

Hvilken Oversættelse! Hvilken Galskab! Translating the poetry of Grundtvig

By S. A. J. Bradley

The need for translations of Grundtvig's hymns, particularly into English, has long been felt and expressed, and has elicited some substantial response. In particular, Danish-originating communities in the United States of America have historically turned to the translation of Grundtvig: partly in the cause of making his hymns – and thereby his theology, of which his hymns are distinctively a vehicle – known to a wider world; partly in concession to the gradual loss of the Danish language among the descendant generations. Interestingly, a call for new translations has recently come from a contemporary American liturgical scholar, Gordon W. Lathrop¹. He notes that late-twentieth-century Lutheran liturgical renewal, outside Denmark itself, has had to proceed »largely without the massive intellectual foundations already provided by Grundtvig« for want of accessible (that is, translated) Grundtvig-materials. In an article which gives consideration to Grundtvig's theology of the 'living word' as »an abiding Lutheran contribution to our common, ecumenical understanding of church«, Lathrop observes that: »The Grundtvigian insights have remained, as Joseph Sittler wrote, »a rich and little known strand in the ethos of Lutheranism«, and they are in need of wider presentation. Even the available hymnic expression of these insights has been softened and obscured. To the extent that Grundtvig's hymns have been translated, the translations have been frequently marked by pietism or by a sentimental use of language. And the vigorous forthrightness of »only at the bath and table« does not exist in an English version of Grundtvig's hymns. Many of Grundtvig's hymns do indeed require either fresh or first-time translation«. But of course it is not only those with a concern for the practical application of Grundtvig's ideas who have a legitimate interest in making his writings more widely accessible through translation. Historians of ideas, and particularly those historians engaged in a reassessment of the 'canon' of European intellectual history in the light of the new 'Europeanism', also have a case to press. The Centre for Grundtvig Studies in the University of Aarhus, whose work co-ordinates and articulates a number

of such motivations, is poised, if funding can be found, to launch a major initiative in English-language translation of Grundtvig.

In delivering the following minor hostages to fortune (that is, translations of four hymns by Grundtvig) and some observations upon problems they typically raise for a translator, I hope that, alongside the contributions from the poet and hymn-writer Alan Gaunt in this same volume, they might serve to generate some needful fresh debate on translating Grundtvig.

What a translation! The man-s mad!² Grundtvig the translator's own experiences with the critics and the reading public well illustrate the hazards faced by those who enter the lists in this particular literary jousting-ground. If (to start out from the more trivial aspects of the situation) the translator finds his offerings pulled apart and picked over by every minor critic in the field, it is because, in popular perception, translation belongs among the service industries of Literature, rather like that other grossly underestimated activity, lexicography. It is not uncommonly assumed to be simply a job of working things out properly and looking things up correctly and achieving the right established equivalences, word for word, which even a half-decent word-processing package will do for you on your computer. Anyone could do it if they bothered and had the time.³

Slightly further up the scale there is the view that anything other than a literal, word for word translation is somehow less true to the original, as though there is nothing about the original that is *not* conveyed by scrupulous word for word equivalences. The admirable Bülow writes to Grundtvig and says, with the straightforwardness of the man who is footing the bill: Of course, you must press on with your *poetic* translation of *Beowulf*; I know what talents you have for writing both poetry and prose; but I want you to listen to the opinion out there among the scholars and provide us as well with a *literal* translation, a word for word translation. Grundtvig replies: Trust me, I *studied* the original as meticulously as though I meant to produce a word-for-word translation; but when it came to creating a *translation*, the word-for-word idea was unviable; for me, the ideal of translation is to carry across the *spirit* of the original; and this cannot be done on a word-for-word basis but entails assumption and exercise of a poetic freedom; that is what I mean by 'translating poetry.'⁴

In fact, it proves that Grundtvig has in mind two areas where – at least in translating such a work as *Beowulf* – strict fidelity to the original is required if the result is to be called ‘translation’: the poetical and the historical. »Oversættelsen er troe; historisk troe, saa jeg aldrig med Villie har forandret eller indskudt Noget, og poetisk troe, saa jeg af al Magt har stræbt at sige livlig hvad jeg saae i Kvadet«⁵ [The translation is faithful: historically faithful, in that I have never wilfully altered or inserted anything, and poetically faithful, in that I have striven with all my might to express with vitality that which I saw in the poem]. Not all commentators have agreed that this is an exhaustive or rightly prioritised prescription of the task of a ‘translator’, nor have all agreed that Grundtvig’s translation of *Beowulf* shows him constraining himself strictly by these criteria.

