manna that had fallen in a desert for many years. But the Rationalists violently condemned it and presented the Committee on Church Affairs with an indignant protest against its author “for having grossly insulted the Danish clergy.”

Considering the enthusiastic approval the sermon had received in various quarters, the committee would gladly have squashed the complaint. But the complainers, comprising many of the most influential pastors in the city, were too powerful to be ignored. And so Grundtvig was found guilty “of having willfully insulted the Danish clergy, both individually and as a body,” and sentenced to receive a reprimand by the dean of the theological faculty.

When Grundtvig on January 11, 1811, presented himself before the dean to receive his reprimand, he looked so pale and shaken that even the worthy official took compassion upon him and advised him privately that he must not take his sentence too seriously. It was not, however, the stern reprimand of the dean but an experience of far greater consequence that so visibly blanched the cheeks of the defendant.

The prospect of entering the active ministry caused Grundtvig to examine seriously his own attitude toward Christianity. And although the bishop vetoed his assignment to Udby and thus released him from the immediate prospect of entering the pulpit, this did not stop the trend of his thoughts. He had lost his former indifference toward religion and discovered the historical significance of Christianity, but just what did the Christian faith mean to him personally?

He was still pondering this question, when in the fall of 1810, he commenced a study of the Crusades, "the heroic age of Christianity," as one historian called the period. The phrase appealed to him. He had lately wandered through the mystic halls of Northern gods and heroes and deplored the decay of their heroic spirit. He admired the heroic, and his heart still wavered between the mighty Wodin and the meek and lowly Christ. But the heroic age of Christianity—was it possible then that Christianity too could rise to the heroic?

In the course of his study he read **The Early History of Prussia** by A. von Kotzebue in which the author, after ridiculing "the missionary zeal that, like a fire on the steppes, caught the kings of Poland and Scandinavia and moved them to frantic efforts for the conversion of neighboring peoples," proudly stated, "But while her neighbors all accepted Christianity and the withered cross drew steadily nearer to the green oak, Prussia remained faithful to her ancient gods."

"The withered Cross!" The words stung Grundtvig to the quick. He hurled the book away, sprang up and stormed about the room, vowing that he would henceforth dedicate his life to the cause of the spurned emblem.

A few weeks of restless exaltation followed. He read his Bible, studied Luther's catechism and pondered the ways and means of accomplishing a reform of his church, especially a reform inspired by pen and ink. But his **New Year's Night**, a small book published during this period, shows his still troublesome uncertainty, his constant wavering between the old gods and the Christ of the Gospels, between various degrees of Rationalism and a full acceptance of the mystery of the cross. In a mighty hymn of praise to the suffering Savior, he wrote many years later: "Yes, my heart believes the wonder of Thy cross, which ages ponder"—but he had yet to pass through the depths before he could say that. Even so, he now exultingly wrote: "On the rim of the bottomless abyss toward which our age is blindly hastening, I will stand and confront it with a picture, illumined by two shining lights, the Word of God, and the testimony of history. As long as God gives me strength to lift up my voice, I will call and admonish my people in His name."

But from this pinnacle of proud exultation, he was suddenly hurled into the abyss when, like a bolt of lightning, the thought struck him: But are you yourself a Christian, have you received the forgiveness of your sin?

"It struck me like a hammer, crashing the rock," he said later, "what the Lord tells the ungodly: 'What hast thou to declare my statutes or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth, seeing that thou hatest my instruction and castest my word behind thee!'" Gone like a dream were now all his proud fancies. Only one thought filled his whole being—to obtain the forgiveness of his sin and the assurance of God's grace. But so violent became his struggle that his mind at times reeled on the brink of insanity. His young friends stood loyally by him, comforting and guarding him as far as they could. And when it became clear that he must be removed from the noise of the city, one of them, F. Sibbern, volunteered to take him home. There his old parents received him with understanding, even rejoicing that anxiety for his soul and not other things had so disturbed his mind.

The peace of the quiet countryside, the understanding care of his parents and the soothing influence of their firm Evangelical faith acted as a balm to Grundtvig's struggling spirit. He loved to enter the old church of his childhood, to hear his father preach, or sit alone before the altar in meditation and prayer. And there before the altar of the church in which he had been baptized and confirmed, he at last found peace, the true peace of God that passeth all understanding.

After the great change in his life, Grundtvig now wished most heartily to become his father's assistant. The elder Grundtvig had already forwarded his resignation from the pastorate but was more than happy to apply for its return and for the appointment of his son as his assistant. And so, Grundtvig was ordained at Copenhagen, May 11, 1811, and installed at Udby a few days later. He was back again in the old church of his childhood.

Chapter Twelve

The Lonely Defender of the Bible

Grundtvig began his work at Udby with all the zeal of a new convert. He ministered to young and old, spent himself in work for the sick and the poor, and preached the Gospel with a fervor that was new, not only to the people of Udby, but to most people of that generation. If other things had not intervened, like his father, he might have spent his life as a successful country pastor. But his father died January 5, 1813. The authorities refused to confirm Grundtvig in the vacant charge, and he and his mother, shortly afterward, were compelled to leave the parsonage that had been their home for more than forty years. His mother settled in Prastø, a small city a few miles from Udby, and Grundtvig returned to Copenhagen to search for a new position, a task that this time proved both long and painful.

Among available positions, Grundtvig especially coveted a professorship in history at the newly founded university of Oslo, Norway, at which three of his friends, S. B. Hersleb, Niels Trechow and George Sverdrup, had already obtained employment. But although these friends worked zealously for his appointment, even after the separation of Norway from Denmark, their efforts were fruitless. Grundtvig was not destined to leave his native land. Nor were his attempts to secure other work successful. In spite of the fact that he applied for almost every vacancy in the church, even the smallest, his powerful enemies among the Rationalists were influential enough to prevent his appointment to any of them.

Meanwhile he was by no means idle. Following his conversion, he felt for a time like a man suddenly emerging from darkness into the brightness of a new day. Old things had passed away, but the brilliance of the new light confused him. What could he do? How many of his former interests were reconcilable with his new views? Could he, for instance, continue his writings? "When my eyes were opened," he writes, "I considered all things not directly concerned with God a hindrance to the blessed knowledge of my Lord, Jesus Christ." After a time he saw, however, that his ability to write might be accepted as a gift from God to be used in His service. "The poet when inspired," he says, "may proclaim a message from above to the world below," and so, "after dedicating it to Himself, the Lord again handed me the harp that I had placed upon His altar."

During his brief stay at Udby, Grundtvig published three larger works: **Episodes from the Battle between Ases and Norns**, **Saga** and **A New Year's Gift for 1812**.[9] The first of these was nearly completed before his conversion, and as he now reread the manuscript, its content almost shocked him. Was it possible that he had felt and written thus only a few months ago! He thought of destroying the

work but decided to recast it in conformity with his present views and to express these clearly in a preface. With the completion of this task, however, he took a long leave from the “ice-cold giants of the North” that had so long engrossed his attention.

After his brief visit with the heroes of the past, Grundtvig again turned his attention to their descendants in the present. And the contrast was almost startling. The war still was dragging on and the country sinking deeper and deeper into the morass of political, commercial and economic difficulties. But the majority of the people seemed completely indifferent to her plight. “They talked of nothing,” Grundtvig says, “but of what they had eaten, worn and amused themselves with yesterday, or what they would eat, wear and amuse themselves with tomorrow.” Was it possible that these people could be descendants of the giants whose valor and aggressive spirit had once challenged the greater part of Europe?

Grundtvig was convinced that the spiritual apathy of his people resulted from the failure of their spiritual leaders to uphold the Evangelical faith, and that the salvation of the nation depended on a true revival of Evangelical Christianity. For this reason he now exerted every means at his command to induce the people and, especially, their leaders to return to the old paths. In numerous works, both in verse and in prose, he urged the people to renew the faith of their fathers and challenged their leaders to take a definite stand for Biblical Christianity. He became the lonely defender of the Bible.

Among outstanding personalities of that day, there were especially two that attracted widespread attention: J. P. Mynster, assistant pastor at the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, and Adam Gottlieb Oehlenschlaeger, the dramatic poet, then at the height of his fame. With their influence these men, as Grundtvig saw it, might give a strong impetus to the much needed awakening; and, he therefore, approached them personally.

Rev. Mynster, a stepson of Grundtvig’s maternal uncle, after a period of rationalism, had experienced a quiet conversion to Evangelical faith and won a respected name as a faithful and gifted preacher of the Gospel, a name which he retained throughout his conspicuous career as pastor of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen and, later, as Bishop of Sjælland. He and Grundtvig, working to the same purpose, ought to have united with another, but they were both too individualistic in temperament and views to join forces. Mynster was coldly logical, calm and reserved, a lover of form and orderly progress. Grundtvig was impetuous, and volcanic, in constant ferment, always in search of spiritual reality and wholly indifferent to outward appearances. His own experience had led him to believe that a return to Evangelical Christianity could be effected only through a clean break with Rationalism, and he could not understand Mynster’s apparent attempt to temporize and bring about a gradual transition from one to the other. There should be no compromise between truth and falsehood. All believers in the Gospel should stand up and proclaim it fearlessly, no matter what the consequences.

And so Grundtvig wrote to Mynster: “Dear Rev. Mynster, I owe you an apology for asking a question that in our days may appear inexcusable: What is your real belief regarding the Bible and the faith of Jesus Christ? If you humbly believe in God’s Word, I shall rejoice with you even if you differ with me in all other things. Dear Rev. Mynster—for you are that to me—if my question appears unseemly, you must not let it hurt you, for I have written only as my heart dictates.” But Mynster did feel offended and answered Grundtvig very coldly that his questions implied an unwarranted and offensive doubt of his sincerity that must make future intercourse between them difficult—if not impossible.

Nor was Grundtvig more successful with a letter of similar purport to Oehlenschlaeger whose later writings he found lacked the spiritual sincerity of his earlier work. “My concern about this,” he wrote,

“is increased by the thought that this lessening of spirituality must be expressive of a change in your own spiritual outlook, your inner relationship with God whom all spiritual workers should serve, counting it a greater achievement to inspire their fellow men with a true adoration of our Lord than to win the acclaim of the world.” But like Mynster the highly feted poet accepted this frank questioning of his inner motive as an unwarranted impertinence, the stupid intrusion of an intolerable fanatic with whom no friend of true enlightenment could have anything to do. Grundtvig was fast finding out what it means to be counted a fool for Christ’s sake—or for what he thought was Christ’s sake.

In the midst of these troubles Grundtvig again turned his attention to history, his favorite subject from childhood days. His retreat from the present to the past implied no abolition, however, of his resolve to dedicate himself to a spiritual revival of his people. Through his historical work he wished to show the influence of Christianity upon the people of Europe. “That the life of every people,” he writes, “is and must be a fruit of faith should be clear to all. For who can dispute that every human action—irrespective of how little considered it may have been—is expressive of its doer’s attitude, of his way of feeling and thinking. But what determines a man’s way of thinking except his essential thoughts concerning the relationship between God and the world, the visible and the invisible? Every serious thinker, therefore, must recognize the importance of faith in the furtherance of science, the progress of nations and the life of the state. It is a fearful delusion that man can be immoral, an unbeliever, even an enemy of the cross of Christ, and yet a furtherer of morality and science, a good neighbor and a benefactor to his country.”

A Brief Survey of the World’s History, which Grundtvig published in 1812, is thus the opposite of an objective presentation of historical events. It is a Christian philosophy of history, an attempt to prove the truth of the Gospel by its effect upon the nations. With the Bible before him Grundtvig weighs and evaluates people and events upon the scale of the revealed word. And his judgment is often relentless, stripping both persons and events of the glorified robes in which history and traditions invested them. In answer to countless protests against such a method of reading history, Grundtvig contends that the Christian historian must accept the consequences of his faith. He cannot profess the truth of Christianity and ignore its implication in the life of the world. If the Gospel be true, history must be measured by its relation to its truth.

Grundtvig’s history caused a sensation, especially on account of its frank appraisal of many well-known persons. Nearly all praised its lucid style; a few, such as George Sverdrup, spoke highly of its strikingly original estimate and correlation of events; but the intelligentsia condemned it as the work of an impossible fanatic. With this work, they claimed, Grundtvig had clearly removed himself from the pale of intelligent men.

But while his enemies raged, Grundtvig was already busy with another work: **A Brief Account of God’s Way with the Danish and Norwegian Peoples**. This history which, written in verse and later published under the title of **Roskilde Rhymes**, was first read at a diocesan convention in Roskilde Cathedral, the Westminster Abbey of Denmark. Although the poem contained many urgent calls to the assembled pastors to awake and return to the way of the fathers, whose bones rested within the walls of the historic sanctuary, its reading caused no immediate resentment. Most of the reverend listeners are reported, in fact, to have been peacefully asleep when late in the evening Grundtvig finished the reading of his lengthy manuscript. But a paper on “Polemics and Tolerance” which he read at another convention two years later kept his listeners wide awake.

“Our day has inherited two shibboleths from the eighteenth century: enlightenment and tolerance. By

the last of these words most people understand an attitude of superior neutrality toward the opinions of others, even when these opinions concern the highest spiritual welfare of man. Such an attitude has for its premise that good and evil, truth and falsehood are not separate and irreconcilable realities but only different phases of the same question. But every Christian, thoroughly convinced of the antagonism and irreconcilability of truth with falsehood, must inevitably hate and reject such a supposition. If Christianity be true, tolerance toward opinions and teachings denying its truth is nothing but a craven betrayal of both God and man. It is written, 'Judge and condemn no one' but not 'Judge and condemn nothing.' For every Christian must surely both judge and condemn evil.

"There are times when to fight for Christianity may not be an urgent necessity; but that cannot be so in our days when every one of its divine truths is mocked and assailed.

"You call me a self-seeking fanatic, but if I be that, why are you yourself silent? If I be misleading those who follow me, why are you, the true watchmen of Zion, not exerting yourself to lead them aright? I stand here the humblest of Danish pastors, a minister without a pulpit, a man reviled by the world, shorn of my reputation as a writer, and held to be devoid of all intelligence and truth. Even so I solemnly declare that the religion now preached in our Danish church is not Christianity, is nothing but a tissue of deception and falsehood, and that unless Danish pastors bestir themselves and fight for the restoration of God's word and the Christian faith there will soon be no Christian church in Denmark."

