

Promoting the Further Contextualization of Hymns:

Experience and reflections on editing the New Hymnal and its Supplement

推进“圣诗中国化”的途径

—编辑《赞美诗（新编）》及其《补充本》的历程与感悟

cao shengjie 曹圣洁

There is a consensus that “Christianity is the singing religion,” not only because songs are always associated with Christian worship but also because they are rooted in Christian theology. The human voice is a part of God’s creation, and with it, humans can speak, express their emotions and sing praises to God. There are ample records of this in the Bible: from the ancient hymns of Moses and Hannah, from the Psalms and other wisdom books in the Old Testament, to the New Testament in which Jesus sang with his disciples and Paul made the exhortation to speak to one another with “Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs”.

In addition, songs are a part of Church history and legacy: from the earliest Doxology, the compositions of Ambrose, to Gregorian chants, and especially the products of the Reformation begun by Martin Luther. Consequently, the composition of hymns has spread globally, and most Christians can now sing hymns in their own languages. Christian music assumes many forms, including large choral compositions, but the hymn or song of praise is the most basic and popular form which has its own unique sacredness and widespread impact.

In 1981, the Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches (TSPM) and China Christian Council (CCC) set up a working group on hymns, which was later renamed the editorial department of hymns (New Edition) (hereinafter referred to as the New Hymnal), composed of four people that included myself, Shi Qigui 史奇珪¹, Lin Shengben 林声本² and Hong Lvming 洪倡明³. As the deputy general Secretary of the China Christian Council, I assumed leadership of the group⁴.

At that time, the local churches were resuming their worship, and both the Bible and hymnals were indispensable, but most of these had been lost in the Cultural Revolution. I fully understood the urgency of reprinting them. The Bible could be reprinted according to the old version, but the hymns used by different denominations in the past were not the same. With the practice of union worship, it became impossible to use hymns of one denomination as a general model, and it became urgent to edit a new hymnal.

At the beginning of my work, I was not so clear about what kind of hymnal I wanted to compile. For a while, I simply thought that it would be just a collection of hymns

1 Shi Qigui, born in Suzhou in 1929, graduated from Jinling Union Theological Seminary and taught himself to compose music. He successively served as vice chairman of Shanghai Christian Council and senior pastor of Muen Church. He is the author of *Footprints* and *Shi Qigui's Composition on Sacred Songs*.

2 Lin Shengben, born in 1927 in Xinhui, Guangdong, graduated from Jinling Union Theological Seminary. He studied in the Department of Church Music of China Baptist Theological Seminary under Ma Geshun. He has been the pastor of Shanghai Jingling Church and the editor of *Selected Anthems*.

3 Hong Lvming, born in Shanghai in 1930, graduated from St. John's University. She successively served as deputy director general of Shanghai YWCA and as organist of Shanghai Community Church.

4 Luo Weihong, *Cao Shengjie's Oral History*, Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore press, 2016, Chapter 20

that believers were familiar with and loved. Bishop Ding Guangxun (K. H. Ting) 丁光训 President of CCC, and Bishop Zheng Jianye 郑建业, General Secretary of CCC, had long-term vision and formulated the basic principles of “Mutual Respect and Comprehensiveness” and “further contextualization of hymns,” which enabled us to identify our goals. These two principles reflect the context and advancing direction of the Church in China.

In terms of “mutual respect,” we have built the church according to the Three-Self Principle and have entered the post-denominational era. The characteristics of the original denominations and the hymns they used have not been totally negated. In fact, based on the spirit of mutual respect, their essence has been absorbed. No further discussion on this will be made here since it is not the focus of this paper.

As for the further contextualization of hymns, we, as Chinese Christians, have our own profound Chinese cultural resources. Just as all Christians can express their feelings for God using their own cultural forms, so can we. What is more, our predecessors have left some works as examples for us, so we should continue to work hard. No one in the editorial department has any objection to this point and all are willing to put it into practice. The numerical musical notation of the *New Hymnal* was published in 1983 and the preface was written by Bishop Zheng himself. He listed “Indigenization of Sacred Music” as the title of a large paragraph. Today, when I read it, I cannot help but admire his sagacity and foresight.

As some hymns were not included in the *New Hymnal* when it was published, and the need of Chinese churches continued to grow, the National CCC&TSPM decided in 2003 to publish a supplementary edition, with Shi Qigui and Hong Lvming and myself as the main editors, and including other personnel such as Luo Liguang 罗黎光⁵, Sheng Yin 盛茵⁶, Gu Yuntao 顾云涛⁷ and Lin Dehua 林德桦⁸. We still follow the established principles on the “Indigenization of Hymns in China.”⁹ The *Supplementary Volume* was published in 2009.