There have been critics and translators up to the present who would go further than Grundtvig and declare that where poetry is concerned it can *only* truly be ‘translated’ into *new poetry*, and that *only* poets are qualified to be translators of poetry. Others may then say: But while it is true that the poetic qualities of an original poem cannot be carried across in translation if the medium is prose, is a poetic translation any truer to the original than prose, if it uses a poetic style quite at variance with the original – using, for example, end-rhyme where the original is distinguished by being alliterative poetry, or using the rhetorical patterning of stanzas where the original is rhetorically patterned around continuous, non-stanzaic discourse? And still others would ask what place there is for the poetic response which is as free in exercising its own creative autonomy as, for example, Grundtvig’s response to the Anglo-Saxon poetic account of Christ’s descent into Hell, in the form of *I Kveld blev der banket paa Helvedes Port*:⁶ – certainly, something of the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon poet is being carried across here, but is the end-product a ‘translation’? It has been suggested by Bent Noack that Grundtvig himself used terminology in his notes in the *Sangværk* which signalled the ascending degree of faithfulness to the wording of the original, in those hymns which he based upon sources in another language.⁷ Interestingly, if Noack is right, ‘oversat’ [translated] – though qualified by ‘frit’ [freely] – is halfway along the scale, which runs: ‘omsat’, ‘efterlignet’, ‘frit oversat’, ‘efter’ and ‘af’ [approximately, ‘reworked’, ‘modelled on’, ‘freely translated’, ‘after’ and ‘from’].

The point hardly needs dragging out any further: what we call ‘translation’ legitimately embraces a wide spectrum of responses to an original source. There is no gain (and no practical hope of success) in trying to reserve the term ‘translation’ for some very specific and prescriptively-framed definition of the process of ‘carrying-across’. Translation is *always* a *partial* carrying-across: no translation can totally match its source. There are kinds of ‘carrying-across’ which are more usefully, more indicatively, labelled by other terminology, and which yet properly belong within this spectrum of forms of negotiation, through language, between cultures and periods. Each act of, and kind of, translation should be judged by the criteria of what it sets out to do.

The following translations of my own aim to remain reasonably close to Grundtvig’s texts in their thoughts, their images and their rhetorical structures, and to come across in English as having a poetic character (of lexis, syntax, metre and so on) which pays some respect to Grundtvig’s own poetic tone; and they aim to be singable in English.

Some of the problems encountered here are general ones which have to do with the respective natures of the two languages. A distinctive characteristic of English is its historic absorption of words of Romance origin especially Latin and French. Modern English is in a sense a layered language. Its fundamental syntactic structures and a large proportion of its lexis are *derived from Anglo-Saxon*. There is still sensed in Anglo-Saxon derivations used in literature a certain concreteness, which in some respects corresponds with Danish. When English poets wish, for example, to express such tones as sober simplicity, or ideas of the primary, the elemental, it will often turn out to be the case that their language, consciously or intuitively, has drawn heavily upon the Anglo-Saxon repository in English. The introduction of huge numbers of *French-derived words* into English, which mainly took place before the age of Chaucer, is also associated with the literary-cultural shift away from the alliterative regime of traditional English (Anglo-Saxon) poetry to the end-rhyming and stanzaic structures emulative of French and Italian poetry. *Latin-derived words* tend to favour more abstract topics. Often an imported Latin-derived word, not having around it the kind of ‘family’ of root-related words that native English words typically have, has more precision of meaning, or a narrower range of association, than an English word, and may thus be more suited to a precise and perhaps more learned discourse. Historically, Latin-derived words are also associated with