The immediate effect of this bold challenge was a stern reprimand from Bishop Frederik Munter, accompanied by a solemn warning that if he ever again ventured to voice a similar judgment upon his fellow pastors, sterner measures would at once be taken against him. Besides this, his enemies raved, some of his few remaining friends broke with him, and H. C. Ørsted, the famous discoverer of electro-magnetism, continued an attack upon him that for bitterness has no counterpart in Danish letters. In the midst of this storm Grundtvig remained self-possessed, answering his critic quite calmly and even with a touch of humor. Although relentless in a fight for principles, he was never vindictive toward his personal enemies. In 1815, he published a collection of poems, **Kvaedlinger**, in which he asks, "Who knoweth of peace who never has fought, whoso has been saved and suffered naught?" And these lines no doubt express his personal attitude toward the battles of life.

Being without a pulpit of his own, Grundtvig, after his return to Copenhagen, frequently accepted invitations to preach for other pastors. But as the opposition against him grew, these invitations decreased and, after the Roskilde affair, only one church, the church of Frederiksberg, was still open to him. Grundtvig felt his exclusion very keenly, but he knew that even friendly pastors hesitated to invite him for fear of incurring the disapproval of superiors or the displeasure of influential parishioners. And so, at the close of a Christmas service in the Frederiksberg church in 1815, he solemnly announced that he would not enter a pulpit again until he had been duly appointed to do so by the proper authorities.

Grundtvig's withdrawal from the church, though pleasing to his active enemies, was a great disappointment to his friends. His services had always been well attended, and his earnest message had brought comfort to many, especially among the distressed Evangelicals. But others, too, felt the power of his word. Thus a man in Copenhagen, after attending one of his services, wrote to a friend, "that he had laughed at the beginning of the sermon and wept at its conclusion" and that "it was the only earnest testimony he had ever heard from a pulpit." And a reporter writing to a Copenhagen newspaper about his last service said, "Our famous Grundtvig preached yesterday at Frederiksberg church to such a crowd of people that the church was much too small to accommodate them. Here were people from all

walks of life, and the speaker, we are convinced, stirred them to the bottom of their souls. Here was a Mynster's clarity, a Fallesen's earnestness, and a Balle's appeal united with a Nordahl Brun's manliness and admirable language." And this about a man for whom his church had no room!

Thus Grundtvig instead of the friendly co-operation he had hoped for especially from the spiritual and intellectual leaders of the people found himself virtually shut out from the circle to which he naturally belonged, and from the church he loved, perhaps better than any man of his generation.

But if his hope of enlisting the leaders in a campaign to revive the spiritual life of the common people had been disappointed, his own determination to devote his life to that purpose remained unshaken. If he could look for no help from the recognized leaders of his nation, he must somehow gain a hearing from the common people themselves. His personal contact with these, however, was rather slight. Except for his brief work as a pastor, he had so far spent the greater part of his life in intellectual pursuits quite removed from the interest of the common man. And the question was then how he, a man without any special position and influence, could reach the ears of his countrymen.

In searching for an answer to this question, he remembered the two things that most profoundly had influenced his own spiritual outlook, his study of the traditions and history of his people, and his religious awakening in 1810. Was it not possible then that a like change might be engendered in others by presenting them with a picture of their own glorious past or, as his friend Ingemann later expressed it, by calling forth the generations that died to testify against the generation that lived? In presenting such a picture he would not have to rely on his own inventiveness but could use material already existing, foremost among which were the famous **Sagas of Norwegian Kings** by Snorra Sturlason, and **Denmark's Chronicle** by Saxo Grammaticus, the former written in Icelandic, and the latter in Latin.

When Grundtvig presented this plan to his remaining friends, they received it at once with enthusiasm and began the organization of societies both in Denmark and Norway for the purpose of sponsoring its execution, in itself a most herculean task.

The two books contain together about fifteen hundred large and closely printed pages and present a circumstantial account of the early mythological and factual history of the two nations. Even a merely literal translation of them might well consume years of labor. But Grundtvig's plan went much farther than mere literal translation. Wishing to appeal to the common people, he purposed to popularize the books and to transcribe them in a purer and more idiomatic Danish than the accepted literary language of the day, a Danish to be based on the dialects of the common people, the folk-songs, popular proverbs, and the old hymns. It was a bold undertaking, comparable to the work of Luther in modelling the language of the German Bible after the speech of the man in the street and the mother at the cradle, or to the great effort of Norway in our days to supplant the Danish-Norwegian tongue with a language from the various dialects of her people. Nor can it be said that Grundtvig was immediately successful in his attempt. His version of the sagas sounds somewhat stilted and artificial, and it never became popular among the common people for whom it was especially intended. Eventually, however, he did develop his new style into a plain, forceful mode of expression that has greatly enriched the Danish language of today.

For seven years Grundtvig buried himself in "the giant's mount," emerging only occasionally for the pursuit of various studies in connection with his work or to voice his views on certain issues that particularly interested him. He discovered a number of errors in the Icelandic version of Beowulf and made a new Danish translation of that important work; he engaged in a bitter literary battle with Paul

Mueller, a leader among the younger academicians, in defence of the celebrated lyric poet, Jens Baggesen, who had aroused the wrath of the students by criticising their revered dramatist, Oehlenschlaeger; and he fought a furious contest with the greatly admired song and comedy writer, John L. Heiberg, in defence of his good friend, Bernhard Severin Ingemann, whose excellent but overly sentimental lyrics had invited the barbed wit of the humorist. But although Grundtvig's contributions to these disputes were both able and pointed, their main effect was to widen the breach between him and the already antagonistic intellectuals.

In 1817 Grundtvig published the second part of **World Chronicles**, and a few issues of a short-lived periodical entitled "Dannevirke" which among other excellent contributions presented his splendid poem, "The Easter Lily," a poetic dramatization of our Lord's resurrection, about which the poet, Baggesen, said that "it outweighed all Oehlenschlaeger's tragedies and that he himself had moments when he would rather have been the author of this incomparably beautiful poem than of everything he himself had written."

Grundtvig began his translation of the sagas on a wave of high enthusiasm. But as the years multiplied, the interest of his supporters waned and he himself wearied of the task. He began, besides, to doubt his ability to resurrect the heroic dead in such a manner that they could revive the dropping spirit of the living.

In a welcome to Ingemann, on his return from a tour abroad, he expresses the hope that the poet will now devote his gifts to a reincarnation of his country's old heroes. He himself has tried to do this. "He has made armor, shields and swords for them of saga's steel, and borrowed horses for them from the ancient bards, but he has no cloth fit for the coats of such elegant knights nor feathers beautiful enough to adorn their helmets. He can sound a challenge but has no voice for singing; he can ring a bell but can not play the lute." In other words, he can depict the thoughts and ideals of the old heroes but lacks the poetical ability to recreate them as living personalities—a remarkably true estimate of his own limitations.

The discovery that his translation of the sagas was not accomplishing its intended purpose, and a growing apprehension that the written word was, perhaps, impotent to revive the spiritual life of his people, engendered in him an increasing wish to leave "the mount of the dead" and re-enter the world of the living. His economic circumstances also necessitated a change. In 1818 he had married Elizabeth Blicher, the daughter of a brother pastor, and he found it well nigh impossible to support his wife and growing family on the meager returns from his writings and a small pension which the government allowed him for his work with the sagas.

Spurred by these reasons, he applied for almost every vacancy in the church, even the smallest, and, in 1821, succeeded in obtaining an appointment to the pastorate at Prastø, a small city on the south-eastern shores of Sjælland.

Grundtvig was well satisfied with his new charge. He was kindly received by his congregation; the city was quite close to his beloved Udby, and his mother still lived there. "In the loveliest surroundings my eyes have ever seen and among a friendly people," he writes, "my strength soon revived so that I could continue my literary work and even complete my wearisome translation of the sagas."

An incident is related from his work at Prastø which throws a somewhat revealing light upon his ability as a pastor. At his only confirmation service there, the confirmants, we are told, wept so that he had to

pause several times in his address to them in order to let them regain their composure. Since he was always quite objective in his preaching and heartily disbelieved in the usual revival methods, the incident illustrates his rare ability to profoundly stir even the less mature of his hearers by his objective presentation of the Gospel. Even his bitterest enemies could not deny the evident effectiveness of his ministry in every charge he served.

His work at Prastø was, however, of brief duration. In 1822, less than two years after his installation, he received and accepted a call as assistant pastor at Our Savior's Church in Copenhagen, thus attaining his long deferred wish for a pulpit in the capital.

[9] The printed text is corrupt here. **Saga: A New Year's Gift for 1812** is one work. Possibly the third work referenced is **World Chronicles**, the first part of which was published in 1812.

Chapter Thirteen

The Living Word

Grundtvig began his ministry in the capital with high hopes, but he was soon disappointed. His services as usual attracted large audiences, audiences that frequently overflowed the spacious sanctuary. But these came from all parts of the city, an ever changing throng from which it was quite impossible to create a real congregation. The parish itself was so large that the mere routine duties of his office consumed much of his time. There were mass weddings, mass baptisms, mass funerals for people of whom he knew little and could have no assurance that he was not "giving the holy unto dogs or casting pearls before swine." With the prevailing decay of church-life most pastors accepted these conditions with equanimity, but to Grundtvig they constituted an increasingly heavy burden.

He was still lonely. Awakened Christians were few, and his fellow pastors were nearly all Rationalists who looked upon him as a dangerous fanatic whom it was best to avoid. Grundtvig's opinion about them, though different, was scarcely higher. It provoked him to observe pastors openly repudiating doctrines and ordinances which they had sworn to defend. To his mind such a course was both dishonorable to themselves and unjust toward their congregations which, whether or not they approved of these unlawful acts, had to be served by their parish pastors. The majority, it is true, accepted the new doctrines with indifference. Rationalism then as now promoted apathy rather than heresy. But Grundtvig observed its blighting effect everywhere, even upon himself.

Signs of a new awakening, nevertheless, were appearing here and there, especially in certain rural communities. Influenced by the Haugean movement in Norway and Grundtvig's own earlier work, scattering groups of Evangelicals and Pietists began to evince new life and activity. Peasants in a number of parishes in Jutland refused to accept the Evangelical Christian hymnal and a new rationalistic colored catechism, choosing to go to jail rather than to compromise their faith; and groups of Evangelical laymen on the island of Fyn began to hold private assemblies at which they nourished themselves by reading Luther's sermons and singing Kingo's and Brorson's hymns. Most if not all of these groups admired Grundtvig for his bold defiance of Biblical Christianity and looked hopefully to him for encouragement. If, as his enemies charged, he had wished to make himself the head of a party, he could easily have done so by assuming the leadership of the private assemblies.

But Grundtvig never compromised his views for the sake of attracting a following, and he did not approve of private assemblies. Such groups, he wrote, had frequently disrupted the church, bred contempt for Scripture, and fostered a perverted form of piety. Even as a release from the present deplorable situation, they might easily produce more harm than good.

Although Grundtvig could not approve of the assemblies he, nevertheless, sympathized deeply with the distressed laity. A layman was then bound to his parish, and Grundtvig clearly understood the difficulty of laymen who had to accept the ministry, have their children baptized, instructed and confirmed by pastors denying fundamental doctrines of their faith. With his usual frankness he therefore threw caution to the winds and reminded the pastors that it was their own failure to preach and defend the Lutheran faith that was forcing Evangelical laymen to seek in the assemblies what was arbitrarily withheld from them in the church. "Whether it be good or bad, recommendable or deplorable," Grundtvig wrote, "it is, at any rate, a fact that the spirit of the church service has changed so greatly during the last half century that it is almost impossible for an Evangelical Christian to derive any benefit from it, and it is this

situation that has forced earnest laymen to invent such a substitute for the church as the private assemblies evidently are."

For a number of years Grundtvig thought and wrote almost ceaselessly about this problem. With conditions so perverted that the lawbreakers were imprisoning the victims of their own lawlessness, something ought evidently to be done about it. But what could he do?

He tried to attack Rationalism from new angles. In a carefully written article in "The Theological Monthly," a magazine that he published in collaboration with the learned but crusty Dr. G. A. Rudelbach, he argued that any inquiry concerning the nature of Christianity should distinguish between the questions: What is true Christianity? and Is Christianity True? The first was a historical question, and could be answered only by an examination of the original teachings of Christianity; the second was a question of conscience and depended on the attitude of the individual. He was he asserted, perfectly willing to recognize the right of the Rationalists to believe what ever they choose, but as a historian he had to protest against the propagation of any belief under the name of Christianity that clearly denied what Christianity originally affirmed.

His writing, however, produced no evident result. The rationalists either maintained a contemptuous silence or answered him by their favorite cry of ignorance and fanaticism. The true teachings of Christianity, they asserted, could be ascertained only by the trained theologian, able to read the Bible in the original and trained to interpret it in the light of current knowledge. Such men knew, it was claimed, that many of the doctrines formerly held by the church, such as the divinity of Christ, the atonement and the triunity of God, were not found in the Scriptures at all or were based on misread or misinterpreted texts.

Although these contentions were almost as old as Christianity itself, Grundtvig still found that a clear refutation of them was practically impossible. He could not disprove them by Scripture, for the Rationalists would claim their interpretation of the Bible to be as trustworthy as his own; nor could he appeal to the confessions, for his opponents openly repudiated these as antiquated conceptions of a less enlightened age. His only hope of giving any real guidance to the confused and distressed laity of his church thus appeared to depend on the possibility of discovering an expression of Christianity so authoritative that the most learned perverter of the faith could not repudiate it and so plain that the humblest believer could understand it. In his anxiety it even seemed to him that the Lord had failed adequately to provide for His little ones if He had not supplied them with such a shield against the storm of confusing doctrines.

"Being greatly distressed with the thought that all humble Christians must either fall into doubt concerning their only Savior and His Gospel or build their faith on the contradictory teachings of learned theologians," he wrote, "I perceived clearly the pressing need of the church for a simpler, more dependable and authoritative statement of that word of God which shall never pass away than all the book-worms of the world could ever produce. But while my anxiety for the distressed laity of my church grew and I sought night and day for a clear testimony of Jesus that would enable them to try the spirits whether they be of God, a good angel whispered to me: 'Why seekest thou the living among the dead?' Then the scales fell from my eyes, and I saw clearly that the word of God which I so anxiously sought could be no other than that which at all times, in all churches and by all Christians has been accepted as a true expression of their faith and the covenant of their baptism, the Apostolic Creed."

In his search for an effective means of arming the laity against the confusing claims of the Rationalists,

Grundtvig thus came to place the Creed above the Bible, or rather to assert that the two should stand side by side, and that all explanations of the latter should agree with the plain articles of the former so that every Christian personally could weigh the truth or error of what was taught by comparing it with his baptismal covenant.

