JENS AABERG

HYMNS AND HYMNWRITERS OF DENMARK

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Содержание

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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.

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.

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.

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.

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".

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.

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,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.