The Connotation of “Further Contextualized” Hymns (namely Chinese Originated Hymns)

1. “Hymns” have common features that must be observed:

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, *hymnos* in Greek originally means “song of praise,” referring to the songs sung by the congregation during Christian worship. The lyrics are rhythmic and segmented, not copied from the Bible.¹⁰ This is focused on its form of expression.

5 Luo Liguang, born in 1940, studied piano, violin, and national musical instruments since childhood. He has successively served as the president of Jiangxi Christian Council and the senior pastor of Yushui Church in Xinyu City. He is the author of Christian choral songs, such as *Hymns Echoing in the Heart and Biblical Scripture Songs*.

6 Sheng Yin, born in 1933 in Shanghai, graduated from Mateer’s Girls High School, and is a member of China Musicians Association. She has been a pianist of China Central Broadcasting Orchestra and Shanghai Broadcasting Orchestra and translated hundreds of foreign songs.

7 Gu Yuntao, born in 1972 in Suzhou, has a bachelor’s degree in theology from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. He once studied music from a teacher in Nanjing Normal University. He is the senior pastor of the Christian Church in Suzhou High Tech Zone.

8 Lin Dehua, born in Shanghai in 1962, graduated from the Chinese Department of Fudan University and Church Music Department of Singapore Bible College. She has successively served as the editor of the Publishing Department of CCC&TSPM, the teacher of sacred music at Huadong Theological Seminary, and the conductor of the Shanghai Community Church Choir.

9 Cao Shengjie: “Comments on the Supplementary Volume of New Hymnal”, originally published in *Tianfeng*, Issue 12, 2009. Reprinted in *Thinking in Circumstances*, Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 2010, p.247.

10 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/hymnSac>

Saint Augustine once said in his annotation to Psalm 148: “Would you like to know what is a hymn? A hymn is a song of praise to God. If you say praises to God but do not sing them, then your praise is not a hymn; if you sing to God but do not have the heart to praise, then it is not a hymn; if you sing to praise, but the object is not God, the hymn you sing is not a hymn.”¹¹ The emphasis here is on the praise of God from the heart.

I realize that hymns have the following characteristics:

- 1) It is a song of praise with God as its object. In poetry and music, it sings out the religious feelings of believers, such as praising, thanking, trusting, obeying and praying to God.
- 2) The lyrics of hymns are verses, not exactly verses of the Bible, but must conform to the whole message and basic doctrines of the Bible and reflect correct theological ideas. As such, it actually serves as a theological textbook.
- 3) In hymns, the tunes¹² should be closely matched with the lyrics to produce the effect of piety, solemnity and peace, and avoid expressions of anxiety, senselessness and other negative emotions.
- 4) Hymns are prepared for believers. While mainly used for collective worship, they are also used for individual, spiritual retreats or devotions. The former has an inseparable relationship with liturgy. A good hymn must resonate with the heart of the believer.
- 5) In their composition, both lyrics and tunes are inseparable from the cultural context of the composer,

11 Quoted from Luo Bingliang: *Comprehensive Discussion on Sacred Music*, Hong Kong: Tiandao Bookstore Co., Ltd., 1994, p. 83.

12 In studying of hymns, some people think that hymns only refer to lyrics, excluding tunes, but good tunes can help lyrics spread like wildfire, and people’s memories of hymns are often inseparable from their familiar tunes. The hymns discussed in this paper include tunes.

so hymns are not always uniform. The hymns of churches all over the world demonstrate multicultural features.

2. *“Further contextualization” is the particularity that Chinese Christians need to consider*

First of all, “Chinese contextualized” hymns should meet the common requirements of the above-mentioned “hymns,” especially on the fifth point. In the process of editing the *New Hymnal*, I gradually arrived at the following understanding:

- 1) It refers to the compositions of Chinese Christians, whether lyrics or tunes. In the *New Hymnal* there are also works of overseas Chinese Christians that meet the editing requirements.
- 2) In addition to their rich spirituality, the lyrics should be written based on the standards of the Chinese language. Historical works include ancient prose, rhymed poetry written in classical Chinese and *Ci* 词. Vernacular works have rhyme and free style, but they should also meet the basic elements of a poem.
- 3) In addition to conforming to the “rules” of music, the melody is best combined with Chinese elements to reflect Chinese style. Using the pentatonic scale is one way, but not limited to it. The adaptation of folk songs is feasible, but should be done cautiously. Harmony in compositions should be appropriate for church use.

