Preface to the New Ancient and Modern:
Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship

Since the first edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* was published in 1861, with 273 hymns, there have been six further editions. The second, *Revised and Enlarged Edition*, edited by William H. Monk, with 473 hymns, appeared in 1875, to which Charles Steggall added 175 supplementary hymns 14 years later in 1889 (*The Complete Edition*). In 1904 a *New Edition* was published, edited by Bertram Luard-Selby, containing 643 hymns. This controversial and unpopular edition was removed from sale in 1906 (the year the *English Hymnal* was published) and the 1889 edition reinstated, as the *Old Edition* with its 638 hymns). In 1916 this *Old Edition* gained a supplement of 141 hymns, edited by Sydney Nicholson. Six years later, in 1922, Nicholson combined these in the *Standard Edition*. In 1950 came *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised* edited by G. H. Knight and J. Dykes, who had succeeded Nicholson after his death in 1947. A significant pruning of content took place, both to make room for new material and to reconsider the merit of the wealth of supplementary material accrued over the life of the preceding editions. The book had 636 hymns. A *School Edition* was published in 1958, with 288 hymns from the *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised*.

In 1969 *100 Hymns for Today*, and in 1980, *More Hymns for Today* were published as free-standing supplements and these were integrated with 333 of the 636 hymns in *Ancient and Modern Revised*, to be published in 1983 as *Hymns Ancient and Modern, New Standard*. By this time, *Hymns Ancient and Modern* had become a registered charity and limited company, which in time grew to encompass the Canterbury Press. Their first volume was *Worship Songs Ancient & Modern*, published in 1992 with 100 items. Then, in 2000, coinciding with the advent of the Church of England’s new *Common Worship* liturgies, and the new millennium, the Canterbury Press published *Common Praise*, edited by a committee chaired by Henry Chadwick and others.

While the ‘Ancient and Modern’ name was dropped from the title, *Common Praise* was nevertheless the eighth instantiation of an ‘Ancient and Modern’ hymnbook. It contained 628 hymns drawn from a range of traditions, and made new, albeit tentative forays into the worlds of worship music, meditative chant and modern hymnody. Graham Kendrick, Damian Lundy and John Bell made it into the Ancient and Modern stable for the first time, along with some writers of more traditionally structured modern hymnody such as Timothy Dudley Smith, Michael Saward and Chris Idle. While this representation was thin, it is notable that *Common Praise* did not draw on any material from a previous supplement, but started afresh.

In 2009 *Common Praise* itself gained a supplement. Entitled *Sing Praise*, it contained 330 hymns and songs, most of which do not appear in *Common Praise*. There was some overlap, so as to make the book stand alone, but its fundamental purpose and rationale was as a supplement to *Common Praise*. 
Now with this completely new Ancient and Modern, we have a ninth edition, which both celebrates the 150th anniversary of Hymns Ancient and Modern, and brings together the best of Common Praise and Sing Praise. While the editors of Common Praise wrote that they had “tried to select the best hymns, those which will last”, the editors of Sing Praise, (Chaired by Anne Harrison) said they were “on the lookout for ways to ‘sing a new song to the Lord’, while also valuing what is tried and tested”. So, while the unfortunate events of 1904-1906 may provoke the thought that ancient hymnody has been more significant than modern content in the life of Hymns Ancient and Modern, there lies at the core of the brand, a desire to retain not only the greatest of the hymns still in use from the past seventeen hundred years, but also a desire to encourage and affirm the very best of recent material. In an age of ‘top ten’ charts, phone-in talent shows and the inspiringly successful phenomenon of the BBC’s Songs of Praise, there is a temptation to select the most popular modern worship songs and chants and thereby serve simply as a reflector of contemporary taste. Naturally, as editors, we studied the popularity charts, but, perhaps inevitably, they are not a guarantor of quality, nor of durability. This can be true in terms of theological coherence, scriptural integrity, musical quality or poetic value. Nevertheless, there is in this Ancient and Modern the widest range of style and heritage of hymns and songs that has yet been produced, and this is surely right.

Unlike some other hymn books, we have taken great care to ensure that arrangements of contemporary items that have been selected are musically satisfying for worship leaders, choir members and congregation alike. The main purpose lying behind all such choices concerns their suitability for congregational singing, with accompaniments and arrangements eminently suited to their genre. Many new arrangements have been commissioned and included accordingly. Similarly, a generous range of descents is included to encourage choirs and enrich the overall musical impact of many of the well-known hymns.

