

Tam, Angela, ed. *Hymns of Universal Praise*. New revised ed. Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council Ltd., 2006.

The 2006 edition of *Hymns of Universal Praise* is the third in more than sixty years of ecumenical hymnal collaboration among Chinese Christians. Like the first two editions of 1946 and 1977, this third edition combines the efforts of the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, and the Church of Christ in China that represents denominations with Presbyterian, Congregational, and Reformed roots (earlier editions also included Baptists, who now have their own hymnal). In another ecumenical gesture, as well as recognition of the many Chinese Christians who live outside mainland China, this is a hard-bound, full-music, bilingual Chinese-English edition. It is also very large, with 904 items of hymns, service music, and spoken items, followed by a large section of psalms, making for a hefty volume of 1,878 pages. Understandably, the paper is very thin and the opacity is not the best, but the paper and binding are of excellent quality.

The denominations listed above all sent missionaries to China in the 19th century, so it is no surprise that Western hymnody is very well represented. In fact, to a Westerner, with the convenience of English texts, *Hymns of Universal Praise* might seem at first glance very much like an excellent Western hymnal (I kept jotting down notes for worship planning, and noting arrangements with descants for choral use). Like many recent North American denominational hymnals, the 2006 edition of *Hymns of Universal Praise* (hereafter HUP2006) is greatly changed from its preceding editions in reducing the amount of 19th century hymns, adding some older and many newer hymns, and greatly expanding stylistic variety. Of recent Western hymn writers and composers, for example, John Bell, Carl Daw, Timothy Dudley Smith, Alfred Fedak, Fred Pratt Green, and Fred Kaan each has more than 20 entries, and there are a dozen settings from the Community of Taizé. The committee obviously studied

current hymnals throughout North America and United Kingdom, gleaning both older and newer hymns from a variety of sources. On a deeper level, the committee also applied recent biblical and liturgical theology from ecumenical sources; the structure of the hymnal and the additions are rooted in a greater attention to the liturgical year, the sacraments, and the psalms. Their approach is summarized well on p. 11 of the informative ten-page Forward of the Chief Editor: "The late 20th century was a harvesting period of Christian hymns. It summarized the fruits of biblical research and theological studies in the 20th century." Careful biblical, theological, liturgical, and musical study characterize this revision. HUP2006 would make an excellent hymnal for English as well as Chinese-speaking Protestant churches anywhere in the world.

Structure

The first 775 numbers are "Hymns and Spirituals," which include 102 spoken items, mainly prayers, often intended for responsive reading. These prayers are a rich resource for worship planning and a wonderful gift to the larger church; almost all were prepared for HUP2006 by four Chinese pastors and Dr. Angela Tam (see p. 1851). The hymns are organized according to Praise and Adoration, the Church Year, Festivals (e.g. New Year), Worship (liturgy and sacraments), Church Life, Christian Life (including hymns on healing, social justice, environment), Christian Family and Fellowship, and Hymns for Special Occasions (including school life and table graces).

A "Service Music" section follows (129 items), and the volume concludes with a large section of psalms, yet another similarity with recent Western denominational Protestant hymnals. The psalter includes 144 settings of 80 psalms. The diversity is remarkable, including: (1) texts only (*NIV*) for responsive reading; (2) chant, both from traditional Anglican choral chant and contemporary Roman Catholic sources; (3) responsorial, with some refrains taken from traditional hymnody, but far more from a wide range of sources, including David Haas, Marty Haugen, African, African American, South

American, and a few original Chinese refrains; (4) and of course, metrical—about a third of the settings. The settings use psalm numbering, adding letters for multiple settings (Psalms 19, 100, and 150 have the most; five settings each). It is not clear how the particular psalms were chosen; they do not match the *Revised Common Lectionary* or the *Episcopal Church Lectionary*. There is a rather loose approach to the psalm texts; they are not all complete, and sometimes only the refrain is based on the psalms. Yet this is an excellent and diverse contemporary psalter, one that has gleaned well from recent English language hymnals from around the world.

All songs are presented either side-by-side in Chinese and English, or if there is room, both texts together within the music. Each hymn has numbers written above the staff, corresponding to the melody by means of numbered scale steps from 1-7 in a kind of Solfege system, a common practice in Asian hymnals. Many Asians learn to read melodies by this system, and are thereby often better able to negotiate new tunes than Westerners are. A corresponding index makes it possible to find any tune (and tune name). For example, to find the tune name for "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," sing the incipit using scale degrees and look up 53651171.