The history of Christianity in China shows the inevitability of the further contextualization of hymns

1. *Three representative Hymns in Chinese history*

Based on historical records, Chinese hymns such as “All Heaven Worships in Great Awe” 大秦景教三威蒙度赞 (*New*

Hymnal, No. 385) can be traced to Nestorianism in the Tang Dynasty. Jingjiao 景教, or Nestorianism, was introduced and spread in China by Syrian priests along the Silk Road in the Tang Dynasty around 635-845 A.D. Most of its classics were translated using Buddhist terminology. It was destroyed while Buddhism was suppressed by the Tang Emperor, Wuzong. This poem seems to be an old translation of “Gloria in Excelsis” 《荣归主颂》. “Sanwei” 三威 means the Trinity, “Mengdu” 蒙度 means salvation.¹³ The original tune cannot be verified. The poem was included in *Hymns of Universal Praise* 《普天颂赞》 published in 1936 and composed by Liang Jifang 梁季芳, who was then a student at the Music Department of Yenching University 燕京大学. In order to preserve history, the *New Hymnal* listed this poem as an “ancient Chinese Hymn”.

Another ancient hymn included in the *New Hymnal* is “Yangzhige” 仰止歌 (No. 386). The author is Wu Li 吴历, a poet and painter of the early Qing Dynasty, whose alternative name is Yushan 渔山 (1631-1718). After his conversion to Catholicism, he became a priest and wrote *A Copy of Mo Jing’s Poems* 《墨井诗抄》 and the hymn in question is one of them. The lyrics involve God’s creation of heaven and earth, Jesus’ redemptive action on the cross, and believers’ admiration and imitation of Jesus by “looking up to the mountains.” Qiu Changnian 裘昌年 composed its music using the oblique tone of poetry, giving it the charm of poetry recitation.

Emperor Kangxi 康熙 of the Qing Dynasty cured his malaria by taking western medicine, thus he formed a friendship with Ferdinand Verbiest 南怀仁, a Belgian

13 For the content of the translation, see Wang Shenyin’s original book: *Historical Notes of the Hymns in the New Hymnal*, Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, first edition in 1994, revised edition in 2014, p. 312. The author and writing background of each hymn in *New Hymnal* are introduced in this book.

Catholic missionary and an official of the Bureau of Astronomy. Emperor Kangxi once held a favorable attitude to Christianity. It is said that he wrote an eight-line poem with seven characters to each line in a strict tonal pattern as a gift to Ferdinand Verbiest:

“When the work on the Cross was accomplished, blood formed a creek; Grace from the west flowed a thousand yards deep. He stepped onto the midnight road, to subject Himself to four trials. Before the rooster crowed twice, betrayed thrice was He. Five hundred lashes tore every inch of His skin. Two thieves at six feet high hanged beside him. The sadness was greater than any had ever known; seven utterings, one completed task, ten thousand spirits weep.”

This is a poem commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus. From the time Jesus was escorted and flogged, Peter denied the Lord three times, two robbers were nailed on either side of him until the time when he spoke the seven last words on the cross. In 1977, the revised edition of *Hymns of Universal Praise* published in Hong Kong¹⁴ selected this poem, entitled “Song of the Cross by Kangxi” 《康熙十架歌》 (No. 170), and music was composed for it by Huang Yongxi 黄永熙.¹⁵ When editing the *New Hymnal*, I saw this poem, but did not select

14 *Hymns of Universal Praise* was published in 1936 by the Christian Literature Society for China in Shanghai . In 1977, the Hong Kong Christian Literature and Art Publishing House published the revised edition of *Hymns of Universal Praise*, edited by Huang Yongxi. In 2006, it also published a new edition of *Hymns of Universal Praise*, edited by Tan Jingzhi.

15 Huang Yongxi (黄永熙 Heyward W.H.Wong 1917-2003), born in Guangdong, holds a Ph.D. in music education from Columbia University. He has successively served as conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Shanghai Municipal Council, conductor of Hong Kong Sacred Music Orchestra and President of Hong Kong Christian Literature and Art Publishing House.

it because I could not find its exact source.¹⁶

The above three poems, which have been preserved to this day, show that since the introduction of Christianity to China, there have been poems praising God, with Chinese culture as the medium.

2. *Popular hymns written by early Chinese Christians*

Modern Christianity was introduced from the west, and foreign missionaries translated Western hymns into Chinese based on mission needs. In 1818, after translating the New Testament, Robert Morrison published a collection of 30 sacred poems, the first of its kind since Protestantism arrived in China. Following the signing of the Nanjing Treaty, various denominations entered China in rapid succession, setting up churches and publishing their own collections of hymns. Some of the lyrics were in local dialects, such as Fuzhou 1861's Rongqiang hymn 福州《榕腔圣诗》, followed by Chaoqiang hymn 《潮腔圣诗》 and Xiaqiang hymn 《厦腔圣诗》. Some of the lyrics which were used in Ningbo 宁波 and other places were in Romanized Chinese. Many of these hymns were translated into Chinese from English, but because the missionaries had a limited knowledge of Chinese, and their Chinese assistants did not understand English well nor western music theory, the quality of translation was very poor.