Latin-derived models of diction, metres and rhetorical forms. What is registered as grandness of style and tone is often the effect of the author's use of the great latinate resources of literary English. On top of all this, there is inevitably a tendency – in literary as in common spoken usage – for a matching class or social differentiation to attach to the layers of this stratified language. Thus the profile of English is very significantly different from the profile of Danish, especially of earlier Danish where loan-words have mainly tended to be from another Germanic language, German, and where the scale of the absorption of non-native derivations is not nearly so great. Literary translation between the two therefore involves a very complex interplay not merely of basic culture-conditioned 'meanings' of individual words, but all these other aspects, of inherent metrical patterns of words and syntactic structures, rhetorical norms in spoken and literary usage, the social coloration of particular language selections and so on.

One particular aspect of Grundtvig's metre and verse-form which causes difficulty for the English translator is the much-favoured Danish habit of ending a line with an unstressed syllable (traditionally called a 'feminine' ending or rhyme). The 'feminine' rhyme, as a matter of deep-seated English habit, strikes the English ear as having a certain weakness of effect about it, or even as prompting an intended comic effect. The English present participle, with its ending in *-ing*, is an all too tempting solution to the translator here. When it is used adjectivally or as the verbal noun it can sometimes work quite well; but very often it is used as part of the continuous-present form, with lame and alien effect. It draws attention to itself as translationese – as also does the gratuitous use of the supplementary verb 'does'. When the 'do'-usage conventionally applies and when not is a very tricky aspect of modern English usage, and it has always been a mark of less talented poetry that excessive appeal is made to the metrical support of a gratuitous 'do' or 'does'. Both flaws come together for example in C. Døving's translation of *Kirken den er et gammelt hus*: »Built on the rock the church *does stand*, / Even when steeples are falling / ... / Surely in temples made with hands, / God, the most high, *is not dwelling*.«⁸ – where conventional English usage would have 'the church stands' and 'God does not dwell'.

Convention of word-order in poetry is another problem confronting the translator of Grundtvig. Danish poetry appears to accept disturbance of 'natural'

word-order in poetry to a degree not conventionally acceptable in English poetry, at least of the more recent period. And Grundtvig's word-order can get very convoluted – as, for example, in his *Bjowulfs Drape*: »Leed af Grændel Fortræd jeg meer / Og Fals, end i Hast er at melde« [Suffered from Grendel harm I more and treachery than in haste is to tell]. An English translator trying in such a case to pack all the necessary words into a metrical structure, without the liberty of juggling the word-order to the same degree, is faced with an often insuperable task.

The following version of *Giv mig Gud en Salme-Tunge* is an experiment in deliberate archaic effect, using what has become in English usage, especially since the decline of the use of the Book of Common Prayer and the King James Bible, the obsolescent pair of ancient 2nd-person pronouns, *thou* and *thee*. In fact, throughout these translations I have by choice inclined to a mildly archaic mode of English idiom. The aim – in this particular set of translations – is to make the translation sound rather like a traditional hymn of the English church. I have chosen to use only the two stanzas (out of eight available) which Grundtvig himself sanctioned as a separate hymn.⁹ It has a pleasing integrity based upon the polarity of morning and evening. A small cultural problem in the second verse is that the English parish church has no tradition of ringing the evening curfew bell, whereas the tolling of the evening bell is a highly evocative and symbolically-charged motif in Grundtvig's poetry as in that of other Danish poets. It will be noticed that I have made much use of the English *-ing* ending – but have avoided the 'present-continuous' tense. It may also be noticed that a slightly dubious device I have allowed myself is omission of the definite article (»and when bell tolls out day's ending« and »like lark ascending«). I think it is just about acceptable in English usage, particularly where the typical rather than the particular is being specified; and it is a valuable remedy for the problem that, in English, definite articles – normally *unstressed* and therefore potentially metrically *debilitating* syllables within a piece of poetic discourse – abound in English whereas Danish has the flexibility of the post-attached article as well as a more common omission of the article.