Grundtvig supported his "great discovery" with passages from the Bible and the church fathers, especially Irenaeus. He advanced the theory that Jesus had taught the Creed to His disciples during the forty days after His resurrection in which He remained with them, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God"; that the Creed through the early centuries had been regarded as too sacred to commit to writing and, therefore had been transmitted orally; and that it constituted, together with the words of institution of the sacraments and the Lord's prayer, in a special sense "the living word of God" by which He builds and vivifies His church. It should be stated, however, that Grundtvig's intention by distinguishing between what he called "the living" and "the written word," was not to belittle the Bible but only to define its proper place, the place of enlightening and guiding those, who through God's living covenant with them in their baptism already have become Christians. A Christian, he believed, is reborn in his baptism, nourished in the Communion and enlightened by the Word.

A critical examination of Grundtvig's theory, about which thousands of pages have been written, lies beyond the scope of this work. Grundtvig himself felt that his "discovery" had given him a solid foundation for his stand against the Rationalists. And his theory unquestionably did enable him, in the midst of an almost hopeless religious confusion, to reassert the essentials of Evangelical Christianity, to refute the contentions of the Rationalists by weighing them on an acknowledged historical basis of faith, and to reemphasize that the Christian church is not a creation of theological speculations but of God's own work in His word and sacraments.

Grundtvig for some time previous to his discovery had felt exceedingly depressed. His long struggle for the reawakening of his people to a richer Christian and national life appeared fruitless. Most of the intellectual and spiritual leaders of his time looked upon the very idea of sharing the richer cultural and spiritual values of life with the common man as a visionary conception of an unstable and erratic mind. One ought naturally, they admitted, to be interested in improving the social and economic conditions of the lower classes, but the higher treasures of mind and spirit belonged in the very nature of things to the cultured few and could not be shared with the common herd.

In spite of these discouragements, Grundtvig somehow experienced a wonderful rebirth of his hope in the spring of 1824, an experience to which he gave eloquent expression in his great poem, "New Year's Morning." He writes in the preface that he has "long enough battled with a witch called indifference, and has discovered that the battle wherein one is most likely to be defeated is the battle against nothing." He therefore urges his friends to ignore the witch and join him in a determined crusade for a reawakening of the Northern spirit to the accomplishment of Christian deed.

Grundtvig's hope for a season of quiet and peaceful cooperation with his friends was, however, soon shattered. In the summer of 1825, a young professor of theology, H. N. Clausen, published a book entitled: **The Constitution, Doctrine and Rituals of Catholicism and Protestantism**. As Prof. Clausen enjoyed a great popularity among his students and, as a teacher of theology, might influence the course of the Danish church for many years, Grundtvig was very much interested in what he had to say. He obtained the book and read it quickly but thoughtfully, underscoring the points with which he disagreed. And these were numerous. At the very beginning of the book, he found the author asserting

that “the Protestant theologian, since he need recognize no restriction of his interpretations by creeds, traditions, or ecclesiastical authorities, is as once infinitely more free and important than his Catholic colleague. For as the Protestant church unlike the Catholic possesses no conclusive and authoritative system of belief either in her creeds or in Scripture, it devolves upon her trained theologians to set forth what the true teachings of Christianity really are. “Why, O why!” the professor exclaims, “should eternal Wisdom have willed revelation to appear in a form so imperfect? What other purpose, I ask you, can an all-wise Providence have had with such a plan than to compel the children of man to recognize that it is only through the exercise of their own, human intelligence that the revelation of God can be comprehended!”

As Grundtvig mused upon these assertions so expressive of all that he had denied and fought against, he felt at once that they constituted a challenge which he could not leave unanswered. He had shortly before written to a friend: “Since the perverters of Christianity have become so self-confident that they will not answer any charge against them except when it is addressed to themselves personally and by name, one may eventually have to employ that form of attack.” And that was the form he chose to use in his now famous book. **The Reply of the Church to Prof. H. N. Clausen**.

“By the publication of this book,” he writes, “Prof. Clausen has put himself forward as a leader among the enemies of the church and the perverters of God’s word in this country. A church, such as he advocates, that has no determinable form, exists only in the brains of the theologians, and must be construed from theological speculations on the basis of a discredited Bible and according to the changing thoughts and opinions of man, is plainly nothing but a fantastic dream, a comic if it were not so tragic conception of a Christian congregation which claims to confess the same faith, but knows not what it is, and holds that it is instituted by God, but cannot tell for what purpose before the theologians have found it out.

“Against such a church, I place the historical church, that is the church of the Gospel, instituted by Christ Himself, created by His word and vivified by His Spirit. For I contend that the Christian church now as always consists of that body of believers who truly accept the faith of their baptismal covenant, Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as the faith and means of salvation.”

The Reply of the Church caused a sensation. It was read and discussed everywhere. But if Grundtvig had hoped to force a general discussion of the plight of the church, he was disappointed. Prof. Clausen answered him with a lawsuit “for malicious injury to his professional honor”; his enemies all condemned him, and his friends were silent. If they approved of the substance of his charges, they disapproved of their form. Grundtvig appeared to have thrown away the last remnant of his already tattered reputation, and only the years would reveal that in doing so he had struck a deadlier blow against Rationalism than he had expected, that he had, in fact, for years to come made Rationalism impossible in Denmark as a form of Christianity.

Meanwhile the Danish church was preparing to celebrate its thousandth anniversary in May, 1826. Grundtvig looked forward to the event with almost child-like anticipation, hoping that the celebration might serve to awaken a new appreciation of the old church. To heighten the festivities the authorities had authorized pastors to select the hymns for the services in their own churches, and Grundtvig had written and published a pamphlet of hymns to be used in his church. But shortly before the festival, his bishop informed him that only hymns from the authorized hymnal could be chosen. As no one else had composed hymns for the occasion, Grundtvig could not doubt that this new ruling was aimed solely at

him, and this new evidence at the length to which his enemies would go for the sake of humiliating him appeared to him like the last straw. He had long suffered under the difficulty of serving a church which honored the law-breaker and persecuted the law-abiding and thought of resigning. But he had a family to support. And while he himself would gladly bear the poverty his resignation would inevitably bring him, he doubted his right to impose such a burden upon his family. The difficulty was finally solved for him by his wife, who one day came into his study and said: “Father, I know what is troubling you. You wish to resign and hesitate to do so for our sake. But I want you to do whatever you think is right. The Lord will provide for us.”

And so it was settled. His resignation was handed to the authorities a few days before the festival, and it was accepted so quickly that he was released from office before the following Sunday. When the festive Sunday came which he had looked forward to with so much pleasure, he sat idly in his study across from the church and watched people come for the service, but another pastor preached the sermon, he had earnestly wished to deliver, and other hymns than his own beloved songs served as vehicles for the people’s praise.

Public sentiment regarding Grundtvig’s resignation varied. His friends deplored the action, holding that he should have remained in his pastorate both for the sake of his congregation and the cause which he had so ably championed. But his opponents rejoiced, seeing in his resignation just another proof of an erratic mentality. For who had ever heard of a normal person withdrawing from a secure and respectable position without even asking for the pension to which he was entitled?

The six years during which Grundtvig remained without a pulpit were among the busiest and most fruitful of his life. He published his **Sunday-Book**, a collection of sermons which many still rate among the finest devotional books in Danish; made extended visits to England in 1829-1831, for the purpose of studying the old Anglo Saxon manuscripts kept there, an undertaking that awakened the interest of the English themselves in these great treasures; wrote his splendid **Northern Mythology or Picture Language**, and **The World’s History after the Best Sources**, works in which he presents the fundamental aspects of his historical, folk and educational views that have made his name known not only in Scandinavia but in almost every country in the world.

Meanwhile he again had entered the pulpit. As a compensation for the loss of his ministry, a group of his friends shortly after his resignation began to hold private assemblies. When Grundtvig still firmly refused to take part in these, they decided to organize an independent congregation, petition the government for permission to use an abandoned German Lutheran church and call Grundtvig as their pastor. The petition was promptly refused, though Grundtvig himself pleaded with the authorities to permit the organization of an independent congregation as the best means of relieving the dissatisfied members of the church and declared that he would himself join the assemblies unless some such measure of relief was granted. When the authorities ignored his plea, Grundtvig made good his threat and appeared at the assemblies, drawing such a crowd that no private home could possibly hold it, whereupon it was decided to secure a public hall for future meetings. But when the authorities heard this, they suddenly experienced a change of heart and offered the troublesome preacher and his friends the use of Frederik’s church for a vesper service each Sunday.

The eight years Grundtvig served as an independent preacher at the Frederik’s church were among the happiest in his life. He rejoiced to know that the large, diversified audience crowding the sanctuary each Sunday came wholly of its own free will. It also pleased the now gray-haired pastor to see an increasing

number of students become constant attendants at his services. Even so, his position had its drawbacks. He was permitted neither to administer the sacraments nor to instruct the young people, and the authorities even denied him the right to confirm his own sons. Grundtvig felt especially this refusal so keenly that he again was thinking of resigning his pulpit when the king offered him an appointment as pastor of Vartov, a large institution for the aged.

Thus from 1839 until Grundtvig's death the chapel at Vartov became his home and that of his friends and the center of the fast growing Grundtvigian movement. People from all walks of life, from the Queen to the common laborer, became regular attendants at the unpretentious sanctuary, and the eyes of some old people still shine when they recall the moving spirit of the services there, the venerable appearance and warm monotone voice of the pastor, and, especially, the hearty, soul-stirring singing. Many of Grundtvig's own great hymns were introduced at Vartov. From there they spread throughout the church. And it was to a large extent the hearty, inspiring congregational singing at Vartov which made the Danish church a singing church.

Chapter Fourteen

The Hymnwriter

Splendid are the heavens high,
Beautiful the radiant sky,
Where the golden stars are shining,
And their rays, to earth inclining,
-: Beckon us to heaven above :-

It was on a Christmas night,
Darkness veiled the starry height;
But at once the heavens hoary
Beamed with radiant light and glory,
-: Coming from a wondrous star :-

When this star so bright and clear
Should illume the midnight drear,
Then, according to tradition,
Should a king of matchless vision
-: Unto earth from heaven descend :-

Sages from the East afar
When they saw this wondrous star,
Went to worship and adore Him
And to lay their gifts before Him
-: Who was born that midnight hour :-

Him they found in Bethlehem
Without crown or diadem,
They but saw a maiden lowly
With an infant pure and holy
-: Resting in her loving arms :-

Guided by the star they found
Him whose praise the ages sound.
We have still a star to guide us
Whose unsullied rays provide us
-: With the light to find our Lord :-

And this star so fair and bright
Which will ever lead aright,
Is God's word, divine and holy,

Guiding all His children lowly
-: Unto Christ, our Lord and King :-

This lovely, childlike hymn, the first to appear from Grundtvig's pen, was written in the fall of 1810 when its author was still battling with despair and his mind faltering on the brink of insanity. Against this background the hymn appears like a ray of sunlight breaking through a clouded sky. And as such it must undoubtedly have come to its author. As an indication of Grundtvig's simple trust in God, it is noteworthy that another of his most childlike hymns, "God's Child, Do Now Rest Thee," was likewise composed during a similar period of distress that beset him many years later.

For a number of years Grundtvig's hymn of the Wise Men represented his sole contribution to hymnody. Other interests engaged his attention and absorbed his energy. During his years of intense work with the sagas he only occasionally broke his "engagement" with the dead to strike the lyre for the living. In 1815 he translated "In Death's Strong Bonds Our Savior Lay" from Luther, and "Christ Is Risen from the Dead" from the Latin. The three hundredth anniversary of the Reformation brought his adaptation of Kingo's "Like the Golden Sun Ascending" and translations of Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" and "The Bells Ring in the Christmastide." In 1820 he published his now popular "A Babe Is Born at Bethlehem" from an old Latin-Danish text, and 1824 saw his splendid rendering of "The Old Day Song," "With Gladness We Hail the Blessed Day," and his original "On Its Rock the Church of Jesus Stood Mongst Us a Thousand Years."

These songs constitute his whole contribution to hymnody from 1810 to 1825. But the latter year brought a signal increase. In the midst of his fierce battle with the Rationalists he published the first of his really great hymns, a song of comfort to the daughters of Zion, sitting disconsolately at the sickbed of their mother, the church. Her present state may appear so hopeless that her children fear to remember her former glory:

Dares the anxious heart envision
Still its morning dream,
View, despite the world's derision,
Zion's sunlit height and stream?
Wields still anyone the power
To repeat her anthems strong,
And with joyful heart embower,
Zion with triumphant song.

Her condition is not hopeless, however, if her children will gather about her.

Zion's sons and daughters rally
Now upon her ancient wall!
Have her foemen gained the valley,
Yet her ramparts did not fall.
Were her outer walls forsaken
Still her cornerstone remains,
Firm, unconquered and unshaken,
Making futile all their gains.

Another of his great hymns dates from the same year. Grundtvig was in the habit of remaining up all night when he had to speak on the following day. The Christmas of 1825 was particularly trying to him. He had apparently forfeited his last vestige of honor by publishing his **Reply of the Church**; the suit started against him by Professor Clausen still dragged its laborious way through the court; and his anxiety over the present state of the church was greatly increased by the weight of his personal troubles.

He felt very much like the shepherds watching their flocks at night, except that no angels appeared to help him with the message his people would expect him to deliver in the morning. Perhaps he was unworthy of such a favor. He rose, as was his custom, and made a round into the bedrooms to watch his children. How innocently they slept! If the angels could not come to him, they ought at least to visit the children. If they heard the message, their elders might perchance catch it through them.

Some such thought must have passed through the mind of the lonely pastor as he sat musing upon his sermon throughout the night, for he appeared unusually cheerful as he ascended his pulpit Christmas morning, preached a joyful sermon, and said, at its conclusion, that he had that night begotten a song which he wished to read to them. That song has since become one of the most beloved Christmas songs in the Danish language. To give an adequate reproduction of its simple, childlike spirit in another language is perhaps impossible, but it is hoped that the translation given below will convey at least an impression of its cheerful welcome to the Christmas angels.

Be welcome again, God's angels bright
From mansions of light and glory
To publish anew this wintry night
The wonderful Christmas story.
Ye herald to all that yearn for light
New year after winter hoary.

With gladness we hear your sweet refrain
In praise of God's glory solely;
Ye will not this wintry night disdain
To enter our dwellings lowly.
And bring to each yearning heart again
The joy that is pure and holy.