Since it was difficult for Chinese believers to learn Western tunes, some Chinese evangelists began composing their own hymns for the sake of preaching. Some famous poets, such as Xi Shengmo 席胜魔 (1835-1896) in Shanxi

16 Cao Shengjie: "The Past Exploration on the further contextualization of hymns", *Tianfeng*, No. 10, 2016.

Province, compiled *Xi Shengmo's Hymns*《席胜魔诗歌》¹⁷. Among them, “Why We Gather”《聚会的缘故》(No. 53) became very popular. The lyrics of the first verse are: “There is a reason for our gathering this time, which is that the Holy Spirit guides the Church forward. Let men and women, young and old, worship the Lord devoutly to receive the Lord’s command. The Lord said,

“I laid down my life for you on the cross. What else are you loath to part with to follow me? Drinking, smoking, pride, and vengefulness? Please say what else are you loath to part with to follow me and enjoy the eternal happiness of heaven.”

Many of these hymns were straightforward and sung to existing folk tunes. Some of them were later included in the *Chinese Hymnary*《颂主圣歌》published by the China Inland Mission. Apart from compiling biblical principles into popular words of encouragement, the lyrics impressed me deeply at two levels:

- 1) Most of them are evangelistic poems, which exclude other religions.

For example, there is a song that says,

“Everyone seeks blessings in his heart, holds the love of heaven and fear of hell, but never reaps satisfaction even while busily traversing the sky. Some chant sutras praying to clay sculptures, others burn incense and worship carvings. Many heretics work in vain and yet cannot teach him true happiness.”¹⁸

17 *Xi Shengmo's Hymns*, published by China Inland Mission, printed by Shanghai Commercial Press, 5th Edition, 1918.

18 “Brief Union Ode to the Lord,” Hankou: Chinese Sacred Book Society, 1922, No. 62. *Chinese Hymnary*, Hong Kong sermon press, 1961, No. 477.

In another song it says:

*"The three religions of China have been handed down through the ages. Their interpretations have been twisted to serve the power of evil spirits. Confucian sages preach morality but are no match to the heavenly Ten Commandments..."*¹⁹

- 2) They pay attention to the present life and expose bad habits.

For example, Xi Shengmo's "ten bad" 《十不好》 and "ten best" 《十最好》 (the 77th and 78th hymns of the anthology) depict the harm of opium smoking, persuading people to believe in the Lord and give up opium. I have come across another song entitled "Throwing Girls Away" 《扔女孩歌》. The lyrics are: *"It's a pity that people often throw girls away. Their parents are willing to harm them. They put them in baskets and abandon them in the suburbs, alive. This kind of evil mind needs to be changed."*²⁰ It is like a motto.

The evangelical efforts of this kind of hymns are worth recalling, and it was also sensible to urge the majority of believers to improve their moral lives. However, the lyrics deliberately opposing other religions were influenced by Western cultural centrism and should not be inherited.

Foreign missionaries have different responses to the use of Chinese tunes in hymns. Some despise Chinese culture and think that "Chinese music is not as complete nor as refined as that of the western countries." They even say that "The tone of Chinese music is probably a kind of play, and it is inappropriate to use it to sing hymns and worship

19 Hymns of Protestants, Fuzhou congregationist, 1861. Quoted from Sheng Xuanen: "On the History of Chinese Christian Hymns (5)", *Sacred Music Quarterly*, winter 1981.

20 Feng Yixuan: *Poetry of Truth*, Anhui Shouxian, Anhui Zhengyang Inland Mission Society, 1944, No. 39.

God.”²¹ However, the missionaries who went deep into the mainland knew that it was not easy for the common people to sing Western tunes. For the sake of mission convenience, they accepted Chinese compositions. Some missionaries, such as Timothy Richard (1845-1919)²² and William Edward Soothill (1861-1935)²³ appreciated Chinese tunes, collected them, and tried to connect them with western music.

3. *The publication of Hymns of Universal Praise in the era of the Republic of China is the most important achievement*

Since the start of the 20th century, there have been numerous collections of hymns published by different denominations. As the trend towards “church independence” became more influential, writing, compiling, and publishing hymns became irresistible to the Chinese. For example, Xie Honglai 谢洪赉 edited *Hymns for Youth* 《青年诗歌》 in 1908 and in 1923, Wang Zai 王载 edited the *Hymns of Sermon Revival* 《复兴布道诗》. Jia Yuming²⁴ 贾玉铭 wrote *Hymns of Communion with the Holy Spirit* 《灵交诗歌》 at the North China Theological Seminary in 1928. After 1938, he published the *Hymns of Triumph* 《得胜诗歌》 and *Triumphant Hymns of Communion with the Holy Spirit* 《灵交得胜诗歌》 in Chongqing. In 1943, he collected the

21 Edited by Julia B Mateer: *Enlightenment of Western Music Theory*, later added as *Hymnal Score*, 1872, Chinese original preface.

22 Liu Qi: “Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Li and the *Little Hymnal score*”, Music Research, 1988, No. 1.

