



## Reviews

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# "Sing forth the honour of His Name"\*

John Nicholls

**W**HEN IT WAS announced that the Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association proposed to publish a new hymn book, this reviewer, like many others, felt that it would be a difficult and troublesome project, and might not be worth all the ill-feeling that could be generated. However, as the project developed, with a questionnaire for all to complete, then the appointment of committees, and then not infrequent progress reports and samples of material to be used, the reviewer, he has to admit, slowly changed his mind. We were kept informed of the problems and progress, and above all we were able to write and express preferences and opinions, and to contribute hymns and music for inclusion.

Thinking back to the 1964 hymn book, which was published to meet the needs of the then recently united Central and Suffolk Street fellowships, there could not have been a bigger difference. The reviewer cannot remember any consultation or invitation to submit views or items for that book, and in some quarters of the Brotherhood it was received with hostility or rejected outright. It seems to the reviewer that the 2002 hymn book has been produced in a spirit of love and consideration for brethren and sisters, and a desire that all should be able to contribute and share in its production. This may be why, as far as the reviewer is aware, it has been generally welcomed by the Brotherhood.

### General view

This having been said, what is the new hymn book like? Are the words that we are being asked to sing sound in doctrine? Does it present the Truth in a balanced way, declaring, as the apostle said in Acts 20:27, "all the counsel of God"? Is it a book that can be used by ecclesias small and large, with short and easy-to-sing hymns as well as the more challenging longer anthems and chorales? In general, the reviewer has found that the

answers to these questions are all in the affirmative.

The reviewer said in reviewing another hymn book that, because musical tastes vary so much from person to person and generation to generation, not much would be said about the music, the words are all-important.<sup>1</sup> Because of the powerful and memorable effect that words sung to music have upon us, it is vital that the ideas they convey are in harmony with the will and purpose of God revealed in Scripture (1 Cor. 14:15; Ps. 47:7).

The hymn book is set out in the same sections as the 1964 book, except that an additional section, "Preaching the Word", is included, and the anthems section has been omitted, with the anthems being dispersed as appropriate amongst the other sections. Not having the anthems all together in a rather remote section at the end of the hymn book may have the effect of encouraging greater use of them.

### Detailed view

For this reviewer, the first section, **The Psalms**, is the most delightful. It has been almost doubled in number, from forty-one hymns in the 1964 book to seventy-five in the new one. The hymns are in the same order as the psalms themselves. Some of the additional pieces are from the anthems section of the 1964 book, but there are also some entirely new hymns. Number 1 is an almost verbatim rendering of Psalm 1, "Blessed is the man". Hymn 40 is likewise a faithful rendering of Psalm 80:3-18. Hymn 52 paraphrases some of the beautiful verses in Psalm 103, "Bless the LORD, O my soul". A welcome return from the 1932 book is Hymn 64, "The Lord in truth to David swear", based on Psalm

\* *The Christadelphian Hymn Book*, 2002.

1. ["An opportunity missed"](#), Jul. 2001, p. 289.

132, a faithful representation of the wonderful covenant to David.

The section **God: Praise** is also outstanding. Three old favourites, "My God, I thank Thee, who hast made" (Hymn 103), "All-pow'rful, self-existent God" (Hymn 77) and "Lift up to God the voice of praise" (Hymn 99), are set out more clearly, with the lines of music paralleled by the lines of the words in full, so making it easier to sing the words and read the music simultaneously. Some good new hymns in this section include 85, "God who cheered the faithful Joseph"; 88, "Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father"; 89, "Hallelujah, God be honoured"; 100, "Lord of the circling earth"; 104, "My heart rejoices in the Lord"; 109, "O God whose voice of thunder"; 110, "O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder"; 122, "Sing to the Lord, Who triumphed gloriously"; 123, "Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!"; and 132, "To God be the glory, great things He has done!". Some of these new hymns have lively tunes and are a joy to sing, and some of them are composed by brethren and sisters and reflect the fullness and joy of the Truth in a way that hymns by non-Christadelphians fail to achieve.

**God: Prayer and Confidence** is almost unchanged from the 1964 book, except for two additions: Hymn 160, "Our Father, hear as now we pray", a delightful little hymn; and 165, "Teach me Thy Way, O Lord; teach me Thy Way". Although Hymn 135 is improved by the change from "Father" to "Maker" in the first line, the hymn does not truly reflect the background in 1 Kings 19, and one suspects that it was retained for sentimental reasons rather than for reasons of Scriptural veracity. Hymn 161 is improved by using the old anthem tune from the 1932 book.

**The Word of God** and **Christ: His Birth** are virtually unchanged except for some welcome omissions in the latter section. The section where this reviewer feels discomfort over a few hymns is the next one, **Christ: His Mission and Ministry**. This section has fewer hymns than in the 1964 book. Hymn 204, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds", and some others do not seem to follow any Scriptural words or passages, but the reviewer recognises that for many faithful brethren and sisters they are well-loved hymns.

In the next section, **Christ: His Sacrifice**, which is also slightly reduced, the reviewer still has difficulty with the "wondrous cross" of Hymn 223, and in his mind he will sing "cursed cross" as being more in harmony with Scriptural

ideas. There are several fine new hymns in the section, **Christ: The Breaking of Bread**, all by brethren and sisters. These include Hymn 230, "Father, we seek Thy blessing now"; 233, "Jesus said, 'Share this meal . . .'"; 235, "Lord, thy death and resurrection"; 236, "Lord, as we break this bread in sweet communion"; and 242, "This is my body". We are grateful to our brethren and sisters who have used their time and talents in this way to help produce this hymn book.