In humble homes as in mansions rare
With light in the windows glowing,
We harbor the babes as sweet and fair
As flowers in meadows growing.
Oh, deign with these little ones to share
The joy from your message flowing.

Reveal the child in the manger still
With angels around Him singing
The song of God's glory, peace, good-will
That joy to all hearts is bringing,
While far over mountain, field and hill,
The bells are with gladness ringing.

God's angels with joy to earth descend
When hymns to His praise are chanted;
His comfort and peace our Lord will lend
To all who for peace have panted;
The portals of heaven open stand;
The Kingdom to us is granted.

In 1826 Grundtvig, as already related, published his hymns for the thousand years' festival of his church. But a few months later he again buried himself in his study, putting aside the lyre, which for a little while he had played so beautifully. Many had already noticed his hymns, however, and continued to plead with him for more. The new Evangelical revival, which he had largely inspired, intensified the general dissatisfaction with the rationalistic Evangelical Christian Hymnal, and called for hymns embodying the spirit of the new movement. And who could better furnish these than Grundtvig? Of those who pleaded with him for new hymns, none was more persistent than his friend, Pastor Gunni

Busck. When Grundtvig wrote to him in 1832 that his **Northern Mythology** was nearing completion, Busck at once answered: “Do not forget your more important work; do not forget our old hymns! I know no one else with your ability to brush the dust off our old songs.” But Grundtvig was still too busy with other things to comply with the wish of his most faithful and helpful friend.

During the ensuing years, however, a few hymns occasionally appeared from his pen. A theological student, L. C. Hagen, secured a few adapted and original hymns from him for a small collection of **Historical Hymns and Rhymes for Children**, which was published in 1832. But the adaptations were not successful. Despite the good opinion of Gunni Busck, Grundtvig was too independent a spirit to adjust himself to the style and mode of others. His originals were much more successful. Among these we find such gems as “Mongst His Brothers Called the Little,” “Move the Signs of Grief and Mourning from the Garden of the Dead,” and “O Land of Our King,” hymns that rank with the finest he has written.

In 1835 Grundtvig at last wrote to Gunni Busck that he was now ready to commence the long deferred attempt to renew the hymnody of his church. Busck received the information joyfully and at once sent him a thousand dollars to support him during his work. Others contributed their mite, making Grundtvig richer financially than he had been for many years. He rented a small home on the shores of the Sound and began to prepare himself for the work before him by an extensive study of Christian hymnody, both ancient and modern.

“The old hymns sound beautiful to me out here under the sunny sky and with the blue water of the Sound before me,” he wrote to Busck. He did not spend his days day-dreaming, however, but worked with such intensity that only a year later he was able to invite subscriptions on the first part of his work. The complete collection was published in 1837 under the title: **Songs of the Danish Church**. It contains in all 401 hymns and songs composed of originals, translations and adaptations from Greek, Latin, German, Icelandic, Anglo-Saxon, English and Scandinavian sources. The material is of very unequal merit, ranging from the superior to the commonplace. As originally composed, the collection could not be used as a hymnal. But many of the finest hymns now used in the Danish church have been selected or adapted from it.

Although **Songs for the Danish Church** is now counted among the great books in Danish, its appearance attracted little attention outside the circle of Grundtvig’s friends. It was not even reviewed in the press. The literati, both inside and outside the church, still publicly ignored Grundtvig. But privately a few of them expressed their opinion about the work. Thus a Pastor P. Hjort wrote to Bishop Mynster, “Have you read Grundtvig’s **Songs of the Danish Church**? It is a typical Grundtvigian book, wordy, ingenious, mystical, poetical and full of half digested ideas. His language is rich and wonderfully expressive. But he is not humble enough to write hymns.”

Meanwhile the demand for a new hymnal or at least for a supplement to the old had become so insistent that something had to be done. J. P. Mynster who, shortly before, had been appointed Bishop of Sjælland, favored a supplement and obtained an authorization from the king for the appointment of a committee to prepare it. The only logical man to head such a committee was, of course, Grundtvig. But Mynster’s dislike of his volcanic relative was so deep-rooted that he was incapable of giving any recognition to him. And so in order to avoid a too obvious slight to his country’s best known hymnwriter, he assigned the work to an already existing committee on liturgy, of which he himself was president. Thus Grundtvig was forced to sit idly by while the work naturally belonging to him was

being executed by a man with no special ability for the task. The supplement appeared in 1843. It contained thirty-six hymns of which six were written by Kingo, seven by Brorson, and one by Grundtvig, the latter being, as Grundtvig humorously remarked, set to the tune of the hymn, “Lord, I Have Done Wrong.”

Mynster’s influence was great enough to secure the supplement a wide circulation. The collection, nevertheless, failed to satisfy the need of the church. Dissatisfaction with it was so general that the pastors’ conference of Copenhagen appointed a committee consisting of Grundtvig, Prof. Martensen, Mynster’s own son-in-law, Rev. Pauli, his successor as Provost of the Church of Our Lady, and two other pastors to prepare and present a proposal for a new hymnal. It was an able committee from which a meritorious work might reasonably be expected.

Grundtvig was assigned to the important work of selecting and revising the old hymns to be included in the collection. He was an inspiring but at times difficult co-worker. Martensen recalls how Grundtvig at times aroused the committee to enthusiasm by an impromptu talk on hymnody or a recitation of one of the old hymns, which he loved so well. But he also recalls how he sometimes flared up and stormed out of the committee room in anger over some proposed change or correction of his work. When his anger subsided, however, he always conscientiously attempted to effect whatever changes the committee agreed on proposing. Yet excellent as much of his own work was, he possessed no particular gift for mending the work of others, and his corrections of one defect often resulted in another.

The committee submitted its work to the judgment of the conference in January 1845. The proposal included 109 hymns of which nineteen were by Kingo, seven by Brorson, ten by Ingemann, twenty-five by Grundtvig and the remainder by various other writers, old and new. It appeared to be a well balanced collection, giving due recognition to such newer writers as Boye, Ingemann, Grundtvig and others. But the conference voted to reject it. Admitting its poetical excellence and its sound Evangelical tenor, some of the pastors complained that it contained too many new and too few old hymns; others held that it bore too clearly the imprint of one man, a complaint which no doubt expressed the sentiment of Mynster and his friends. A petition to allow such churches as should by a majority vote indicate their wish to use the collection was likewise rejected by the Bishop.

Grundtvig was naturally disappointed by the rejection of a work upon which he had spent so much time and energy. The rejection furthermore showed him that he still could expect no consideration from the authorities with Mynster in control. He was soon able, however, to comfort himself with the fact that his hymns were becoming popular in private assemblies throughout the country, and that even a number of churches were beginning to use them at their regular services in defiance of official edicts. The demand for granting more liberty to the laymen in their church life, a demand Grundtvig long had advocated, was in fact becoming so strong that the authorities at times found it advisable to overlook minor infractions of official rulings. Noting this new policy, Grundtvig himself ventured to introduce some of the new hymns into his church. In the fall of 1845, he published a small collection of Christmas hymns to be used at the impending Christmas festival. When the innovation passed without objections, a similar collection of Easter hymns was introduced at the Easter services, after which other collections for the various seasons of the church year appeared quite regularly until all special prints were collected into one volume and used as “the hymnal of Vartov.”

The work of preparing a new authorized hymnal was finally given to Grundtvig’s closest friend, Ingemann. This hymnal appeared in 1855, under the title, **Roskilde Convent’s Psalmbook**. This book

served as the authorized hymnal of the Danish church until 1899, when it was replaced by **Hymnal for Church and Home**, the hymnal now used in nearly all Danish churches both at home and abroad. It contains in all 675 hymns of which 96 are by Kingo, 107 by Brorson, 29 by Ingemann and 173 by Grundtvig, showing that the latter at last had been recognized as the foremost hymnwriter of the Danish church.

Chapter Fifteen

Grundtvig's Hymns

Grundtvig wrote most of his hymns when he was past middle age, a man of extensive learning, proved poetical ability and mature judgment, especially in spiritual things. Years of hard struggles and unjust neglect had sobered and mellowed but not aged or embittered him.

His long study of hymnology together with his exceptional poetical gift enabled him to adopt material from all ages and branches of Christian song, and to wield it into a homogenous hymnody for his own church. His treatment of the material is usually very free, so free that it is often difficult to discover any relationship between his translations and their supposed originals. Instead of endeavoring to transfer the metre, phrasing and sentiment of the original text, he frequently adopts only a single thought or a general idea from its content, and expresses this in his own language and form.

His original hymns likewise bear the imprint of his ripe knowledge and spiritual understanding. They are for the most part objective in content and sentiment, depicting the great themes of Biblical history, doctrine and life rather than the personal feeling and experiences of the individual. A large number of his hymns are, in fact, faithful but often striking adaptations of Bible stories and texts. For though he was frequently accused of belittling the Book of Books, his hymns to a larger extent than those of any other Danish hymnwriter are directly inspired by the language of the Bible. He possessed an exceptional ability to absorb the essential implications of a text and to present it with the terseness and force of an adage.

Although Grundtvig's hymns at times attain the height of pure poetry, their poetic merit is incidental rather than sought. In the pride of his youth he had striven, as he once complained, to win the laurel wreath, but had found it to be an empty honor. His style is more often forceful than lyrical. When the mood was upon him he could play the lyre with entrancing beauty and gentleness, but he preferred the organ with all stops out.

His style is often rough but expressive and rich in imagery. In this he strove to supplant time-honored similes and illustrations from Biblical lands with native allusions and scenes. Pictures drawn from the Danish landscape, lakes and streams, summer and winter, customs and life abound in his songs, giving them a home-like touch that has endeared them to millions.

His poetry is of very unequal merit. He was a prolific writer, producing, besides many volumes of poetry on various subjects, about three thousand hymns and songs. Among much that is excellent in this vast production there are also dreary stretches of rambling loquacity, hollow rhetoric and unintelligible jumbles of words and phrases. He could be insupportably dull and again express more in a single stanza, couplet or phrase than many have said in a whole book. A study of his poetry is, therefore, not unlike a journey through a vast country, alternating in fertile valleys, barren plains and lofty heights with entrancing views into far, dim vistas.

This inconsistency in the work of a man so eminently gifted as Grundtvig is explainable only by his method of writing. He was an intuitive writer and preferred to be called a “skjald” instead of a poet. The distinction is significant but somewhat difficult to define. As Grundtvig himself understood the term, the “skjald”, besides being a poet, must also be a seer, a man able to envision and express what was still hidden to the common mortal. “The skjald is,” he says, “the chosen lookout of life who must reveal from his mountain what he sees at life’s deep fountain. When gripped by his vision,” he says further, the skjald is “neither quiescent nor lifeless but, on the contrary, lifted up into an exceptional state of sensitiveness in which he sees and feels things with peculiar vividness and power. I know of nothing in this material world to which the skjald may more fittingly be likened than a tuned harp with the wind playing upon it.”

A skjald in Grundtvig’s conception was thus a man endowed with the gift of receiving direct impressions of life and things, of perceiving especially the deeper and more fundamental truths of existence intuitively instead of intellectually. Such perceptions, he admitted, might lack the apparent clarity of reasoned conclusions, but would approach nearer to the truth. For life must be understood from within, must be spiritually discerned. It could never be comprehended by mere intellect or catalogued by supposed science.

He knew, however, that his work was frequently criticized for its ambiguity and lack of consistency. But he claimed that these defects were unavoidable consequences of his way of writing. He had to write what he saw and could not be expected to express that clearly which he himself saw only dimly. “I naturally desire to please my readers,” he wrote to Ingemann, “but when I write as my intuition dictates, it works well; ideas and images come to me without effort, and I fly lightly as the gazelle from crag to crag, whereas if I warn myself that there must be a limit to everything and that I must restrain myself and write sensibly, I am stopped right there. And I have thus to choose between writing as the spirit moves me, or not writing at all.”

This statement, although it casts a revealing light both upon his genius and its evident limitations, is no doubt extreme. However much Grundtvig may have depended on his momentary inspiration for the poetical development of his ideas, his fundamental views on life were exceptionally clear and comprehensive. He knew what he believed regarding the essential verities of existence, of God and man, of good and evil, of life and death. And all other conceptions of his intuitive and far-reaching spirit were consistently correlated to these basic beliefs.

Bishop H. Martensen, the celebrated theologian, relates an illuminating conversation between Grundtvig and the German theologian, P. K. Marheincke, during a visit which the Bishop had arranged between the two men. Dr. Marheincke commenced a lengthy discourse on the great opposites in life, as for instance between thinking and being, and Grundtvig replied, “My opposites are life and death” (Mein Gegensatz ist Leben und Tod).

“The professor accepted my statement somewhat dubiously,” Grundtvig said later, “and admitted that that was indeed a great contrast, but—” The difference between the two men no doubt lay in the fact that Prof. Marheincke, the speculative theologian, was principally interested in the first part of the assumed contrast—thinking, whereas Grundtvig’s main concern was with the last—being, existence, life. In real life there could be no more fundamental, no farther reaching contrast than the continuous and irreconcilable difference between life and death. The thought of this contrast lies at the root of all his thinking and colors all his views. From the day of his conversion until the hour of his death, his one

consuming interest was to illuminate the contrast between the two irreconcilable enemies and to encourage anything that would strengthen the one and defeat the other.

Grundtvig loved life in all its highest aspects and implications, and he hated death under whatever form he saw it. “Life is from heaven, death is from hell,” he says in a characteristic poem. The one is representative of all the good the Creator intended for his creatures, the other of all the evil, frustration and destruction the great destroyer brought into the world. There can be no reconciliation or peace between the two, the one must inevitably destroy or be destroyed by the other. He could see nothing but deception in the attempts of certain philosophical or theological phrasemakers to minimize or explain away the eternal malignity of death, man’s most relentless foe. A human being could fall no lower than to accept death as a friend. Thus in a poem:

Yea, hear it, ye heavens, with loathing and grief;
The sons of the Highest now look for relief
    In the ways of damnation
    And find consolation
In hopes of eternal death.

But death is not present only at the hour of our demise. It is present everywhere; it is active in all things. It destroys nations, corrupts society, robs the child of its innocence, wipes the bloom from the cheeks of youth, frustrates the possibilities of manhood and makes pitiful the white hair of the aged. For death, as all must see, is only the wage of sin, the ripe fruit of evil.

I recognize now clearly;
Death is the wage of sin,
It is the fruitage merely
Of evil’s growth within.