23 Chen Fengsheng: the *History of Christianity in Modern Wenzhou* (I), Taiwan: Huamulan Culture Co., Ltd., 2020, P122-124.

24 Jia Yuming (1879-1964), born in Changle, Shandong Province, graduated from Dengzhou Cultural Association, Shandong Province, and was a pastor. He has successively served as vice president of the World Evangelical Conference, vice chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of China, and President of Shanghai Seminary of Spiritual Retreat. He is the author of *Theology about God’s Word and the Essentials of the Bible*.

Voices of the Saints《圣徒心声》. He wrote most of the lyrics, but the tunes were borrowed from existing hymns.

In the 1920s, the idea of “Christian indigenization” arose, advocating breaking the barriers of foreign denominations and encouraging the integration of Chinese culture into church music and art. First, the Chinese Anglican Church compiled a trial edition of the collection *Hymns of Praise*《颂主诗集》 which was aimed for use within its own denomination (from different mission boards). During the editing period, it also launched a competition for the composition of Chinese hymns. When the Anglican Church realized that other denominations also intended to break the chaotic situation of publishing their own hymn books, it issued an invitation to cooperate in compiling a new hymnal.

In 1931, the Church of Christ in China, the Chinese Anglican Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church, the North China Congregational Church, and the Chinese Baptist Convention decided to set up a joint Hymn Editing Committee to edit a national collection of hymns, which was published in 1936 as *Hymns of Universal Praise*《普天颂赞》. This collection of hymns was called “a collection of national hymns” because the spirit of unity “consciously highlights the identity of the Chinese Church.”²⁵ Zhu Weizhi 朱维之 praised the completion of *Hymns of Universal Praise* as the greatest contribution of Christianity to Chinese literature after the May 4th Movement, comparable to the translation of the official language (Mandarin) and union versions of the New and Old Testaments before the May 4th movement.²⁶

25 Liang Nachi: *The Birth of a National Hymnal*, Hong Kong: Christian literature and Art Press, 2007, P. 17.

26 Zhu Weizhi: “A Great Loss for Chinese Christian Culture - mourning for Dr. Liu Tingfang”, *Tianfeng*, No. 83, 1947.

The editing process of *Hymns of Universal Praise* was very strict. The Committee had its own branches, such as the text branch and music branch. It limited the number of hymns in the collection (512 at the time of publication), formulated the principles for translating hymns, and made it clear that original Chinese hymns should account for 10 percent (at the time of publication it was 12 percent) of the collection. Liu Tingfang²⁷ 刘廷芳 was the chair of the editorial committee and the chair of the text sub-committee, and Yang Yinliu 杨荫浏 was the general secretary of the editorial committee.²⁸

Liu Tingfang was then the director of the Religious College of Yenching University. He attached great importance to the high translation standards of the hymns, and set up special columns to discuss the editing work of *Hymns of Universal Praise in Amethyst* 《紫晶》 established by him and *Truth and Life* 《真理与生命》, with him as the chief editor. In *Hymns of Universal Praise*, he translated 164 hymns and created 6, accounting for about one-third of the entire collection.²⁹

Before editing *Hymns of Universal Praise*, Yang Yinliu had edited the hymnbook *Hymns of Praise* for the Anglican Church, which became the blueprint for *Hymns of Universal Praise* in which there were 15 hymns composed or adapted by him.³⁰

27 Liu Tingfang (Timothy T. F. Liu 1891-1947); Chen Fengsheng: *Poetic Life*, Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 2013.

28 Yang Yinliu (Ernest Y. L. Yang 1899-1984), born in Wuxi, studied Chinese musical instruments as a child. When he became a Christian, he studied western music with missionary Luis Hammond. He served for successive terms as the director of the Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Arts.

29 Chen Fengsheng: *Poetic Life*, p. 142.

30 Liang Naqi: *The Birth of a National Hymnal*, p. 101.

Zhao Zichen (T. C. Chao) 赵紫宸 was the most popular poet in the *Hymns of Universal Praise*.³¹ He was then a professor at Yenching University and its affiliated religious college at that time. In 1931, he published two collections of hymns: *The Collection of Fellowship Hymns* 《团契圣歌集》 and *The Collection of Hymns for Believers* 《民众圣歌集》. The former was his translation of hymns for the purpose of fellowship at Yenching University, and the latter was completely written for ordinary believers, including rural ones. The words are easy to understand. American missionary Bliss Wyant (1895-1975), whose Chinese name is Fan Tianxiang 范天祥, head of the Music Department of Yenching University, had a special interest in Chinese music. He collected many Chinese traditional and folk tunes, and Zhao Zichen made lyrics for them. Fan Tianxiang made outstanding contributions to the composition of hymns with Chinese tunes, and eight of them were included in the *Hymns of Universal Praise*.³²

After the reform and opening up, *The New Hymnal* edited by us was put together for the purpose of union worship and inherited the tradition of “further contextualization”. Naturally, *Hymns of Universal Praise* was our main source. Of the 102 Chinese-originated hymns in the *New Hymnal*, 56 were old ones, of which 27 were selected from the *Hymns of Universal Praise*, accounting for about half, and 4 were added to the supplementary edition, a total of 31. Twelve works of Zhao Zichen were selected, namely, Nos. 30, 31, 43, 59, 101, 130, 138, 148, 184, 202, 204 for the *New Hymnal* and No. 133 in the *Supplement Volume*.

