



LIVING WELL- SPRINGS

*The Hymns, Songs,
and Poems of*

N.F.S. Grundtvig

Edward Broadbridge
(translator and editor)

Aarhus University Press

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Introduction: Uffe Jonas

‘All my living wellsprings are in you.’

Psalm 87:7

Aarhus University Press | 

Living Wellsprings: The Hymns, Songs, and Poems of N.F.S. Grundtvig
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Foreword

It is no exaggeration to say that the hymns and songs of N.F.S. Grundtvig have chiselled their way into the Danish consciousness and remained there for over 200 years. They are best sung in church and in the People's High Schools, where their number and popularity dominate all others. This is thanks to Grundtvig's unique poetic language and to the fact that he wrote for every kind of church service and occasion throughout the year on themes that are central to human life. His vast printed prose production on education, philosophy, history, politics, and theology, received parallel poetic form, as can be seen in the 103 hymns and songs in the present work, selected from the 1,500 or so that he wrote. They are core texts in Grundtvig's authorship that have stood the test of time in the *Danish Hymnbook* and the *People's High School Songbook*. Also included are 59 poems – which in general are much less known – on a variety of subjects, including a number relating to his personal life.

Living Wellsprings is the second in a series of five major English translations of Grundtvig's work. *The School for Life*, containing texts on his educational ideas, was published in 2011, and volumes are planned on his philosophy/history, his politics, and his theology. *Living Wellsprings* has an accompanying webpage at www.unipress.dk where it is possible to hear the first verse in English of each of the hymns and songs in the book, as well as all of the poetry. This offers the opportunity to get to know the hymns and to use them at a local level.

The Grundtvig Study Centre at Aarhus University has taken the initiative in these translations. It is also responsible for an ongoing critical edition of Grundtvig's Works (in Danish) as they were published in his lifetime, see www.grundtvigsvaerker.dk. The Centre supports research focusing on all areas of interest in Grundtvig studies, including comparative research initiatives that offer new perspectives on Grundtvig's ideas, as well as supportive knowledge exchange, and education in, and dissemination of, his work.

As with the previous volume, *The School for Life*, Edward Broadbridge has been responsible for the translations and editing of the book and also, in collaboration with Else Riisager (Grundtvig's Works), for the annotations. John Nicholson has been the linguistic consultant, and Uffe Jonas has written the introduction. The Grundtvig Study Centre thanks all contributors for their dedication to the project.

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Michael Schelde, Director of the Grundtvig Study Centre, Aarhus University

Notes on Contributors

Edward Broadbridge was born in 1944 and educated in London. He married his Danish wife and moved to Denmark in 1967 as a teacher of English and Religious Studies. He has taught English poetry at Aarhus University and the University of Michigan. He has produced a large number of textbooks for English learners and writes biblical musicals for children which have been staged in the Scandinavian countries. He has made numerous spoken word and musical recordings, and his voice can be heard in various figures in Legoland Denmark and Legoland England. He is a librettist for Danish composers with choral works performed at the Royal Opera House, Copenhagen, at Uppsala Cathedral, and at various international choir contests. Among his many theological translations are books on Ruth, Luke, Paul, Titus of Bostra, Origen, two books on Grundtvig, and in 2009 a translation of 50 Danish hymns, *Hymns in English*, including 20 by Grundtvig. In 2011 he translated and edited *The School for Life, N.F.S. Grundtvig on Education for the People*, and in 2014 *Grundtvig as a Political Thinker* by Ove Korsgaard.

John Nicholson was born in Portland, Dorset in 1938. After the war he grew up in Derbyshire and Yorkshire, attending the Manchester Grammar School. He holds an MA from Oxford University and did postgraduate social studies at Sheffield and Southampton. He married his Danish wife in 1966 and moved to Denmark in 1977. In England he worked in probation and prison after-care, in Denmark in refugee re-settlement. In both countries he has designed and facilitated programmes for adult learning, including applied theology and Christian spirituality. He was a committee member of the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe. For over 30 years he was active in retreat conducting and retreat development in Denmark. He was translation consultant on the above-mentioned *Hymns in English* and on the previous volume in this series, *The School for Life*.

Uffe Jonas was born in Copenhagen and holds an MA and a PhD (on Kierkegaard) in Nordic languages and literature from Copenhagen University. For more than 20 years he has done research in the philosophy, cosmology, and spirituality of N.F.S. Grundtvig. He has lectured and published articles i.a. on Grundtvig, Husserl, Foucault, Jacob Boehme, Ramakrishna, Rudolf Steiner, and Valentin Tomberg. He also works as a singer, writer, and lecturer. As a composer and singer in his own band, he has a deep musical interest in Grundtvig's poetical works.



i. Marathon singing of Grundtvig.