And its danger is so actual because it is active in every individual in himself as well as in others:

When I view the true condition
Of my troubled, restless heart,
Naught but sin can I envision
Even to its inmost part.

Such then is his fundamental view of the condition of man, a being in the destructive grip of a relentless foe, a creature whose greatest need is “a hero who can break the bonds of death”. And there is but one who can do that, the Son of God.

Grundtvig’s hymns abound in terms of adoration for the Savior of Man. He names Him the “Joy of Heaven”, “The Fortune of Earth”, “The Fount of Light”, “The Sovereign of Life”, “The Fear of Darkness”, “The Terror of Death”, and speaks of the day when all the “nations of the earth shall offer praise in the offer bowl of His name.” But he sees the Christ less as the suffering Lamb of God than as the invincible conqueror of death and the heroic deliverer of man.

Like his other hymns most of his hymns to the Savior are objective rather than subjective. They present the Christ of the Gospels, covering his life so fully that it would be possible to compile from them an almost complete sequence on His life, work and resurrection. The following stately hymn may serve as an appropriate introduction to a necessarily brief survey of the group:

Jesus, the name without compare;
Honored on earth and in heaven,

Wherein the Father's love and care
Are to His children now given.
Saviour of all that saved would be,
Fount of salvation full and free
Is the Lord Jesus forever.

Jesus, the name alone on earth
For our salvation afforded.
So on His cross of precious worth
Is in His blood it recorded.
Only in that our prayers are heard,
Only in that when hearts are stirred
Doth now the Spirit us comfort.

Jesus, the name above the sky
Wherein, when seasons are ended,
Peoples shall come to God on high,
And every knee shall be bended,
While all the saved in sweet accord
Chorus the praise of Christ, the Lord,
Savior beloved by the Father.

Grundtvig sang of Christmas morning "as his heaven on earth", and he wrote some of the finest Christmas hymns in the Danish language. A number of these have already been given. The following simple hymn from an old Latin-Danish text is still very popular.

A babe is born in Bethlehem,
Bethlehem,
Rejoice, rejoice Jerusalem;
Hallelujah, hallelujah.

A lowly virgin gave Him birth,
Gave Him birth,
Who rules the heavens and the earth;
Hallelujah, hallelujah.

He in a simple manger lay,
Manger lay,
Whom angels praise with joy for aye;
Hallelujah, hallelujah.

And wise men from the East did bring,
East did bring,
Gold, myrrh and incense to the King;
Hallelujah, hallelujah.

Now all our fears have passed away,
Passed away,
The Savior blest was born today;
Hallelujah, hallelujah.

God's blessed children we became,
We became,
And shall in heaven praise His name;
Hallelujah, hallelujah.

There like the angels we shall be,
We shall be,
And shall the Lord in glory see;
Hallelujah, hallelujah.

With gladsome praises we adore,
We adore,

Our Lord and Savior evermore;
Hallelujah, hallelujah.

His hymns on the life and work of our Lord are too numerous to be more than indicated here. The following hymn on the text, “Blessed are the eyes that see what ye see, and the ears that hear what ye hear”, is typical of his expository hymns.

Blessed were the eyes that truly
Here on earth beheld the Lord;
Happy were the ears that duly
Listened to His living word.
Which proclaimed the wondrous story
Of God’s mercy, love and glory.

Kings and prophets long with yearning
Prayed to see His day appear;
Angels with desire were burning
To behold the golden year
When God’s light and grace should quicken
All that sin and death had stricken.

He who, light and life revealing,
By His Spirit stills our want;
He, who broken hearts is healing
By His cup and at the font,
Jesus, Fount of joy incessant,
Is with light and grace now present.

Eyes by sin and darkness blinded
May now see His glory bright;
Hearts perverse and carnal minded
May obtain His Spirit’s light.
When, contrite and sorely yearning,
They in faith to Him are turning.

Blessed are the eyes that truly
Now on earth behold the Lord;
Happy are the ears that duly
Listen to His living word!
When His words our spirits nourish
Shall the kingdom in us flourish.

Grundtvig reaches his greatest height in his hymns of praise to Christ, the Redeemer. Many of his passion hymns have not been translated into English. In the original, the following hymn undoubtedly ranks with the greatest songs of praise to the suffering Lord.

Hail Thee, Savior and Atoner!
Though the world Thy name dishonor,
Moved by love my heart proposes
To adorn Thy cross with roses
And to offer praise to Thee.

O what moved Thee so to love us,
When enthroned with God above us,
That for us Thou all wouldst offer
And in deep compassion suffer
Even death that we might live.

Love alone Thy heart was filling
When to suffer Thou wert willing.
Rather givest Thou than takest,

Hence, O Savior, Thou forsakest
All to die in sinner's place.

Ah, my heart in deep contrition
Now perceives its true condition,
Cold and barren like a mountain,
How could I deserve the fountain
Of Thy love, my Savior dear.

Yet I know that from thy passion
Flows a river of salvation
Which can bid the mountain vanish,
Which can sin and coldness banish,
And restore my heart in Thee.

Lord, with tears I pray Thee ever:
Lead into my heart that river,
Which with grace redeeming cleanses
Heart and soul of all offences,
Blotting out my guilt and shame.

Lord, Thy life for sinners giving,
Let in Thee me find my living
So for Thee my heart is beating,
All my thoughts in Thee are meeting,
Finding there their light and joy.

Though all earthly things I cherish
Like the flowers may fade and perish,
Thou, I know, wilt stand beside me;
And from death and judgment hide me;
Thou hast paid the wage of sin.

Yes, my heart believes the wonder
Of Thy cross, which ages ponder!
Shield me, Lord, when foes assail me,
Be my staff when life shall fail me;
Take me to Thy Paradise.

Grundtvig's Easter hymns strike the triumphant note, especially such hymns as "Christ Arose in Glory", "Easter Morrow Stills Our Sorrow", and the very popular,

Move the signs of gloom and mourning[10]
From the garden of the dead.
For the wreaths of grief and yearning,
Plant bright lilies in their stead.
Carve instead of sighs of grief
Angels' wings in bold relief,
And for columns, cold and broken,
Words of hope by Jesus spoken.

His Easter hymns fail as a whole to reach the height of his songs for other church festivals. In this respect, they resemble the hymnody of the whole church, which contains remarkably few really great hymns on the greatest events in its history. It is as though the theme were too great to be expressed in the language of man.

Grundtvig wrote a number of magnificent hymns on the themes of our Lord's ascension and His return to judge the quick and the dead. Of the latter, the hymn given below is perhaps the most favored of those now available in English.

Lift up thy head, O Christendom!
Behold above the blessed home
For which thy heart is yearning.
There dwells the Lord, thy soul's delight,
Who soon with power and glory bright
Is for His bride returning.

And when in every land and clime,
All shall behold His signs sublime,
The guilty world appalling,
Then shalt with joy thou lift thine eyes
And see Him coming in the skies,
While suns and stars are falling.

While for His coming thou dost yearn,
Forget not why His last return
The Savior is delaying,
And ask Him not before His hour
To shake the heavens with His power,
Nor judge the lost and straying.

O saints of God, for Sodom pray
Until your prayers no more can stay
The judgment day impending.
Then cries the Lord: "Behold, I come!"
And ye shall answer: "To Thy home
We are with joy ascending!"

Then loud and clear the trumpet calls,
The dead awake, death's kingdom falls,
And God's elect assemble.
The Lord ascends the judgment throne,
And calls His ransomed for His own,
While hearts in gladness tremble.

Grundtvig is often called the Singer of Pentecost. And his hymns on the nature and work of the Spirit do rank with his very best. He believed in the reality of the Spirit as the living, active agent of Christ in His church. As the church came into being by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, so our Lord still builds and sanctifies it by the Spirit, working through His words and sacraments. His numerous hymns on the Spirit are drawn from many sources, both ancient and modern. His treatment of the originals is so free, however, that it is difficult in most cases to know whether his versions should be accepted as adaptations or originals. Of mere translations there are none. The following version of the widely known hymn, "Veni Sancte Spiritus," may serve to illustrate his work as a transplanter of hymns.

Holy Spirit, come with light,
Break the dark and gloomy night
With Thy day unending.
Help us with a joyful lay
Greet the Lord's triumphant day
Now with might ascending.

Comforter so wondrous kind,
Noble guest of heart and mind
Fix in us Thy dwelling.
Give us peace in storm and strife,
Fill each troubled heart and life
With Thy joy excelling.

Make salvation clear to us,
Who despite our sin and dross
Would exalt the Spirit.

For without Thine aid and love
All our life and work must prove
Vain and without merit.

Raise or bow us with Thine arm,
Break temptation's evil charm,
Clear our clouded vision.
Fill our hearts with longing new,
Cleanse us with Thy morning dew,
Tears of deep contrition.

Blessed Fount of life and breath,
Let our hope in view of death
Blossom bright and vernal;
And above the silent tomb
Let the Easter lilies bloom,
Signs of life eternal.

Many of Grundtvig's original hymns evince a strong Danish coloring, a fact which is especially evident in a number of his Pentecost hymns. Pentecost comes in Denmark at the first breath of summer when nature, prompted by balmy breezes, begins to unfold her latent life and beauty. This similarity between the life of nature and the work of the Spirit is strikingly expressed in a number of his Pentecost hymns.

The following hymn, together with its beautiful tune, is rated as one of the most beautiful and, lyrically, most perfect hymns in Danish. Because of its strong Danish flavor, however, it may not make an equal appeal to American readers. The main thought of the hymn is that, as in nature, so also in the realm of the Spirit, summer is now at hand. The coming of the Spirit completes God's plan of salvation and opens the door for the unfolding of a new life. The translation is by Prof. S. D. Rodholm.

The sun now shines in all its splendor,
The fount of life and mercy tender;
Now bright Whitsunday lilies grow
And summer sparkles high and low;
Sweet songsters sing of harvest gold
In Jesus' name a thousand fold.

The peaceful nightingales are filling
The quiet night with music thrilling.
Thus all that to the Lord belong
May rest in peace and wake with song,
May dream of life beyond the skies,
And with God's praise at daylight rise.

It breathes from heaven on the flowers,
It whispers home-like in the bowers,
A balmy breeze comes to our coast
From Paradise, no longer closed,
And gently purls a brooklet sweet
Of life's clear water at our feet.

This works the Spirit, still descending,
And tongues of fire to mortals lending,
That broken hearts may now be healed,
And life with grace and love revealed
In Him, who came from yonder land
And has returned to God's right hand.

Awaken then all tongues to honor
Lord Jesus Christ, our blest Atoner;
Let every voice in anthems rise
To praise the Savior's sacrifice.

And thou, His Church, with one accord
Arise and glorify the Lord.

Of his other numerous hymns on the Spirit, the one given below is, perhaps, one of the most characteristic.

Holy Ghost, our Interceder,
Blessed Comforter and Pleader
With the Lord for all we need,
Deign to hold with us communion
That with Thee in blessed union
We may in our life succeed.

Heavenly Counsellor and Teacher,
Make us through Thy guidance richer
In the grace our Lord hath won.
Blest Partaker of God's fullness,
Make us all, despite our dullness,
Wiser e'en than Solomon.

Helper of the helpless, harken
To our pleas when shadows darken;
Shield us from the beasts of prey.
Rouse the careless, help the weary,
Bow the prideful, cheer the dreary,
Be our guest each passing day.

Comforter, whose comfort lightens
Every cross that scars and frightens,
Succor us from guilt and shame.
Warm our heart, inspire our vision,
Add Thy voice to our petition
As we pray in Jesus' name.

Believing in the Spirit, Grundtvig also believed in the kingdom of God, not only as a promise of the future but as a reality of the present.

Right among us is God's kingdom
With His Spirit and His word,
With His grace and love abundant
At His font and altar-board.

Among his numerous hymns on the nature and work of God's kingdom, the following is one of the most favored.

Founded our Lord has upon earth a realm of the Spirit
Wherein He fosters a people restored by His merit.
        It shall remain
        People its glory attain,
They shall the kingdom inherit.

Forward like light of the morning its message is speeding,
Millions receive and proclaim it with gladness exceeding
        For with His word
        God doth His Spirit accord,
Raising all barriers impeding.

Jesus, our Savior, with God in the highest residing,
And by the Spirit the wants of Thy people providing,
        Be Thou our life,
        Shield and defender in strife,

Always among us abiding.

Then shall Thy people as Lord of the nations restore Thee,
Even by us shall a pathway be straightened before Thee
Till everywhere,
Bending in worship and prayer,
All shall as Savior adore Thee.

The kingdom of God is the most wonderful thing on earth.

Most wonderful of all things is
The kingdom Jesus founded.
Its glory, treasure, peace and bliss
No tongue has fully sounded.

Invisible as mind and soul,
And yet of light the fountain,
It sheds its light from pole to pole
Like beacons from a mountain.

Its secret is the word of God,
Which works what it proposes,
Which lowers mountains high and broad
And clothes the wastes with roses.

Though foes against the kingdom rage
With hatred and derision,
God spreads its reign from age to age,
And brings it to fruition.

Its glory rises like a morn
When waves at sunrise glitter,
Or as in June the golden corn
While birds above it twitter.

It is the glory of the King
Who bore affliction solely
That he the crown of life might bring
To sinners poor and lowly.

And when His advent comes to pass,
The Christian's strife is ended,
What now we see as in a glass
Shall then be comprehended.

Then shall the kingdom bright appear
In glory true and vernal,
And usher in the golden year
Of peace and joy eternal.

But the kingdom of God here on earth is represented by the Christian church, wherein Christ works by the Spirit through His word and sacraments. Of Grundtvig's many splendid hymns of the church, the following, in the translation of Pastor Carl Doving, has become widely known in all branches of the Lutheran church in America. Pastor Doving's translation is not wholly satisfactory, however, to those who know the forceful and yet so appealing language of the original, a fate which, we are fully aware, may also befall the following new version.

Built on a rock the church of God
Stands though its towers be falling;
Many have crumbled beneath the sod,
Bells still are chiming and calling,

Calling the young and old to come,
But above all the souls that roam,
Weary for rest everlasting.

God, the most high, abides not in
Temples that hands have erected.
High above earthly strife and sin,
He hath his mansions perfected.
Yet He, whom heavens cannot contain,
Chose to abide on earth with man
Making their body His temple.

We are God's house of living stones,
Built for the Spirit's indwelling.
He at His font and table owns
Us for His glory excelling.
Should only two confess His name,
He would yet come and dwell with them,
Granting His mercy abounding.