31 Zhao Zichen (T. C. Chao, 1888-1979), a native of Deqing, Zhejiang Province. Received an Honorary Doctorate in Theology from Princeton University, USA. He was one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches and the Dean of the College of Religion at Yanjing University. A famous theologian, philosopher and poet, he is also known as “the father of Chinese hymns.”

32 Liang Naqi, *The Birth of a National Hymnal*, P. 101.

When the editorial department of *The New Hymnal* was established, Shen Zigao 沈子高,³³ Yang Yinliu 杨荫浏 and Ma Geshun 马革顺 were invited to serve as advisers to the hymnal committee.³⁴ Shen Zigao was in the writing committee of *Hymns of Universal Praise*. Before his death, he sent a catalogue to us in shaky handwriting, listing the hymns he felt ought to be included in the *New Hymnal*. In 1982, Cai Wenhao 蔡文浩, a member of the hymnal committee, accompanied me to visit Yang Yinliu in Beijing.³⁵ By then he was old and frail, but he still talked about his faith in Christ. In the process of editing *Hymns of Universal Praise*, he had divided the collected hymns into three categories: necessary, secondary and acceptable, so as to decide on which to include. He also stressed that one must note the differences in tones in the lyrics and that the functional words cannot fall on the musical accent - an insight that was of great benefit to me.

The believers in union worship not only belonged to the original six denominations but also had different theological tendencies. Therefore, in the *New Hymnal*, the old works in other hymn books should be selected at the same time. Jia Yuming's works are more concentrated. There are five of his hymns in the *New Hymnal*, namely Nos. 55, 58, 64, 129, and 152. From the *Songs* 《诗歌》 compiled by the Little Flock, No. 251 is selected.

33 Shen Zigao (T. K. Shen 1895-1982), born in Wuxian County, Jiangsu Province, graduated from Theological Seminary of St. John's University, was a Bishop, and emphasized church etiquette. He was also a Professor of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary and Dean of Central Theological Seminary.

34 Ma Geshun (1914-2015), a native of Ganxian County, Shaanxi Province, graduated from the Music Department of Nanjing Central University, and received his Ph.D. from Westminster Choir College, Princeton. The leading chorus conductor in China, he won the Golden Bell Award for his life-long contribution to music.

35 Cai Wenhao (1913-1993), born in Jiangyin, Jiangsu Province, graduated from University of Shanghai and Nanjing Theological Seminary, and was a pastor with a master's degree in Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary. He served as Vice President of China Christian Council, Chairman and President of Zhejiang Provincial TSPM & Christian Council.

Selection of lyrics of The New Hymnal and Supplementary Volume

1. *Scriptural basis is fundamental*

Many hymns reproduce scriptural teaching in poetry form, for instance, “Sowing Seeds” 《播种比喻歌》 (No. 202, based on Matthew. 13: 1-23), “Neighbor at Our Side” 《邻舍就在身旁歌》 (No. 358, based on Luke 10: 25-37) and “May Thy Divine Life” 《活出基督歌》 (No. 365, based on Philippians 1:20), and so on.

The original first sentence of “May Thy Divine Life” goes “May Thy divine life be manifest in me” 你的生命藉我 表扬, was amended to “as disclosed through me” 藉我表彰 which is more in line with the meaning of modern Chinese. “Here on the Cross” 《十架七言》 (No. 74 in *Supplementary Volume*) was originally a translated hymn. It was later rewritten by Gu Yuntao 顾云涛 according to Chinese Scriptures, with a meditative response for believers added in the last line, making it a creative piece with special features.

I have heard criticisms of two songs concerning the conformity of lyrics to scripture.

One is No. 83 “Joyful Tidings” 《欢乐佳音歌》 which was criticized for the line “Joyful tidings.....Jerusalem rejoice, Messiah’s King.” Some people quoted Matthew 2: 3 to point out that people in Jerusalem were “uneasy” rather than “rejoicing” when Jesus was born. My understanding is that the author associated Jesus’ last entry into Jerusalem (Mt. 21: 1-9) with His birth. Jesus is the Messiah, so his birth is worth rejoicing. The other criticism is of No. 165 “Give to Your People, Lord” 《擘开生命饼歌》. The first two lines read “As once by Galilee others were fed”. It was pointed out that Jesus instituted the Eucharist in Jerusalem, not Galilee. But I think that here, “giving living bread” refers simply to the miracle of Jesus’ feeding the 5,000 in Galilee (Matt. 14:19),

rather than the establishment of the Eucharist. This hymn is often sung during the Eucharist, and as its second half describes Jesus giving his life, it leads to the misunderstanding that the lyric is about the Eucharist. What really counts is the symbolic meaning of “giving bread,” which refers to Jesus’ giving up his divine life. As in poetry, the lyrics often make associations beyond time and space, but we should focus more on its essence.

