Like the Golden Sun Ascending
Text: Thomas Hansen Kingo (1634-1703)
Tune: Johann Schop (1590-1667)

Christ's Resurrection is one of the Christian's greatest joys. As this hymn proclaims, "None can fully sing the glory of the Resurrection story." The best of the Church's Easter hymnody focuses not just on a retelling of the events of Christ's Resurrection, but rejoices in the application of the Resurrection to the Christian. However, this is not true just of Easter hymns, but of all the greatest hymns of the Church. Thanks be to God for the faithful men and women who have given us a song to sing to learn the faith!

Thomas Kingo

One such writer is Thomas Kingo, Denmark's first great hymn writer. He was born in Slangerup, Denmark, in December 1634. He spent his boyhood in the Latin school in Slangerup. He completed courses in his preparation for the Ministry in 1658 and spent the next 10 years as a tutor and assistant Pastor. In 1668 he became the Pastor of the church in Slangerup. During his youth, Kingo was known for his fine poetry, though most of it was secular in nature. His first foray into religious poetry was in 1673 when his *Aandelig Sjungekors förste Part* (Spiritual Songs, First Part) was published. This collection made such an impact that it was influential in Kingo becoming the Bishop of Fyen. The introduction to this volume included a challenge to the Danes, encouraging more to develop the gift of poetry, since almost all their hymns in use were of other language origins.

By the time the second volume of his Christian poetry was released, King Christian V desired to have a new hymnal for Denmark to replace the one that had been in use since 1569. The official request was given to Kingo in 1683 and he was given very specific guidelines: some of his own hymns should be included, few changes should be made to the existing hymns, and Luther's hymns should appear unaltered. Kingo produced this hymnal at his own expense, and in 1689 the first part appeared, but it was disapproved because Kingo had not observed the guidelines. However, of its 267 hymns, 136 were Kingo's, reflecting the expanse of his body of work. However, a 1693 attempt by Sören Jonassön was also denied (it did not contain any of Kingo's hymns), and Kingo was asked to make a second attempt. This version, called *Psalmebog*, found acceptance and by 1699 was introduced into all the churches of Denmark. Kingo died shortly after his hymnal's release, dying in October 1703.

The hymn's tune was written by Johann Schop. Little is known about Schop's life. He joined the court orchestra in Wolfenbüttel in 1615 as "an intelligent performer on the violin, lute, trumpet, and zinke" (an instrument similar to a recorder or oboe). In 1664 he became the director of music at Hamburg, where he had been a musician since 1654. He wrote a great deal of instrumental music. He also wrote several hymn tunes for his fellow townsman and friend, Johann Rist (e Lutheran Hymnal contains five of his hymns).

When Kingo wrote "Like the Golden Sun Ascending," he wrote it as a ten-stanza hymn. Our six stanzas are actually stanzas 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, and 10. It first appeared in *En Ny Kirke-Psalmenbog* in 1689, and was later included in his *Psalmebog*.

After the first stanza gives a brief retelling of Easter morning, Kingo moves quickly into thanksgiving for Christ's Resurrection. But the second stanza also starts the work of applying the Resurrection to the Christian, thanking God that "Death hath now no power over us." Because of this, no matter how dark and dreary earthly life may be, the light of heavenly hope still shines (st. 3). Because of Jesus' death to pay for our sin and His resurrection the third day, "death itself is transitory," and we will inherit heaven (st. 4). Stanza 5 is a prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance in this life, to keep us in a life pleasing to God and free from sin. How He does this we sing in stanza six: the Word, Baptism, and Holy Communion. Because of these Gifts which give us Christ's saving work, we will behold our God in heaven.