Christ stod op af Døde is already, in Grundtvig's version, a reworking of an ancient pre-Reformation hymn. It is, in its deceptive artlessness, a brilliant construct, particularly effective in the singing because of its residual traces of an ancient antiphonal procedure. Each stanza is based upon the announcement

of the good news, followed by a declaration of rejoicing at the news.¹⁰ It is also a good example of a text of which no translation could ever, to the satisfaction of any Dane, catch the ‘spirit’, in Grundtvig’s sense, of the original. The Danish hymn comes trailing behind it the accrued associations of generations and centuries of Easter rejoicing, and is vested with the venerability of a text which has appeared in one hymnal after another down through the history of the Danish Church. For many, and certainly for its nineteenth-century congregation, it is sung in the wake of a sermon such as Grundtvig preached at Vartov (as it happens, on Palm-Sunday rather than Easter Day), 1851:

»Medens vi derfor, Christne Venner, maae bede til og, naar vi er kaldte dertil, stride for, at hver en Mand i Landet faaer verdslig Forlov til lige-saa vel at raabe: Korsfæst ham! som: Hosianna for Davids Søn! da skal det inderlig glæde os, naar Staden og Folket frivillig synger Hosianna! og synger »lydt og sjæle-glad«: Christ stod op af Døde i Paaske-Morgenrøde! Ære være Gud i det Høie! – det skal glæde os som kiærlige Mennesker, der umuelig kan elske deres aandelige Sydskende i Herren, dersom de ikke engang elske deres kiødelige Sydskende i Verden og unde og ønske dem al den Lykke og Held, de kan modtage og vil skiønne paa...Saa være da ikke blot den lille Flok, som kun Herren kiender, og det evige Kongerige, som ikke er af denne Verden, men ogsaa Staden og Folket og Riget, som har med Glæde sunget: Hosianna, Hæder og Ære skal denne vor Konning være! og har holdt Fred med Herren under hans Lidelse og Død, – tilønsket og forkyndt en glædelig Paaske-Fest med velsignede Virkninger af hans Opstandelses Kraft og af det store »Fred være med eder!« som er den opstandne Frelsers og hans opstandne Evangeliums himmelske Hilsen overalt, hvor de aabenbare sig!«¹¹

While we therefore, Christian friends, must pray and, when we are called to it, strive that everyone in the land gets worldly licence to cry just as readily: Crucify him! as: Hosanna to David’s Son!, then it will heartily rejoice us, when City and Folk in freedom of will sing Hosianna! and sing »lydt og sjæle-glad«: *Christ stod op af Døde i Paaske-Morgenrøde! Ære være Gud i det Høie!* (loudly and joyous of soul: Christ arose from the dead in the Easter dawning! Glory be to God in the highest!) – it will rejoice us as

loving human beings, who cannot possibly love their spiritual kinsfolk in the Lord if they in no way love their fleshly kinsfolk in the world and allow and wish them all the happiness and good fortune they can accept and will appreciate ... So do not be merely that little flock which only the Lord knows, and the eternal Kingdom which is not of this world, but be also the City and the Folk and the Kingdom which has with rejoicing sung: Hosanna, honour and glory be to this our king! and have kept peace with the Lord under his Passion and his death – and wished and celebrated a joyous Easter-festival with the blessed effects of the power of his Resurrection and of the great »Peace be with you!« which is the risen Lord's and his risen Gospel's heavenly greeting everywhere where they reveal themselves!

It is important to preserve in translation the *Christmas* song of the angels which Grundtvig uses deliberately in this *Easter* hymn to point the cycle of the liturgical year and all that the liturgical cycle embodies (dramatises, one could say) of the human understanding of the redeemer-God's love for his fallen creation. Fittingly, Grundtvig makes it the exclamation of joy with which »we, his flock«, people on earth, answer the angelic greeting of Christmas now consummated in the resurrection of the incarnate Christ. The Danish 'menighed' translated too narrowly here as 'flock' also has the dimension of 'parish' and 'congregation' – giving, as part of the whole, an immediacy of identity to »we«: the congregation in Vartov (or wherever), who are also part of the greater flock »i allen Stad«, across the earth.