2. *Theological orientation as an important principle*

Christian faith is based on the Bible, but its practical implications are explained through theology. Since the launch of the Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China, emphasis has always been put on the development of theological thinking that incorporates both the orthodox and the contextual, so as to provide good guidance for believers. The *New Hymnal* attaches importance to this principle.³⁶

As seen from the catalogues of *The New Hymnal* and *Supplementary Volume*, praise for the Holy Trinity is at the core of the entire collection, including creation by the Father, the incarnation of the Son. (In the SV, a column on “Jesus’ Acts” 耶稣行迹 that include “Down from the Mount of Glory” 《山上荣光相辉映》 presents the story of Jesus’ Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. There are original works focused on the doctrine of the Trinity, such as No. 9 “Heavenly Lights” 《颂主恩光歌》 and SV. No. 12 “Glory to the Triune God” 《荣归三一神》.

36 Cao Shengjie: “Exploring the direction of self-propagation of the Gospel in the editing process of the *New Hymnal*,” originally published in the first issue of *Nanjing Theological Review*, 1984, reprinted in *Thinking in Circumstances*, p. 230.

There are fewer works focusing on the Holy Spirit. No. 62 “Holy Spirit is Like the Wind” 《圣灵运行歌》 written by Wang Weifan 汪维藩³⁷ is one of the pieces that are insightful and profound. Its harmony was arranged by Qiu Yuyuan 邱钰源, a teacher from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, who writes under the pen name “Zhong Guoren” 钟国仁, but his name does not appear in the *New Hymnal*.

From the perspective of contextual theology, No. 45 “Christ the Everlasting Lord” 《基督永长久歌》 is an outstanding piece written by Shen Yifan 沈以藩³⁸ after the Cultural Revolution. Despite the upheaval from which the Church suffered, God, the Creator and perfecter of the cosmos, has not changed. “God the Father works even now, Christ is also working still.” (Rf. Jn5:17). This line represents the Christological highlight, to which his wife Hong Lvming 洪侣明 gave a resounding melody. No. 248 “Winter has Passed, the Rain is Over” 《与主同去歌》 written by Wang Weifan is based on the love dialogue in Song of Songs. Its first half was written in 1957, while the refrain was added after the Cultural Revolution, which better conveyed the emotions of the longing and praise for God. Lin Shengben 林声本 gave it an affectionate and moving melody. No. 134 “Now I Come to Thy Holy Temple” 《今到主殿歌》 was written by Pastor Zhang Lingguang 张灵光 from Hangzhou, who experienced hardships and could not help but write a hymn when the church reopened after the Cultural Revolution.

37 Wang Weifan (1927-2015), graduated from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, was a professor in this seminary and a pastor. He is the author of *Chinese Theology and its Cultural Origin*.

38 Bishop Shen Yifan (1928-1994) a native of Wuxian County, Jiangsu Province, graduated from the Philosophy Department of Nanjing University, the Research Section of the Central Theological Seminary. He has served as Vice President and Secretary-General of the China Christian Council and Distinguished Research Fellow, Institute of Religious Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. The remaining works include *Serving through the Pulpit*, *The Voice of the Forum* and so on.

The editorial office combined this hymn with another one by him as refrain, producing a great piece of work, singing out to God with the sweetest praising heart.

Ecclesiology in Chinese Christianity is also developing. If Hymn No. 128 “Our Church Now Is Self-Reliant” 《中华教会自立歌》 reflects the yearning of Chinese Christians for independence and church unity in the 20th century, then No. 124 “The Church Realizing the Three-Self” 《教会三自歌》 and No. 127 “We Love the Chinese Church” 《我爱中国教会歌》 depict the new condition of today’s church and the joy of believers. No. 127 has almost become a must-sing song for church groups commemorating the Three Self Movement. The two pieces by Cai Wenhao 蔡文浩, No. 331 “Learning from the Saints” 《效法诸圣歌》 and No. 125 “I Love Christ’s Church” 《教会我所爱歌》 indicate the historical inheritance of the Church, the author’s devotion to the Chinese Church, the affirmation of taking the Three-Self path and the expectation of complete unity – “Christ’s Church is my rock, How I love His Church, Promote ‘Three-Self by God’s grace, Unity In God’s spirit.” These are concise words with rich meaning. “Gracious Lord, We Meet Here” No.136 was composed by Tang Shoulin 唐守临,³⁹ another member of the hymn committee who was a co-worker of the “Little Flock.” It is commendable that he said, “So there’s no division, we are one in Thee,” indicating that he supported union worship.