Even the temples built on earth
Unto the praise of the Father,
Are like the homes of hallowed worth
Whence we as children did gather.
Glorious things in them are said,
God there with us His covenant made,
Making us heirs of His kingdom.

There we behold the font at which
God as His children received us;
There stands the altar where His rich
Mercy from hunger relieved us.
There His blest word to us proclaim:
Jesus is now and e'er the same,
So is His way of salvation.

Grant then, O Lord, where'er we roam,
That, when the church bells are ringing,
People in Jesus' name may come,
Praising His glory with singing.
"Ye, not the world, my face shall see;
I will abide with you," said He.
"My peace I leave with you ever."

As a believer in objective Christianity, Grundtvig naturally exalts the God-given means of grace, the word and sacraments, through which the Spirit works. In one of the epigrammatic expressions often found in his writings, he says:

We are and remain,
We live and attain
In Jesus, God's living word
When His word we embrace
And live by its grace,
Then dwells He within us, our Lord.

This firm belief in the actual presence of Christ in His word and sacraments lends an exceptional realism to many of his hymns on the means of grace. Through the translation by Pastor Doving the following brief hymn has gained wide renown in America.

God's word is our great heritage,
And shall be ours forever.

To spread its light from age to age,
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guards our way,
In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure
Throughout all generations.

Of his numerous hymns on baptism, the following, which an American authority on hymnody calls the finest baptismal hymn ever written, is perhaps the most representative.

O let Thy spirit with us tarry,
Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
So that the babes we to Thee carry
May be unto Thy death baptized.

Lord, after Thee we humbly name them,
O let them in Thy name arise!
If they should stumble, Lord, reclaim them,
That they may reach Thy paradise.

If long their course, let them not falter.
Give to Thine aged servants rest.
If short their race, let by Thine altar
Them like the swallows find a rest.

Upon their heart, Thy name be written,
And theirs within Thine own right hand,
That even when by trials smitten,
They in Thy covenant firm may stand.

Thine angels sing for children sleeping,
May they still sing when death draws nigh.
Both cross and crown are in Thy keeping.
Lord, lead us all to Thee on high.

His communion hymns are gathered from many sources. Of his originals the following tender hymn is perhaps the most typical.

Savior, whither should we go
From the truest friend we know,
From the Son of God above,
From the Fount of saving love,
Who in all this world of strife
Hath alone the word of life.

No, I dare not turn from Thee,
Though Thy word oft chasten me,
For throughout this world, O Lord,
Death is still the cruel word.
Whoso saves the soul from death
Brings redemption, life and breath.

“Eat my flesh and drink my blood.”
Saith our Lord, so kind and good.
“Whoso takes the bread and wine,
Shall receive my life divine,
Be redeemed from all his foes
And arise as I arose.”

Hear Him then, my heart distressed,
Beating anxious in my breast.

Take Thy Savior at His word,
Meet Him at His altar-board,
Eat His body, drink His blood,
And obtain eternal good.

Grundtvig also produced a great number of hymns for the enrichment of other parts of the church service. Few hymns thus strike a more appropriate and festive note for the opening service than the short hymn given below.

Come, Zion, and sing to the Father above;
Angels join with you
And thank Him for Jesus, the gifts of His love.
We sing before God in the highest.

Strike firmly, O Psalmist, the jubilant chord;
Golden be your harp
In praise of Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord.
We sing before God in the highest.

Then hear we with rapture the tongues as of fire,
The Spirit draws nigh,
Whose counsels with comforts our spirits inspire,
We sing before God in the highest.

Equally fine is his free rendering of the 84th psalm.

Fair beyond telling,
Lord, is Thy dwelling,
Filled with Thy peace.
Oh how I languish
And, in my anguish,
Wait for release
That I may enter Thy temple, O Lord,
With Thee communing in deepest accord.

With Thy compassion,
Lord of Salvation,
Naught can compare.
Even the sparrow
Safe from the arrow
Rests in Thy care.
And as Thou shieldest the bird in its nest,
So let my heart in Thy temple find rest.

Years full of splendors,
Which to offenders
Earth may afford,
Never can measure
One day of pleasure
Found with Thee, Lord,
When on the wings of Thy quickening word
Souls are uplifted and Thou art adored.

Quicken in spirit,
Grow in Thy merit
Shall now Thy friends.
Blessings in showers
Filled with Thy powers
On them descends
Until at home in the city of gold
All shall in wonder Thy presence behold.

Grundtvig's hymns are for the most part church hymns, presenting the objective rather than the subjective phase of Christian faith. He wrote for the congregation and held that a hymn for congregational singing should express the common faith and hope of the worshippers, rather than the personal feelings and experiences of the individual. Because of this his hymns are frequently criticized for their lack of personal sentiment. The personal note is not wholly lacking in his work, however, as witnessed by the following hymn.

Suffer and languish,
Tremble in anguish
Must every soul that awakes to its guilt.
Sternly from yonder,
Sinai doth thunder:
Die or achieve what no sinner fulfilled.

Tremble with gladness,
Smile through their sadness
Shall all that rest in the arms of the Lord.
Grace beyond measure,
Comfort and treasure
Gathers the heart from His merciful word.

Bravely to suffer,
Gladly to offer
Praises to God 'neath the weight of our cross,
This will the Spirit
Help us to merit
Granting a breath from God's heaven to us.

Even stronger is the personal sentiment of this appealing hymn.

With her cruse of alabaster,
Filled with ointment rare and sweet,
Came the woman to the Master,
Knelt contritely at His feet,
Feeling with unfeigned contrition
How unfit was her condition
To approach the Holy One.

Like this woman, I contritely
Often must approach the Lord,
Knowing that I cannot rightly
Ask a place beside His board.
Sinful and devoid of merit,
I can only cry in spirit:
Lord, be merciful to me.

Lord of Grace and Mercy, harken
To my plea for grace and light.
Threatening clouds and tempests darken
Now my soul with gloomy night.
Let, despite my guilt and error,
My repenting tears still mirror
Thy forgiving smile, O Lord.

The following hymn likewise voices the need for personal perseverance.

Hast to the plow thou put thy hand
Let not thy spirit waver,
Heed not the world's allurements grand,
Nor pause for Sodom's favor.

But plow thy furrow, sow the seed,
Though tares and thorns thy work impede;
For they, who sow with weeping,
With joy shall soon be reaping.

But should at times thy courage fail—
For all may fail and falter—
Let not the tempting world prevail
On thee thy course to alter.
Each moment lost in faint retreat
May bring disaster and defeat.
If foes bid thee defiance,
On God be thy reliance.

If steadfast in the race we keep,
Our course is soon completed.
And death itself is but a sleep,
Its dreaded might defeated.
But those who conquer in the strife
Obtain the victor's crown of life
And shall in constant gladness
Forget these days of sadness.

It is, perhaps, in his numerous hymns on Christian trust, comfort and hope that Grundtvig reaches his highest. His contributions to this type of hymns are too numerous to be more than indicated here. But the hymn given below presents a fair example of the simplicity and poetic beauty that characterize many of them.

God's little child, what troubles you!
Think of your Heavenly Father true.
He will uphold you by His hand,
None can His might and grace withstand.
The Lord be praised!

Shelter and food and counsel tried
God for His children will provide.
They shall not starve, nor homeless roam,
Children may claim their Father's home.
The Lord be praised!

Birds with a song toward heaven soar,
Neither they reap nor lay in store,
But where the hoarder dies from need,
Gathers the little bird a seed.
The Lord be praised!

Clad are the flowers in raiment fair,
Wondrous to see on deserts bare.
Neither they spin nor weave nor sew
Yet no king could such beauty show.
The Lord be praised!

Flowers that bloom at break of dawn
Only to die when day is gone,
How can they with the child compare
That shall the Father's glory share?
The Lord be praised!

God's little child, do then fore'er
Cast on the Lord your every care.
Trust in His love, His grace and might
Then shall His peace your soul delight.
The Lord be praised!

God will your every need allay
Even tomorrow as yesterday,
And when the sun for you goes down
He will your soul with glory crown.
The Lord be praised!

Grundtvig's friends were sometimes called the "Merry Christians." There was nothing superficial or lighthearted, however, about the Christianity of their leader. It had been gained through intense struggles and maintained at the cost of worldly position and honor. But he did believe that God is love, and that love is the root and fount of life, as he says in the following splendid hymn. The translation is by the Reverend Doving.

Love, the fount of light from heaven,
Is the root and source of life;
Therefore God's decrees are given
With His lovingkindness rife.
As our Savior blest declareth
And the Spirit witness beareth,
As we in God's service prove;
God is light and God is love.

Love, the crown of life eternal,
Love the brightness is of light;
Therefore on His throne supernal
Jesus sits in glory bright.
He the Light and Life of heaven,
Who Himself for us hath given,
Still abides and reigns above
In His Father's boundless love.

Love, alone the law fulfilling,
Is the bond of perfectness;
Love, who came, a victim willing,
Wrought our peace and righteousness.
Therefore love and peace in union
Ever work in sweet communion
That through love we may abide
One with Him who for us died.

But the fruit of God's love is peace. As Grundtvig, in the hymn above, sings of God's love, so in the sweet hymn given below he sings of God's peace. The translation is by Pastor Doving.

Peace to soothe our bitter woes
God in Christ on us bestows;
Jesus wrought our peace with God
Through His holy, precious blood;
Peace in Him for sinners found
Is the Gospel's joyful sound.

Peace to us the church doth tell.
'Tis her welcome and farewell.
Peace was our baptismal dower;
Peace shall bless our dying hour.
Peace be with you full and free
Now and in eternity.

In this peace Christians find refuge and rest.

The peace of God protects our hearts
Against the tempter's fiery darts.

It is as sure when evening falls
As when the golden morning calls.

This peace our Savior wrought for us
In agony upon the cross,
And when He up to heaven soared,
His peace He left us in His word.

His word of peace new strength imparts
Each day to faint and troubled hearts,
And in His cup and at the font
It stills our deepest need and want.

This blessed peace our Lord will give
To all who in His Spirit live.
And even at their dying breath
Its comfort breaks the sting of death.

When Christ for us His peace hath won
He asked for faith and faith alone.
By faith and not by merits vain,
Our hearts God's blessed peace obtain.

Peace be with you, our Savior saith
In answer to the word of faith.
Whoso hath faith, shall find release
And dwell in God's eternal peace.

Grundtvig's hymns of comfort for the sick and dying rank with the finest ever written. He hates and fears death, hoping even that Christ may return before his own hour comes; but if He does not, he prays that the Savior will be right with him.

Lord, when my final hours impend,
Come in the person of a friend
And take Thy place beside me,
And talk to me as man to man
Of where we soon shall meet again
And all Thy joy betide me.

For though he knows he cannot master the enemy alone, if the Savior is there—

Death is but the last pretender
We with Christ as our defender
Shall engage and put to flight.

And His word will dispel all fear of the struggle:

Like dew upon the meadow
So falls the word of life
On Christians in the shadow
Of mortal's final strife.
The first fruit of its blessing
Is balm for fears distressing,
So gone is like a breath
The bitterness of death.

Like sun, when night is falling,
Sets stilly in the west
While birds are softly calling
Each other from their nest,
So when its brief day closes

That soul in peace reposes
Which knows that Christ the Lord
Is with it in His word.

And as we shiver slightly
An early summer morn
When blushing heavens brightly
Announce a day new-born,
So moves the soul immortal
With calmness through death's portal
That through its final strife
Beholds the Light of Life.

He could therefore exclaim:

Christian! what a morn of splendor
Full reward for every fear,
When the ransomed host shall render
Praises to its Savior dear,
Shall in heaven's hall of glory
Tell salvation's wondrous story,
And with the angelic throng
Sing the Lamb's eternal song.

[10] Another translation: "Take away the signs of mourning" by P. C. Paulsen in "Hymnal for Church and Home".

Grundtvig's Later Years

Grundtvig's later years present a striking contrast to the years of his earlier manhood. The lonely Defender of the Bible became a respected sage and the acknowledged leader of a fast growing religious and folk movement, both in Denmark and the other Scandinavian countries. His long years of continuous struggles were followed by years of fruitful work and an extensive growth of his religious and educational ideals until he was generally recognized as one of the most vital spiritual leaders of Scandinavia.

The first break in the wall of isolation that surrounded him came with an invitation from a group of students to "the excellent historian, N. F. S. Grundtvig, who has never asked for a reward but only for a chance to do good," to deliver a series of historical lectures at Borch's Collegium in Copenhagen. These lectures—seventy-one in all—were delivered before packed audiences during the summer and fall of 1838, and were so enthusiastically received that the students, on the evening of the concluding lecture, arranged a splendid banquet for the speaker, at which one of them sang:

> Yes, through years of lonely struggle
> Did you bravely fight,
> Bearing scorn without complaining
> Till your hair turned white.

During his most lonely years Grundtvig once comforted himself with the words of a Greek sage: "Speak to the people of yesterday, and you will be heard by the people of tomorrow." Thus it was, no doubt, a great satisfaction to him that the first public honor bestowed upon him should be accorded him by his nation's youth.

From that day his reputation and influence grew steadily. He became an honored member of several influential societies, such as the Society for Northern Studies, and the Scandinavian Society, an association of academicians from all the Scandinavian countries for the purpose of effecting a closer spiritual and cultural union between them. He also received frequent invitations to lecture both on outstanding occasions and before special groups. His work as a lecturer probably reached its culmination at a public meeting on the Skamlingsbanke, a wooded hill on the borders of Slesvig, where he spoke to thousands of profoundly stirred listeners, and at a great meeting of Scandinavian students at Oslo, Norway, in 1851, to which he was invited as the guest of honor and acclaimed both by the students and the Norwegian people. When Denmark became a constitutional kingdom in 1848, he was a member of the constitutional assembly and was elected several times to the Riksdag.

Meanwhile he worked ceaselessly for the development of his folk and educational ideals. After his conversion, he felt for a time that his new outlook was incompatible with his previous enthusiasm for the heroic life and ideals of the old North, and that he must now devote himself solely to the preaching of the Gospel. But the formerly mentioned decline of all phases of Danish life during the early part of the nineteenth century and the failure of his preaching to evoke any response from an indifferent people caused him to suspect a closer relationship between a people's religious and national or folk-life than he had hitherto recognized. Was not the folk life of a people, after all, the soil in which the Word of God must be sown, and could the Word bear fruit in a soil completely hardened and unprepared to receive it? If it could not, was not a folk awakening a necessary preparation for a Christian?