In Danish 'af Døde' implies not only from death in the abstract sense but from among the dead, that is, from Hell into which he had descended to fetch, baptise (according to one ancient tradition held among the Anglo-Saxon poets and known to Grundtvig and reflected in *Kommer, Sjæle dyrekiøbte*), and lead up to heaven the souls of Eve and Adam and all who had died before Christ's act of redemption on the cross. To this article of the Creed Grundtvig attached a great deal of importance, of which his hymn *I Kvæld blev der banket paa Helvedes Port* is also a reflection, and this formulation is a hint. Getting that suggestion into the English, however, has evaded me.

Since, as the sermon quoted above shows, Grundtvig's idea was that just as Christ had entered the *Stad* of Jerusalem to cries of Hosanna, so Copenhagen and every *Stad* should in this latter day welcome Christ into it, I should have

liked to find a way of keeping ‘every city’ rather than ‘every part’. Where in v.3 I have »our path to heaven mended« Grundtvig says »we shall meet him in heaven«. Unsuccessful (so far) in finding a way of sticking precisely to Grundtvig here I have tried to keep what I take to be the essential idea, the idea familiarly expressed by the Church in this context, that with the souls released from Hell Christ reopens the blocked route through heaven’s portals (so in the Anglo-Saxon poetry which Grundtvig’s *Kommer Sjæle dyrekiøbte*) and prepares the way for all redeemed souls to follow. It will be noted I allow myself some very slight divergences from conventional English word-order. Keeping the *Hallelujah* extension, which is not in all versions, is irresistible because of its quite dramatic potency in its sung form.

Kimer, I Klokker! This hymn affirms, up to a point, that the periphery of contextual cultural association with an original text can effectively be ‘carried-across’ by a translation. The verbal-visual icons of Christmas work similarly in either language, as do the Easter-associated Scriptural and liturgical formulations used in *Christ stod op af Døde*. Both cultures share a similar liturgical context for lyric reference to Christmas. For some Danes, on the other hand, this hymn may have an untransferable association, in that it was used as the basis for a hymn composed for Grundtvig’s funeral. I have experimented here – not out of desperation but because I like the ring of it in context – with a modest archaism: *darkling*, in v. 1. To lie darkling, to lie still shrouded in darkness. It serves (for me) to acknowledge that Grundtvig is not referring simply literally to the darkness of the night hour, but to the spiritual darkness of the world before the light of the incarnate word dispels darkness as God’s *Fiat lux!* dispelled the primal darkness at the first creation of the world. Grundtvig is here, as so often, true to the medieval, *oldkirkelige* inheritance, in leading his congregation through a present re-creation of the salvation-history of the Scriptures. He shares with the Anglo-Saxon poet of, say, *The Advent Lyrics* of the Exeter Book this perception of what has been called the ‘omnitemporal’ in the dramatised cycle of the Christian liturgical year. We are invited here, as in *The Advent Lyrics*, to *live through* (in the spirit) the moments of sacred history on either side of the ‘solstice’ of Christ’s incarnation. Here, Grundtvig’s sermon-content and above all sermon-technique is part of the cultural context which gives the original a fullness of nuance that is not inherent in anything a translator can carry across. A sticky area of the text in formal metrical terms is the

4th line (as set out here): Danish experts will spot that I have taken some liberty with the metrical feet in Grundtvig's original, which may also have consequences for the musical notation in a sung version – whether or not this is a fatal shortcoming I must leave to the judges. I have also used the infamous present-continuous – but, I hope, according to its natural usage, and not as a resort in an exigency. And I have used some special word-ordering, though nothing more serious than the traditional (but admittedly archaic) poetic option of putting adjectives after nouns (»the Father's mercy mild«), and of deferring a verb to the end of its clause (»bidding us our hearts uplift«). Some readers might find it interesting to compare two English versions of this hymn, and so could consult the admirable translation by Johannes Knudsen.¹²