On the year's longest day, 21 June, Grundtvig's hymns and songs in the *People's High School Song Book* are sung in the court at Vartov from early morning until late in the evening.

Preface

by Edward Broadbridge

Grundtvig's hymns and songs are the bedrock of the Danish Lutheran Church and the Danish People's High Schools. They are sung on numerous occasions, in churches and church halls, in morning assemblies and music lessons, at celebrations and before meetings, and always at the People's High Schools. They are even quoted in parliament. Grundtvig's legacy has been called 'a water-bearing stratum' beneath the surface of Denmark, nurturing its cultural and spiritual life. He is still by far the best represented poet in the *Danish Hymnbook* (2002) with 253 out of 791 hymns, and in the *People's High School Songbook* (2006) with 86 hymns and songs out of 572. So popular were certain songs already in his lifetime that when he ended his 34th lecture in the series *Within Living Memory* on 17 October 1838, the audience broke out spontaneously into 'Gather round, you maidens spry' (LW99 below). The date has therefore been called 'the moment of birth' of the Danish people's communal singing. A good deal of the popularity of Grundtvig's hymns and songs is due to the remarkable tunes that have been written to accompany them, most of them after Grundtvig's death. A wide range of composers has been inspired to write these tunes, none more so than Thomas Laub (1852-1927). The composer Carl Nielsen (1865-1931) wrote tunes to no fewer than 43 poems by Grundtvig, such was his admiration for their quality. A full list of composers of tunes in this book appears in Index 4.

In his book *Grundtvig the Poet* (Gyldendal 1983) the respected Danish poet and critic Poul Borum (1934-96) places Grundtvig alongside Coleridge, Yeats, Eliot, Hölderlin, and Mallarmé as a major poet, but whereas all the others are known world-wide, Grundtvig's reputation is still confined to a relatively narrow circle. In the emigrations of the Danes to North and South America in the late 19th and early 20th century, Grundtvig's hymns and songs were part of the spiritual luggage that accompanied the emigrants, one of whom was Grundtvig's own son by his second wife: Frederik Lange Grundtvig. The first edition of the Danish-American songbook from 1888, which Frederik junior

edited, contained no fewer than 58 lyrics by N.F.S. Grundtvig (of 352), rising to 63 in the 2nd edition, to 88 in the 3rd, and to 128 (of 737) in the 6th edition (1949). But they were still in Danish!

Already in 1950 American scholars were asking the Grundtvig Society's secretary Helge Toldberg for a selection of Grundtvig's writings to be translated into English. In *Grundtvig Studies 1957* Bishop Henning Høirup laments that "this has not been possible, despite the upswing in Grundtvig scholarship in English-speaking countries in recent years."

The present volume at last makes available a comprehensive selection of Grundtvig's major hymns, songs, and poems. Grundtvig wrote some 1,500 hymns and songs, and over 1,000 poems, so the term 'comprehensive selection' is used advisedly, for only the best-known hymns and songs are included, and the longer poems are either omitted entirely or are represented by a few brief extracts in this volume. With a few exceptions the hymns and songs are listed under their headings in the *Danish Hymnbook* (2002) and the *People's High School Songbook* (2006), while the poems are gathered under headings that indicate the major impulses in Grundtvig's life.

A committee comprising Uffe Jonas, Ove Korsgaard, and myself has selected the texts for translation to give a broad view of the scope of Grundtvig's poetry. In the selection process the following have also played a part: Professor Kirsten Nielsen, Pastor Jens Hede, Pastor Jacob Duevang Krogh Rasmussen, and Organist Linda Bolet. Professor Niels Henrik Gregersen has added to and approved the choice of hymns and songs, while Dr. Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen has commented on and added to the poetry selection. British English has been employed throughout. The first verses of all the hymns and songs as well as the poems in their entirety and the introduction to the book have been recorded and are available free online at www.unipress.dk. The musical score of the hymns is published by Krogh Publishers, Copenhagen, 2003. Sound recordings of the hymns by organ or piano are also available at www.dendanskesalmebogonline.dk. – via the Danish title. The musical score of the songs is published by Wilhelm Hansen Publishers, Copenhagen 2006. Biblical translations are from the *New International Bible – United Kingdom* (NIVUK). In the core of the book certain footnotes are repeated on the assumption that readers will read the texts selectively.

My thanks go first and foremost to consultant translator John Nicholson for his always valuable insights and enduring zeal throughout our congenial collaboration. Every hymn, song, and poem has benefitted from his poetic sensitivity. I also wish to thank Holger Lissner for his ongoing theological support, Uffe Jonas for his introduction and help with difficult passages, Ove Korsgaard for wise guidance, and Else Riisager for expert assistance with the annotations. For occasional assistance with Grundtvig's language I thank Klaus Frismann, Helle Bi Frismann, and Susanne Gregersen. I owe