Under the spur of this question he undertook the translation of the sagas and developed his now widely recognized ideas of folk life and folk education, which later were embodied in the Grundtvigian folk schools. The first of these schools was opened at Rødding, Slesvig in 1844. The war between Denmark and Germany from 1848 to 1850 delayed the establishment of other similar schools. But in 1851, Christian Kold, the man who more than any other realized Grundtvig's idea of a school for life—as the folk schools were frequently called—opened his first school at Ryslinge, Fyn. From there the movement spread rapidly not only to all parts of Denmark but also to Norway, Finland and Sweden. The latter country now has more schools of the Grundtvigian type than Denmark, and Norway and Finland have about have as many.[11]

To extend the influence of the movement lecture societies, reading circles, gymnastic societies, choral groups and the like were organized in almost every parish of Denmark. Thus before Grundtvig died, he had the satisfaction of seeing his work bear fruit in one of the most vital folk and educational movements of Scandinavia, a movement which has made a tremendous imprint upon all phases of life in the Northern countries and which today is spreading to many other parts of the world.

Grundtvig held that the life of a nation, Christian as well as national, never rose above the real culture of its common people. To be real, a culture had to be national, had to be based on a people's natural characteristics and developed in accordance with native history and traditions. The aim of all true folk-education was the awakening and enrichment of life and not a mere mental or practical training. The natural means for the attainment of this aim was a living presentation of a people's own cultural heritage, their native tradition, history, literature and folk life. But in all cases the medium of this presentation was the living, that is the spoken word by men and women who were themselves spiritually alive. Christianity, in his opinion, had not come to destroy but to cleanse and vivify the folk life of a people, and, since the latter was the soil in which the former had to grow, the fruitfulness of both demanded a living inter-action so that national life might become Christian and Christianity national.

In the practical application of these educational theories, Grundtvig took no active part. Aside from his conception of the idea and the development of much of the material used in the folk-school, his greatest contributions to their work are probably, his innumerable Biblical, historical and folk songs that were and are used in the schools.

Meanwhile he by no means neglected his religious work. Rationalism had been defeated, a sound Evangelical movement was fast revitalizing the church, and he could therefore concentrate his energy on a further development of the view that had come to him during his years of struggle. Among innumerable other works, he produced during his later years the splendid **Enlightenment of the Church**, published 1840-1844; **Teachings of Our Christian Childhood**, published 1855-1862; **The Seven Stars of the Churches**, published 1854-1855; and **The Church Mirror**, a series of lectures on the main currents of church history, published 1861-1863.

Although Grundtvig's views, and especially his distinction between the "living" and the "written" word, were strongly opposed by many, his profoundly spiritual conception of the church, as the body of Christ, and of the sacraments, as its true means of life, has greatly influenced all branches of the Danish church. In emphasizing the true indwelling of Christ in the creed and sacraments, he visualized the real presence of Him in the church and underscored the vital center of congregational worship with a realism that no theological dissertation can ever convey. Nor did he feel that in so doing he was in any sense diverging from true Lutheranism. The fact that Luther himself chose the creed and the words of

institution of the sacrament as a basis for his catechism, showed, he contended, that the great Reformer also had recognized their distinction.

Despite frequent charges to the contrary, Grundtvig had no desire to engender a separatist movement in the church. He constantly warned his followers against any such tendency. In a closing speech to the Meeting of Friends in 1863, he said, “You can no more forbid the world to call you Grundtvigians than those whom Luther called to the Lord could forbid anyone to call them Lutherans, but do not yourself adopt that name. For history shows that some have let themselves be called Lutherans until they have almost lost the name of Christians. If anyone wishes to name us after any other than Christ, we ought to tell them that we accept nothing unto salvation except what the Christian church has taught and confessed from generation to generation. To or from that we neither add nor detract. We acknowledge without reservation that word of faith which Paul says is believed to righteousness and confessed unto salvation. The manner of teaching and believing that faith so that the Old Adam may be put off and the new put on, we hold to be a matter of enlightenment in which we shall be guided by Grundtvig, as we are guided by Luther, only in so far as we are convinced that he has been guided by Scripture and the Spirit. We also disclaim any intention of making our conception of Scripture an article of faith which must be accepted by the church.” Grundtvig’s followers would, no doubt, have profited greatly by remembering this truly liberal view of their leader.

Thus his years passed quietly onward, filled with fruitful labor even unto the end. In contrast to his often stormy public career, Grundtvig’s private life was quite peaceful and commonplace, subject only to the usual trials and sorrows of human existence. During the greater part of his life he was extremely poor, subsisting on a small government pension, the meager returns from his writings and occasional gifts from friends. For his own part this did not trouble him; his wants were few and easily satisfied. But he “liked to see shining faces around him,” as he once wrote, and he had discovered that the face of a child could often be brightened by a small gift, which he was frequently too poor to give. “But if we would follow the Lord in these days,” he wrote to a friend, “we must evidently be prepared to renounce all things for His sake and cast out all these heathen worries for dross and chaff with which we as Christians often distress ourselves.”

Grundtvig was thrice married. His first wife, Lise Grundtvig, died January 4, 1851, after a long illness. Her husband said at her grave, “I stand here as an old man who is taking a decided step toward my own grave by burying the bride of my youth and the mother of my children who for more than forty years with unfailing loyalty shared all my joys and sorrows—and mostly latter.”

But Grundtvig did not appear to be growing old. During the following summer he attended the great meeting of Scandinavian students at Oslo, where he was hailed as the youngest of them all. And on October 4 of the same year, he rejoiced his enemies and grieved many of his friends by marrying Marie Toft, of Rennebeck’s Manor, a wealthy widow and his junior by thirty years. And despite dire predictions to the contrary, the marriage was very happy. Marie Toft was a highly intelligent and spiritual-minded woman who wholeheartedly shared her husband’s spiritual views and ideals; and her death in 1854 came, therefore, as an almost overwhelming blow. In a letter to a friend a few weeks after her death, Grundtvig writes, “It was wonderful to be loved as unselfishly as Marie loved me. But she belonged wholly to God. He gave and He took; and despite all objections by the world and our own selfish flesh, the believing heart must exclaim, His name be praised. When I consider the greatness of the treasure that the Lord gave to me by opening this loving heart to me in my old age, I confess that it probably would have proved beyond my strength continuously to bear such good days; for had I not

already become critical of all that were not like her, and indifferent to all things that were not concerned with her?”

The last remark, perhaps, refers to a complaint by his friends that he had become so absorbed in his wife that he neglected other things. If this had been the case, he now made amends by throwing himself into a whirl of activity that would have taxed the strength of a much younger man. During the following years, he wrote part of his formerly mentioned books on the church and Christian education, delivered a large number of lectures, resumed his seat in the Riksdag and, of course, attended to his growing work as a pastor. As he was also very neglectful of his own comfort in other ways, it was evident to all that such a strenuous life must soon exhaust his strength unless someone could be constantly about him and minister to his need. For this reason a high-minded young widow, the Baroness Asta Tugendreich Reetz, entered into marriage with him that she might help to conserve the strength of the man whom she considered one of the greatest assets her country possessed.

Grundtvig once said of his marriages that the first was an idyl, the second a romance and the third a fairy-tale. Others said harsher things. But Asta Grundtvig paid no attention to the scandal mongers. A very earnest Christian woman herself, she devoted all her energy to create a real Christian home for her husband and family. As Grundtvig had always lived much by himself, she wished especially to make their home a ready gathering place for all his friends and co-workers. In this she succeeded so well that their modest dwelling was frequently crowded with visitors from far and near, many of whom later counted their visit with Grundtvig among the richest experiences of their life.

Grundtvig’s fiftieth anniversary as a pastor was celebrated with impressive festivities on May 29, 1861. The celebration was attended by representatives from all departments of government and the church as well as by a host of people from all parts of Scandinavia; and the celebrant was showered with gifts and honors. The king conferred upon him the title of bishop; the former queen, Carolina Amalia, presented him with a seven armed candlestick of gold from women in Norway, Sweden and Denmark; his friend, Pastor P. A. Fenger, handed him a gift of three thousand dollars from friends in Denmark and Norway to finance a popular edition of his **Hymns and Songs for the Danish Church**; and another friend, Gunni Busck, presented him with a plaque of gold engraved with his likeness and a line from his hymns, a gift from the congregation of Vartov.

Many of those who participated in this splendid jubilee felt that it would be of great benefit to them to meet again for mutual fellowship and discussion of pressing religious and national questions. And with the willing cooperation of Asta Grundtvig, it was decided to invite all who might be interested to a meeting in Copenhagen on Grundtvig’s eightieth birthday, September 8, the following year. This Meeting of Friends—as it was named—proved so successful that it henceforth became an annual event, attended by people from all parts of Scandinavia. Although Grundtvig earnestly desired that these meetings should actually be what they were designed to be, meetings of friends for mutual help and enlightenment, his own part in them was naturally important. His powers were still unimpaired, and his contributions were rich in wisdom and spiritual insight. Knowing himself surrounded by friends, he often spoke with an appealing heartiness and power that made the Meetings of Friends unforgettable experiences to many.

Thus the once loneliest man in Denmark found himself in his old age honored by his nation, surrounded by friends, and besieged by visitors and co-workers, seeking his help and advice. He was always very approachable. In his younger days he had frequently been harsh and self-assertive in his judgment of

others; but in his latter years he learned that kindness is always more fruitful than wrath. Sitting in his easy chair and smoking his long pipe, he talked frankly and often wittily with the many who came to visit him. Thus Bishop H. Martensen, the theologian, tells us that his conversation was admirably eloquent and interspersed with wit and humor. And a prominent Swedish author, P. Wisselgren, writes: “Some years ago I spent one of the most delightful evenings of my life with Bishop Grundtvig. I doubt that I have ever met a greater poet of conversation. Each thought was an inspiration and his heart was in every word he said.”

Grundtvig’s outward appearance, especially during his later years, was extremely charming. His strong countenance framed by long white locks and a full beard bore the imprint of a profound spiritual intellect and a benevolent calmness. The queen, Caroline Amalia, after her first meeting with him wrote, “Grundtvig has a most beautiful countenance, and he attracted me at once by his indescribably kind and benevolent appearance. What an interesting man he is, and what a pleasure it is to listen to his open and forthright conversation.”

And so, still active and surrounded by friends, he saw his long, fruitful life drawing quietly toward its close. In 1871, he opened the annual Meeting of Friends by speaking from the text: “See, I die, but the Lord shall be with you,” and said in all likelihood this meeting would be the last at which he would be present. He lived, however, to prepare for the next meeting, which was to be held on September 11, 1872. On September 1, he conducted his service at Vartov as usual, preaching an exceptionally warm and inspiring sermon. But the following morning he passed away quietly while sitting in his easy chair and listening to his son read for him.

He was buried September 11, three days after his 89th birthday, in the presence of representatives from all departments of the government, one fourth of the Danish clergy and a vast assembly of people from all parts of Scandinavia.

An American writer recently named Grundtvig “The Builder of Modern Denmark.” And there are few phases of modern Danish life which he has not influenced. His genius was so unique and his work so many-sided that with equal justice one might call him a historian, a poet, an educator, a religious philosopher, a hymnologist and a folk-leader. Yet there is an underlying unity of thought and purpose in all his work which makes each part of it merely a branch of the whole. This underlying unity is his clear conception of the spiritual and of man as a spiritual being who can attain his fullest development only through the widest possible realization of the spiritual in all his divine and human relationships. In every part of his work Grundtvig, therefore, invariably seeks to discover the spiritual realities. The mere form of a thing, the form of religion, of knowledge, of education, of government, of all human institutions and endeavors have no intrinsic value, are only skeletons and dead bones until they become imbued and vivified by the spirit. Thus Professor Martensen, who by no means belonged to the Grundtvigian party, writes, “But among the many things I owe to Grundtvig, I cherish above all his conception of the spiritual as the reality besides which all other things are nothing but shadows, and of the spirit inspired word as the mightiest power in human life. And he gave that to me not as a theory but as a living truth, a spiritual reality about which there could be not even a shadow of doubt.”

Grundtvig found the spiritual in many things, in the myth of the North, in history, literature and, in fact, in all things through which man has to express his god-given nature. He had no patience with the Pietists who looked upon all things not directly religious as evils with which a Christian could have nothing to do. Yet he believed above all in the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of spirits,” the true agent of God

in the world. The work of the Spirit was indispensable to man’s salvation, and the fruit of that work, the regenerated Christian life, the highest expression of the spiritual. Since he believed furthermore, that the Holy Spirit works especially in the church through the word and sacraments, the church was to him the workshop of the Spirit.

In his famous hymn to the church bell, his symbol for the church, he writes “that among all noble voices none could compare with that of the ringing bell.” Despite the many fields in which he traced the imprint of the spiritual, the church remained throughout his long life his real spiritual home, a fact which he beautifully expresses in the hymn below.

Hallowed Church Bell, not for worldly centers
Wast thou made, but for the village small
Where thy voice, as home and hearth it enters,
Blends with lullabies at evenfall.

When a child and in the country dwelling,
Christmas morning was my heaven on earth,
And thy chimes, like angel voices swelling,
Told with joy of my Redeemer’s birth.

Louder still thy joyful chimes resounded,
When on wings of early morning borne,
They proclaimed: Awake with joy unbounded,
Christ arose this blessed Easter morn.

Sweeter even were thy tolls when blending
With the calm of summer eventide
And, as though from heaven above descending,
Bid me cast all grief and care aside.

Hence when now the day is softly ending,
Shadows fall and birds ascend their nest,
Like the flowers my head in silence bending,
I am chanting with my soul at rest:

When at last, O Church Bell, thou art tolling
O’er my grave while loved grieve and sigh,
Say to them, their troubled heart consoling,
He is resting with his Lord on high.

[11] The printed text is corrupt, but the correction is not obvious. Norway and Finland might have "about as many" or "about half as many".

Other Danish Hymnwriters

Chapter Seventeen

The Danish church has produced a large number of hymnwriters, who, except for the greatness of Kingo, Brorson and Grundtvig, would have commanded general recognition. The present hymnal of the church contains contributions by about sixty Danish writers. Though the majority of these are represented by only one or two hymns, others have made large contributions.

Kingo, Brorson and Grundtvig, peculiarly enough, had few imitators. A small number of writers did attempt to imitate the great leaders, but they formed no school and their work for the most part was so insignificant that it soon disappeared. Thus even Kingo's great work inspired no hymnwriter of any consequence, and the fifty years between Kingo and Brorson added almost nothing to the hymnody of the church. Contemporary with Brorson, however, a few writers appeared whose songs have survived to the present day. Foremost among these is Ambrosius Stub, a unique and sympathetic writer whose work constitutes a distinct contribution to Danish poetry.