Finally, *Kirke-Klokke, ej til Hoved-Stæder*. An English inclination would be to call this a 'sacred song' rather than a 'hymn'. It is, in structure and sentiment as in the melody commonly attached to it, broadly reminiscent of nineteenth-century English and American sacred songs. I include this text to make the point that any one of Grundtvig's hymns finds part of its identity by virtue of belonging in a family of hymns: in this case the family of his hymns referring to bells. »Summoned by bells« is a motif in Grundtvig's image of the Christian life lived amidst the daily round and common task, as projected through his hymns, songs and poems. A Dane hearing this particular song is likely to respond to the inbuilt prompts of the text (idiom, images) to bring associations with other 'bell' texts (and the occasions of using them) to mind. The best a translator can hope to do, perhaps, if he aspires to recreate in an English audience something of the same contextualisation, is to furnish annotations to the text. The sharp-eyed (or eared) will notice that occasional and informal alliteration is an effect translators will typically use to enhance the poetic ring of the phrasing (»Village bell! not for the bustling city«; »ring my death not dolefully but cheering! / Say: He slept as sun at harvest sets« and, remembering that alliteration is instinctively associated not necessarily with the first syllable of a word but with its first *stressed* syllable, »He is risen, *d*ust, who has *r*edeemed you!«): it is still a device which generally works well (used with restraint) in English poetry.

Danish texts, with some apparatus and in some case downloadable melodies, can be found on the Internet. A useful route of access is *via* the site *Grundtvig paa Nettet*. On the site *Grundtvig in England* (

inengland.org.uk) a workshop is in process of being established, to which contributions, including perhaps responses to this article, are welcome.

Four Translations from Grundtvig:

Give me, God, a tongue for singing; Christ from dead ascended; Ring out, O bells!; Village Bell

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Give me, God, a tongue for singing

1. Give me, God, a tongue for singing!
 let my song to Thee come ringing,
 fitly loud and free;
 let me know the sweet rejoicing
 of the heart in fulness voicing
 hymns of praise to Thee.

2. Morning sky proclaims thy splendour!
 each new dawning let me render
 praise in harmony;
 and when bell tolls out day's ending,
 let me still, like lark ascending,
 rise in song to Thee.

Christ from dead ascended

1. Christ from dead ascended,
with Easter light attended;
so we his flock in every part
now sing aloud from joyous heart:
Glory be to God in the highest!

2. Christ from dead ascended,
made good where we offended;
so we his flock in every part
now sing aloud from joyous heart:
Glory be to God in the highest!

3. Christ from dead ascended,
our path to heaven mended;
so we his flock in every part
now sing aloud from joyous heart:
Glory be to God in the highest!

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!
so we his flock in every part
now sing aloud from joyous heart:
Glory be to God in the highest!

Ring out, O bells!

1. Ring out, O bells, oh ring out while the world yet lies darkling;
shimmer, O stars, like the light in the angel-eyes sparkling.
Peace comes to earth,
peace from God through his Word's birth:
- Glory to God in the highest!

2. Christmas is come as a solstice to hearts that were fearful!
Christmas and Child, son of God, where the angels sing cheerful,
all is God's gift,
bidding us our hearts uplift:
- Glory to God in the highest!

3. Children of earth clap your hands and come dancing and singing,
raise up your voices till earth's furthest corners are ringing.
Born is the Child
of the Father's mercy mild:
- Glory to God in the highest!

Village Bell

1. Village bell! not for the bustling city
were you cast, but for that little town
where the child that cries is heard with pity,
and is gently lulled with cradlesong.

2. Still a child, in country home yet biding,
Christmas morning was my glimpse of heaven:
angel-voiced you brought its joyous tiding,
clearly chimed that great rejoicing in.

3. Louder yet your tones were pitched, so chimed you,
when they with the golden Sun broke forth:
He is risen, dust, who has redeemed you!
stand now in the light of Easter morn!

4. Harvest-home suits best a sweeter ringing
in the cool and peaceful eventide:
through the world your heaven-voice goes winging
bidding souls to enter into rest.

5. Now, when bell is tolling out day's ending,
saying sun has sunk and birds all rest,
and my head, like flower, is sleepward bending,
with each bidding stroke I softly say:

6. Village bell! when last, though past my hearing,
you shall tell that I am come to dust,
ring my death not dolefully but cheering!
Say: He slept as sun at harvest sets.