From the section **Christ: His Resurrection** the reviewer hopes that we shall hear Hymn 247, with its revised wording, sung on Sundays other than Easter Sunday, and welcomes Hymn 260 (by our Brother John Morris) in **Christ: His Priesthood**, a lovely hymn based on the Letter to the Hebrews. New hymns in **Christ: His Return** include 274, "Christ the King is coming"; and 278, "Joy to the world! the Lord is come"; both set to lively tunes. There are a good number of hymns under **Christ: His Kingdom**, and the **Israel** section has been expanded with the inclusion of Hymn 312, "Come, thou glorious day of promise"; and 318, "O God of Abraham we pray to Thee", a moving and faithful hymn written and composed by our Brother Roy Standeven.

The **Baptism** and **Exhortation** sections have new material, including 336, "We thank Thee, Lord of heav'n and earth"; 356, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God"; 357, "Take courage, my brother"; and 360, "We come around God's word to learn together". The new section **Preaching the Word** has the biggest percentage of hymns new to the book, three of which are written by Christadelphians. Hymn 364, written and composed by Brother Michael Perryman, has five verses devoted to how the Word of God went forth in the past, each beginning with the identical statement "God's word went forth!", with the concluding sixth verse:

"God's word, go forth! Let Jesus soon return  
And raise the sleeping saints to life again;  
In faith, to see our Lord and King, we yearn;  
Let Jesus o'er the world in glory reign!  
God's word, go forth! God's word, go forth!".

The distinctive doctrines of the Truth are a joy to sing with such words as these to express them.

The **Comforts of the Truth** section has been considerably expanded, with three anthems and three lovely new hymns by brethren and sisters. A welcome return from the 1932 book is Hymn 390, "Who was saved when heav'n's vast fountains . . .?". This is one of the few hymns we have about the warning presented by the great

Flood in Noah's time, to which the Lord and the apostles not infrequently referred, though the reviewer regrets the omission of one verse.

In the **Death and Resurrection** section it is good to see the anthem, "I know that my Redeemer liveth", reinstated as Hymn 394, though in Hymn 392 the reviewer feels that the old words, "Bless'd be Jehovah, Israel's God", expressed more forthrightly the Scripture teaching about God than the present, "Blessed be the everlasting God". In his mind he will be singing the old words, as also in verse 2 of Hymn 399 in the **Judgement** section. He recognises that to sing of "Mahomet's great imposture" and "papal superstition's chain" is probably legally dubious and inexpedient in today's multicultural society, but how accurately those old words expressed the mind of God in the prophecies!

The final four sections are **Evening, Morning, Seasons and Special Occasions** and **Dismissal**. They are largely unaltered from the 1964 book except for Seasons and Special Occasions. Here Hymn 421, "Come, let us anew our journey pursue", is set out in anthem form, making it much easier to follow the music and words together. Hymn 427 is an unusual and lovely new hymn by a brother, "Grant, Lord, Thy blessing on this place".

#### Other points

Overall, the reviewer feels that it has been a worthwhile exercise to produce the new book, and would commend it to his brethren and sisters. Although not much has been said in this

review about the music, the reviewer generally finds it very good, whilst recognising that musical tastes are very individual. The lowering of keys for some hymns so that we sing a semitone lower is helpful for many. The metronome speeds are a useful guide and could possibly help in resolving the controversial issue in some ecclesiastical of what is the most appropriate tempo. Finally on the matter of the music, he has a query: Why, as far as he can see, are there no hymns in the two lovely keys of A flat major and D flat major? Perhaps it has to do with the difficulty of playing with four or five flats!

The hymn book has some useful sections at the back. For presiding brethren, the index of Scriptural references should help when choosing hymns suitable for the readings for the day. Alphabetical indices of first lines, tunes and metrical patterns are also there, together with details of authors of words and composers of tunes. The new hymn book has 438 hymns and anthems compared with 400 in the old, and is nicely produced in green. Pocket, leather, large print and organists' copies are also available, and it is very reasonably priced.

May the new hymn book be a help and joy to all those who share the feelings of the psalmist: "Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely" (Ps. 147:1). May the day soon come when David's words in his psalm of praise are fulfilled: "My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever" (145:21).

### 2002 Hymn Book Concordance

As this issue of *The Testimony* was being put together, details were received of a concordance to the new hymn book. This is designed along the lines of a Bible concordance, with virtually every word in the new hymn book listed, along with hymn numbers, verse numbers and contexts where the word is used. This work should be very useful to presidents and organists looking for suitable hymns and voluntaries.

The concordance is available in the following formats:

**Standard:** Small type. 140 A4 sides. Plastic bound. £5.50.

**Large:** Large type, 466 A4 sides. Bound in four-ring binder. £18.00.

**Electronic:** One CD or two 3½" floppy discs, with edit and find facilities. £3.

**E-mail:** In sections, suitable for combining as one file on hard drive or CD. £2.

Postage and packing in the UK for one standard version is £1.74, and for an electronic version £1.04. For the large version, multiple copies or overseas orders, please enquire.

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