HUP2006 ends with a thorough set of indexes, all bilingual. One unusual and helpful index is the "Liturgical Use of the Psalms" that lists the settings in numerical order with an assigned time of the Church Year, a suggested placement in the liturgy, and sometimes a particular focus (e.g. Affirmation of Faith). The index on the psalms offers a clue to the educational and pastoral intent of this whole volume: the harvesting of hymnody and psalmody in the context of biblical research and theological study, bringing to Chinese Christians the ecumenical fruit of what has also driven mainline Western hymnal revisions. The Foreword also mentions a Handbook in preparation for pastors and worship leaders that will offer four perspectives for every new hymn: theological, pastoral, liturgical, and musical.

Original Chinese Contributions

But this is a Chinese hymnal. So far very little has been said about original Chinese contributions, or, for that matter, of hymns from other Asian countries. Great effort was expended in translating hundreds of newer texts from English into Chinese, most for the first time. I am not qualified to comment on the quality of the translations, but based on the principles laid out in the Foreword and in the excellent editing of this entire volume, I would expect that these translated texts are well done. Considerable effort was also given to provide 182 descants and 28 varied harmonizations, most offered here for the first time and composed by Chinese musicians to Western hymns, for the purpose of helping the congregation "observe and discover the inner musical textual relationship of particular hymns" (p. 17).

What about original Chinese hymns? The first two editions actually highlighted Chinese contributions in the indexes, but the 2006 edition retained only sixteen* of the 72 tunes marked in the 1946 edition and 62 marked in the 1977 edition as being Chinese in origin or — as in about one third of these hymns, composed by foreign missionaries "who, having lived in China for a considerable length of time, have learned to think in characteristically Chinese musical idioms" (Preface to the 1946 English edition, p. 11). Six of the sixteen are texts translated into English by Mildred Wiant or Chinese tunes harmonized by Bliss Wiant, a missionary couple who pioneered in the effort to develop an authentic Chinese hymnody and also translate them into English (as described in "Unity in Song" by S. Andrew Grenade and Anping Wu, in *The Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song*, vol. 58.2 (Spring 2007): 13-26). One of those hymns retained from earlier editions is the 1931 New Year's Hymn "The Grace of God Unbounded Is," with a new descant provided in HUP2006 (Example 1).

But many of the Chinese hymns from the first two editions did not meet principles guiding this new edition. Some texts traditionally sung to traditional Chinese folk melodies were better for private devotion than for public worship;

some were rural in focus, and this new edition comes from Hong Kong, which is anything but rural.

In addition to the older hymns retained from earlier editions, there are more than thirty new hymns by Chinese hymn writers and composers. For an example from the 1980's, "Holy Spirit Is Like the Wind" (Example 2) is strong, with a wide range and many leaps of thirds characteristic of many Chinese melodies. Daniel K. L. Chua is a very promising younger writer offering one hymn tune (to a text by Timothy Dudley Smith) and five songs in which he wrote both text and tune in a more contemporary style. His "Jesus Is Lord!" offers a much stronger text and music than "He Is Lord" in Western collections (Example 3). The great Asian hymn scholar I-to Loh is represented with five hymns and arrangements of both a Chinese and Taiwanese folk tune.

In summary, the 2006 edition of *Hymns of Universal Praise* is an excellent hymnal in the Western tradition, with some contributions also from Africa and South America — mainly those that have found a place already in Western hymnals, and with a significant contribution of new hymnody by Chinese writers and composers. The ecumenical effort in HUP2006 could provide guidance for North American denominations that have lived such separate lives when it comes to publishing hymnals. HUP2006 continues the flow of West to East that is so characteristic of much contemporary culture, seen here in the many translations of texts into Chinese and arrangements of Western tunes. But the original Chinese hymns in this collection serve notice to the West that it is time to reconsider the flow that has been so one-sided. HUP2006 offers an excellent collection to all Chinese (and English) speaking churches, and offers direction and hope for the next generation of Chinese Christian poets and composers toward a robust Chinese hymnody that will start to flow more strongly from East to West.

*Chinese hymn tunes from 1946 and 1977 retained in the 2006 edition, most to Chinese texts as well (numbers from the 2006 edition):

FELLOWSHIP (664), HOLY LOVE (334), HSIAO CHU (660), HSUAN P'ING (352), HUAN SHA CHI (154), JORDAN (693), JU MENG LING (84) LE P'ING (402), SAVIOR'S LOVE (67), SHEN CHIANG (859), SHENG EN (452), SONG OF THE YANGTZE BOATMAN (698), STEWARDSHIP (592), TRUST IN JESUS (699), UPHOLDING (680), YENCHING (153).

Examples to include:

Example 1: 334 "The Grace of God Unbounded Is"

Example 2: 315 "Holy Spirit Is Like the Wind"

Example 3: 71 "Jesus Is Lord!"

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