Notes

1. Gordon W. Latrop, '»The Bath and the Table, the Prayer and the Word«: Grundtvig and the Lutheran Contribution to Ecumenical Liturgical Renewal' in Proceedings of the International Consultation on N.F.S. Grundtvig, York 2000, published in S.A.J. Bradley (ed.), website *Grundtvig in England*, <http://www.grundtviginengland.org.uk>; and in this vol. pp. 104ff.
2. »Hvilken Oversættelse! Hvilken Galskab!«; more strictly, »What a translation! What madness!« – an exclamation on Grundtvig's translation of passages of *Beowulf* in G. J. Thorkelin-s 'Svar til: »Et Par Ord om det nys udkomne angel-saksiske Digt«, i *Skilderiets* No. 60.' in *Nyeste Skilderie af Kiøbenhavn*, Tolvte Aargang, no. 67 (Tuesday 22 August, 1815), discussed in my article 'Grundtvig as translator' in this volume.
3. Grundtvig dismisses the minor critics with a panache not many of us could allow ourselves: »...jeg vil ligesaa lidt prale af, hvad der vist er ufuldkomment nok, som jeg vil bede om Forladelse, fordi jeg ikke har gjort meer end jeg kunde, eller undskyldte min

poetiske Frihed for selvgjorte Dommere, der ligesaa lidet veed hvad det er at oversætte, som hvad det er at gjøre et Digt« [As little do I wish to hold forth about what is certainly imperfect enough as I wish to beg forgiveness because I have not done more than I could, or to excuse my poetic freedom before self-appointed judges, who as little know what it is to translate as what it is to make a poem]; *Bjowulfs Drape, Indledning*, p. xxxiv.

4. Letter from Johan Bülow, Sanderumgaard, 9 September 1815; item 134 in G. Christensen and S. Grundtvig (eds), *Breve fra og til N. F. S. Grundtvig*, I, 1807-1820 (Copenhagen, 1924). Introduction to *Bjowulfs Drape* (Copenhagen, 1820), p. xxxiv; and *Om Bruneborg-Slaget og et Riim i den Anledning in Danne-Virke, Et Tids-Skrift* II (1817), p. 79. These sources are quoted and translated in my article 'Grundtvig as Translator' in this volume.
5. Introduction to *Bjowulfs Drape* (p. xxxiv).
6. No. 243 in Grundtvig's *Sangværk* II. The prompt is a passage envisaging the Harrowing of Hell in the poem *Christ and Satan* in Oxford Bodleian MS Junius 11, formerly thought to represent the surviving work of the poet Cædmon.
7. Bent Noack, 'Baggrunden for Salmen »Kommer Sjøle dyrekøbte--«' in *Dansk Kirkesangs Årsskrift* (1981-82), pp. 83-99 (especially 85-86); and 'Den oldengelske Digtning af Grundtvig' in *Grundtvig Studies* (1989-90), pp. 141-156 (especially 148). Both these articles are well worth reading in this present context, for their close and observant comparison of Grundtvig's rendering with the original sources.
8. Quotations are from Peter Balslev-Clausen, *A Collection of Danish Hymns, Songs and Ballads in English Translation* (Copenhagen, 1988).
9. In any formal publication of translated hymns of Grundtvig it would, in my view, be proper not only to include all verses of any such text, but also to provide a prose translation as nearly as possible word-for-word, in order to compensate for the omissions and compromises which are inevitably entailed in producing a poetic and singable version – as well, of course, as annotations on Grundtvig's sources, cross-references, cultural connections and so on.
10. It is not part of the translator's burden of responsibility to speculate how the translated text might actually be sung; but a dramatised antiphonalisation is easily imagined: a solo voice announces the good news of the first two lines in stanzas 1, 2 and 3, and is each time answered by the whole choir, or congregation (»therefore we sing ...«), until all voices unite in the universal chorus of Hallelujah.
11. H. Begtrup (ed.), *N. F. S. Grundtvigs Vartovs-Prædikener 1839-1860* (Copenhagen, 1924), p. 289.
12. No. 22 in Balslev-Clausen (note above).