Worship today, both in the Anglican Communion and interdenominational, has embraced a gamut of content and style that not only betokens a true catholicity of approach, but also provides distinctive niches in which to dwell. That the Christian Church can accommodate both an inclusive and exclusive approach to sung praise at the same time is truly remarkable. While some churches have a preferred style, perhaps wedded to the kind of musicians they employ, others seek to broaden their worship experience with material from other countries, traditions and periods of history in an open universal way. Such breadth and openness, while laudable, is not easy to cater for in a single book. In a book such as this, someone’s favourite has not been included, or, worse still, has been cut. The world of projection technology and cut and paste software makes this both inevitable but also redeemable. For while we hope that this edition will be thoroughly useable on a weekly basis for parishes seeking a new edition that honours the great tradition of English language hymnody, we also hope to have offered the best of new material that will widen the scope and depth of all sorts of worshipping events from large-scale services to small groups meeting for intimate prayer. So it is that in returning to the title Ancient and Modern, there is a clear intention to produce the latest in the line, but also to provide a
contemporary edition that reflects not only the Ancient and Modern heritage, but also the needs of today's worshipping communities, be they large or small.

To this end, there is a greater amount of ‘family-friendly’ material. All-age worship, family services, inclusive church, these terms and others reflect a need and a tendency to offer worship to people of all ages and backgrounds. Notwithstanding the widely-held, but unfortunate opinion that ‘traditional hymns’ are in some way off-putting, or difficult for younger worshippers to grasp (perhaps due to the absence of hymnody in school worship nowadays), there is a significant amount of material which may enable clergy and musicians to respond to the widely-voiced criticism that a hymnbook is not family worship friendly.

Another new trend, begun with Sing Praise and now carried into a main volume is the inclusion of shorter, chant-like material. Well-known items from the Taizé Community and from Iona are included, and they may find a place in both conventional Eucharistic settings, or in regular or one-off services of the Word. Both of the traditions from whence these musical styles came began as reactionary developments, both in worship and theological focus, but, perhaps due to their liturgical and musical appeal, have been enthusiastically adopted by today's churches. Their emphasis on peace, justice and reconciliation has also resonated, and a significant section of this book is dedicated to these key dimensions of modern Christian life and prayer.

Even though are around 100 hymns that have been dropped from Common Praise (and only five from Sing Praise), this is the largest book to date, with its 800 items. Other hymnbooks have even more, but we are acutely aware of the bulk of the book and the problems that can cause. What we have cut we have done so with caution, respect and a clear eye to both the past and the future. 86 of the 273 hymns from the original edition of 1861 remain in this book: just under a third. Many of those we have cut have not travelled that distance in time, but have come and gone over the last century or so. There are fifty items in this book that were not in Common Praise nor Sing Praise, and they have been drawn from a wide range of contemporary sources and traditions, to some extent continuing the inclusive approach tentatively begun in Common Praise and pursued enthusiastically in Sing Praise.

Some hymns have been altered slightly. The key issue of ‘inclusive’ language always prompts debate and reaction, such that there is probably no single, consistent approach that satisfies everybody. Our approach has been to leave well alone anything that is sufficiently historic, poetically balanced or ingrained into the fabric of society. Archaic, ambiguous or apparently sexist as some old hymns are, we have not altered them. Others we have changed where widely accepted alternatives exist elsewhere and are in use, or where the flow and rhythm of the text make a small alteration unnoticeable. The language we speak and sing has political, theological and personal significance, and we hope to have sailed a course between the rocks of poetical butchery on one side and gender obsession on the other. Similarly texts have only been de-archaisised where there is precedent or no apparent damage to the original.
The subdividing of the book merits mention. *Common Praise* like *Hymns Ancient and Modern, New Standard* before it, began with sections for Morning and evening and progressed through the church year. The former had many thematic divisions, some of which contained less than a handful of hymns. *Common Praise* streamlined this, but in doing so moved away from ‘thematic’ suggestions. This was in keeping with the major distinction between the *Alternative Services Book* of 1980 and the new millennium’s *Common Worship*: the former’s lectionary was significantly thematic, whereas the more recent approach involves a more continuous reading of scripture from Sunday to Sunday. Thematic worship was out of vogue at the turn of the century, and to some extent the hymnal suffered by not being able to group, nor even recommend hymns on particular themes to aid those choosing them. *Sing Praise* followed the *Common Worship* approach too, but being a supplement, did not feel obliged to offer material for every eventuality. This book inherits the approach with flows with the *Common Worship* lectionary, but also contains significant sections based on liturgical use and ‘position’, and thematic zones too.

Related to this are the indices. *Common Praise* was the first to include a Scriptural Index. Many other hymns books had begun to do this, for it provides a immensely useful tool for those who are not following the First Service Lectionary of *Common Worship*. *Sing Praise* followed this trend, and we have included one here. *New Standard* had a thematic index, which neither of its successors inherited, but we have reinstated that here, as well as providing a suggested selection of five hymns for a service following the Common Worship Sunday Eucharistic Lectionary, as *Common Praise* did. Thus we hope to have provided every possible tool for those selecting hymns, aiding those of varying ability, interest or enthusiasm to draw richly upon the wide range of material included herein. In this way it is hoped that worship can be truly enriched by ordering material in such a way that choices based on maximum discrimination can be made as often as possible.

*GG 28/7/2012*

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