Ambrosius Stub was born on the island of Fyn in 1705, the son of a village tailor. Although extremely poor, he managed somehow to enter the University of Copenhagen, but his poverty compelled him to leave the school without completing his course. For a number of years, he drifted aimlessly, earning a precarious living by teaching or bookkeeping at the estates of various nobles, always dogged by poverty and a sense of frustration. Although he was gifted and ambitious, his lack of a degree and his continuous poverty prevented him from attaining the position in life to which his ability apparently entitled him. During his later years, he conducted a small school for boys at Ribe, a small city on the west coast of Jutland, where he died in abject poverty in 1758, only 53 years old.

Stub's work remained almost unknown during his lifetime, but a small collection of his poems, published after his death, gained him a posthumous recognition as the greatest Danish poet of the 18th century. Stub's style is extremely noble and expressive, devoid of the excessive bombast and sentimentality that many writers then mistook for poetry. He was of a cheerful disposition with a hopeful outlook upon life that only occasionally is darkened by the hardships and disappointments of his own existence. Even the poems of his darker moods are colored by his inborn love of beauty and his belief in the fundamental goodness of life. Many of his best poems are of a religious nature, and expressive of his warm and trustful Christian faith. In view of the discouraging hardships and disappointments of his own life, the following much favored hymn throws a revealing light upon the spirit of its author.

Undismayed by any fortune
Life may have in store for me,
This, whatever be my portion,
I will always try to be.
    If I but in grace abide,
    Undismayed whate'er betide.

Undismayed when others harry
Mind and soul with anxious care;
If the Lord with me will tarry,
All my troubles disappear.
    If I but in grace abide,

Undismayed whate'er betide.

Undismayed when others sighing,
Quail before the evil day,
On God's grace I am relying;
Nothing can me then dismay.
If I but in grace abide,
Undismayed whate'er betide.

Undismayed when others fearing,
See the hour of death draw nigh.
With the victor's crown appearing,
Why should I repine and sigh.
If I but in grace abide,
Undismayed whate'er betide.

Dearest Lord, if I may treasure
Thy abundant grace each day,
I shall cherish Thy good pleasure,
Be my portion what it may.
If I but in grace abide,
Undismayed whate'er betide.

The age of Rationalism discarded most of the old hymns but produced no worthwhile hymns of its own. The most highly praised hymnwriter of the period, Birgitte Boye, the wife of a forester, wrote a great number of hymns of which no less than 150 were included in a new hymnal published in 1870, by the renowned statesman, Ove Hoegh Guldberg. Although excessively praised by the highest authorities of the period, Birgitte Boye's hymns contain nothing of permanent value, and have now happily been forgotten.

The Evangelical revival about the middle of the 19th century restored the old hymns to their former favor, and produced besides, a number of new hymnwriters of real merit. Among these, Casper J. Boye is, perhaps, the most prominent. Born of Danish parents at Kongsberg, Norway, in 1791, Boye entered the University of Copenhagen in 1820 where he first took up the study of law and then, of theology. After graduating from this department, he became a teacher at a Latin school and some years later, a pastor of the large Garrison Church in Copenhagen, where he remained until his death in 1851. Boye was a gifted writer, both on secular and religious themes. His numerous hymns appeared in six small volumes entitled: **Spiritual Songs**. They are marked by a flowing but at times excessively literary style and a quiet spiritual fervor. The following still is a favorite opening hymn.

Day is breaking, night is ended,
And the day of rest ascended
Upon church and countryside.
Like the day in brightness growing,
Grace from God is richer flowing;
Heaven's portals open wide.

O what joy this day is bringing,
When the chiming bells are ringing,
Calling man to prayer and praise!
All the angel host rejoices
And with gladsome, mellow voices
Thanks the Lord for light and grace.

Sin and death with fear and sorrow
And the burden of tomorrow
Shall not weigh my heart with care.
Unto all in tribulation

Doth the Lord of our salvation
On this day His peace declare.

Be it hushed in solemn stillness,
Must I weep in grief or illness,
Or confess my guilt and shame,
It is blessed to be weeping
When the hungry heart is reaping
Grace and peace in Jesus' name.

O Thou Fount of grace unbounded,
Who our wisdom hath confounded,
Whom but faith can comprehend!
In Thy love my soul reposes;
Heaven's portal never closes
Till before Thy throne we stand.

Herman Andreas Timm, a younger contemporary of Boye, also wrote a large number of excellent hymns. He was born at Copenhagen in 1800, and was for many years pastor of the church on Amager, a suburb of the capital city. He died in 1866. His hymns appeared in a small volume of poems, published in 1834, under the title: **Spiritual Songs**. They are characterized by an easy literary style and an urgent spiritual appeal. The following very popular hymn is perhaps the best-known of those now available in English.

Dost thou know the living fountain
Whence the stream of grace doth flow?
Dry the streams from snowcapped mountain,
Yet this stream shall fuller grow.
From the very heart of God
Flows its currents deep and broad,
Unto every land and nation,
Bringing mercy and salvation.

Come unto the living waters!
Cried the prophets, do not shrink!
God invites His sons and daughters:
He that thirsteth come and drink.
With this water God imparts
Health and strength to sin-sick hearts.
Why are ye then hesitating
While the Lord with grace is waiting.

With us is the day appointed,
God has kept His gracious word.
He has come, the Lord's annointed;
Men have seen the promised Lord.
Saints of God from every race
Found in Him the fount of grace,
And, with joy that never ceases,
Said: The Fount of Life is Jesus.

Hasten then! Let all assemble
At this fountain pure and strong.
Come, ye souls that fear and tremble,
Come, ye old, and come ye young.
Now the hour of grace is here,
Draw then to its fountain near.
Soon, ah soon! the day is over.
Quickly night the world may cover.

Another contemporary of these writers, and perhaps the most prominent of the group, was Theodore

Vilhelm Oldenburg. Oldenburg was born at Copenhagen in 1805, son of the Royal Chamberlain, Frederik Oldenburg. His mother died while he was still a boy, but his excellent father managed to give him a most careful training and a splendid education. He graduated "cum laude" from the University of Copenhagen in 1822, obtained the degree of Master of Arts during the following year, entered the department of theology and graduated from there three years later, also "cum laude." In 1830 he accepted a call to become pastor of the parish of Otterup and Sorterup on the island of Fyn. Here he won high praise for his conspicuously able and faithful work. Together with the gifted Bishop P. C. Kirkegaard, he was editor for a number of years of the influential periodical "Nordisk Tidsskrift for Kristelig Teologi," and also of the outstanding foreign mission paper, "Dansk Missionsblad." Through these papers he exerted a powerful and always beneficent influence upon the churches of both Denmark and Norway. His outstanding and richly blest service was cut short by death in 1842 when he was only 37 years old. He was carried to the grave to the strains of his own appealing hymn: "Thine, O Jesus, Thine Forever."

Oldenburg's quite numerous hymns were printed from time to time in various periodicals. They express in a noble and highly lyrical style the firm faith and warm religious fervor of his own consecrated life.

The hymn given below was written for a foreign mission convention shortly before his death.

Deep and precious,
Strong and gracious
Is the word of God above,
Gently calling
Sinners falling,
To the Savior's arm of love.
Unto all the word is given:
Jesus is the way to heaven.

Blessed Savior,
Wondrous favor
Hast Thou shown our fallen race!
Times may alter,
Worlds may falter,
Nothing moves Thy word of grace.
With Thy word Thy grace abideth,
And for all our needs provideth.

By Thy merit,
Through the Spirit
Draw all sinners, Lord, to Thee.
Sin and error,
Death and terror
By Thy word shall vanquished be.
Guide us all through life's straight portal,
Bear us into life immortal.

Besides Grundtvig the foremost hymnwriter of this period was his close friend, Bernhard Severin Ingemann, one of Denmark's most popular and beloved writers. He was born in 1789 in a parsonage on the island of Falster. His father died in 1800 when the son was only 11 years old, and his mother left the parsonage to settle in Slagelse, an old city on the island of Sjælland. Having graduated from the Latin school there in 1806, Ingemann entered the University of Copenhagen in the fall of the same year. During the English attack on Copenhagen in 1807, he enrolled in the student's volunteer corps and fought honorably in defense of the city. After graduating from the University, he was granted free board and room at Walkendorf's Collegium, an institution for the aid of indigent but promising young

students. Here he devoted most of his time to literary pursuits and, during the following three years, he published a large number of works which won him a favorable name as a gifted lyrical poet of a highly idealistic type. As an encouragement to further efforts, the government granted him a two year stipend for travel and study in foreign parts. He visited Germany, France, Switzerland and Italy, and became acquainted with many famous literary leaders of that day, especially in Germany. On his return from abroad in 1822 he was appointed a lector at the famous school at Sorø on the island of Sjælland. In this charming old city with its splendid cathedral and idyllic surroundings he spent the remainder of his life in the peace and quiet that agreed so well with his own mild and seraphic nature. He died in 1862.

Inspired by Oehlenschlaeger and strongly encouraged by Grundtvig, Ingemann in 1824 began the issuance of his famous historical novels, based upon episodes from the romantic period of Danish history during the 13th and 14th centuries. To some extent the novels are modeled upon the similar works of Walter Scott but are written in a livelier style and more idealistic spirit than their English prototype. In later years their historical veracity has been gravely questioned. Enjoying an immense popularity both in Denmark and in Norway, these highly idealized pictures of the past did much to arouse that national spirit which especially Grundtvig had labored long to awaken. After completing his historical novels, Ingemann again resumed his lyrical and fictional writings, producing a large number of poems, fairy-tales and novels that further increased his already immense popularity.

Bernhard Severin Ingemann

Bernhard Severin Ingemann

Despite the great popularity of Ingemann’s secular writings, it is, nevertheless, his hymns and spiritual songs which will preserve his name the longest. His first collection of hymns, a small volume of morning and evening songs, appeared in 1822. This collection was followed in 1825 by a volume of church hymns, which was enlarged and reprinted in 1843. The favorable reception of these hymns caused Ingemann to be selected to prepare the new church hymnal, published in 1855, a task which he accomplished to the general satisfaction of all.

Ingemann’s hymns faithfully reflect his own serene and idealistic nature. Their outstanding merits are a limpid, lyrical style and an implicit trust in the essential goodness of life and its Author. Of Kingo’s realistic conception of evil or Grundtvig’s mighty vision of existence as a heroic battle between life and death, he has little understanding. The world of his songs is as peaceful and idyllic as the quiet countryside around his beloved Sorø. If at times he tries to take the deeper note, his voice falters and becomes artificial. But though his hymns on such themes as sin and redemption are largely a failure, he has written imperishable hymns of idealistic faith and childlike trust in the goodness and love of God.

The extreme lyrical quality and highly involved and irregular metre of many of Ingemann’s hymns make them extremely difficult to translate, and their English translations fail on the whole to do justice. The translation given below is perhaps one of the best. It is the work of the Rev. P. C. Paulsen.

As wide as the skies is Thy mercy, O God;
Thy faithfulness shieldeth creation.
Thy bounteous hand from the mountains abroad
Is stretched over country and nation.

Like heaven’s embrace is Thy mercy, O Lord;
In judgment profound Thou appearest.
Thou savest our souls through Thy life-giving word,

The cries of Thy children Thou hearest.

How precious Thy goodness, O Father above,
Where children of men are abiding.
Thou spreadest through darkness the wings of Thy love;
We under their pinions are hiding.

For languishing souls Thou preparest a rest;
The quivering dove Thou protectest;
Thou givest us being, eternal and blest,
In mercy our life Thou perfectest.

The following hymn is also quite popular.

The sun is rising in the east,
It gilds the heavens wide,
And scatters light on mountain crest,
On shore and countryside.

It rises from the valley bright,
Where Paradise once lay,
And bringeth life, and joy and light
To all upon its way.

It greets us from the land afar
Where man with grace was crowned,
And from that wondrous Morning Star,
Which Eastern sages found.

The starry host bow down before
The sun that passes them;
It seems so like that star of yore
Which shone on Bethlehem.

Thou Sun of Suns, from heaven come,
In Thee our praises rise
For every message from Thy home
And from Thy Paradise.

The most beloved of all Ingemann's hymns is his splendid "Pilgrim Song."

Dejlig er Jorden,
Prægtig er Guds Himmel,
Skøn er Sjælenes Pilgrimsgang.
Gennem de fagre
Riger paa Jorden
Gaa vi til Paradis med Sang.

This hymn is written to the tune of "Beautiful Savior" which Ingemann, in common with many others, accepted as a marching tune from the period of the crusades. Although this historic origin has now been disproved, the tune united with Ingemann's text undoubtedly will remain the most beloved pilgrim song among the Danish and Norwegian peoples. Though fully aware of the impossibility of translating this tenderly beautiful song so that it is acceptable to those who know the original, the author presents the following translation in the hope that it may interest those who cannot read the original.

Fair is creation,[12]
Fairer God's heaven,
Blest is the marching pilgrim throng.
Onward through lovely
Regions of beauty

Go we to Paradise with song.

Ages are coming,
Ages are passing
Nations arise and disappear.
Never the joyful
Message from heaven
Wanes through the soul's brief sojourn here.

Angels proclaimed it
Once to the shepherds,
Henceforth from soul to soul it passed:
Unto all people
Peace and rejoicing,
Us is a Savior born at last.

Of other hymns by Ingemann, which are now available in English, we may mention "Jesus, My Savior, My Shepherd Blest," "The Country Lies in Deep Repose" and "I Live and I Know the Span of My Years."

[12]Another translation: "Beauty around us" by S. D. Rodholm in "A World of Song."

The last half of the 19th century also brought forth a number of Danish hymnwriters of considerable merit, such as Chr. Richardt, Pastor J. P. M. Paulli, Pastor Olfert Ricard and Pastor J. Schjorring. The latter is especially known by one song which has been translated into many languages and with which it seems appropriate to close this survey of Danish hymnody.

Love from God our Lord,
Has forever poured
Like a fountain pure and clear.
In its quiet source,
In its silent course
Doth the precious pearl appear.

Love from God our Lord,
Comes with sweet accord,
Like a pure and lovely bride.
Dwell within my heart,
Peace from God impart,
Heaven doth with Thee abide.

Love from God our Lord,
Has to man restored
Life and peace from heaven above.
Who in love remains,
Peace from God obtains;
God Himself is ever love.

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