39 Tang Shoulin 唐守临 (1906 - 1993), graduated from Soochow University and was the elder of the Christian Little Flock. He served as Vice Chairman of the TSPM. “Little Flock” is an early self-proclaimed Christian sect which thinks that only the local church they represent is the true church.

The Chinese church attaches great importance to the cohesion between faith and action and expects believers to become witnesses to God's glory through making contributions to society. There is thus no shortage of excellent works concerning these issues. No. 350 "Honor God, Serve the People"

《荣神益人歌》 is a prominent piece. The author Shen Mingsui 沈明燧⁴⁰ is proficient in ancient Chinese. He wrote the hymn, taking as a theme "In all things I will honor God's name," and made it clear that the goal of Christian life is to be "salt and light for Him, through all my days." In particular, in the refrain, he emphasized that "If any honor have I, it all derives from the Lord," implying that there should be no personal greed for honor. When finalizing the manuscript with him, I asked Pastor Shen whether the word he used was "planted" 栽成 or "tailor-made" 裁成 in this line. He answered it was "tailor-made," which meant that all our achievements had been carefully cut and finished by the Lord, the tailor of life. This thought is rich in spiritual meaning. Chen Zemin 陈泽民⁴¹ was very moved by this hymn and offered to compose music for it.

When the theology of reconciliation was promoted, the *Supplementary Volume* included No. 186 "Blessed Are the Peacemakers" 《和睦的人有福了》 by Xie Bingguo 谢炳国⁴² and No. 126 "When the Lord Is Welcomed" 《基督化家庭》, No. 129 "To the Yearly Seasons" 《赐福双亲》 by Yang Yinliu.

40 Shen Ming Sui (1909-1997), a native of Lingling, Hunan Province, graduated from Central China Union Theological Seminary and was a pastor. He served as Chairman and President of the TSPM & Christian Council in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and was a standing committee member of the Chinese Poetry Society.

41 Chen Zemin 陈泽民 (1917-2018), graduated from the University of Shanghai and Nanjing Union Theological Seminary; received an honorary Doctorate in Theology from Central-Philippines University; served as professor and vice president of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Search and Witness*.

These works all convey the ideal of Christian life within the family and in daily social interactions, demonstrating what it means to witness to a faith that reconciles.

3. *Rich in spiritual experience*

Writing hymns should communicate real spiritual feelings, and Chinese Christians have unique experiences in their own contexts. Jia Yuming's lyrics in No. 152 "The Lord's Grace Is New Each Day" 《主恩日新歌》 combined elements from "Every morning is new" in the Bible (Lamentations 3:23) and the Chinese idiom "If you can in one day renew yourself, let there be daily renewals". He used the word "new" 19 times in the song, in a vivid way, including new life, new growth, new ideas, new experiences, new inspiration, new contributions and so on. Yang Lvfu 杨旅复,⁴³ a member of the editorial board who had taken part in editing a large number of hymns, later composed music for this hymn, giving it an uplifting and beautifully artistic imagery. No. 137 "Joy in Worship" 《礼拜喜乐歌》 and No. 199 "Strolling Alone at Early Morning" 《与主心交歌》 reproduce the scenes of collective worship and individual spiritual practices of Chinese Christians in the 19th and early 20th century. "Lord Jesus, When I Think of You" 《每想到你歌》, (No. 251 in the New Hymnal) written by Tang Shoulin depicts the love of believers for the Lord.

The third stanza of the first section is "I hope I can be lifted as soon as possible" (深愿我能早日被提).

42 Xie Bingguo, born in 1968 in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, graduated from East China Theological Seminary; a pastor. He used to be the Chairman of Shanghai Christian Council and is currently the Dean of East China Theological Seminary. Chief editor of *Sacred Music and Worship* and other books.

43 Yang Lvfu (1916-2014), a native of Zhuji, Zhejiang Province, graduated from University of Shanghai, and studied at Westminster Choir College in the United States. She served as Secretary of Music of the National Christian Council of China and was Vice President of Zhejiang Theological Seminary.

Considering the different understandings of “being lifted (in rapture)” among believers, the author agreed to change it to “see you soon” 早日见你 for clearer communication even though his own interpretation remains the same.

Wang Weifan’s spiritual experience comes from intuitive comprehension. SV No. 160 “Deep, Deep Love of Our Lord” 《主爱深沉》 used, in an analogical way, words like “blue sky,” “sea,” “fine water” and “stream” to express his affection for the Lord, to such an extent that he was willing to become the “spring water” and “autumn rain” for the world.

In the *Supplementary Volume*, seven hymns reflecting believers’ feelings for the Lord’s grace and kindness are placed under the column “Love for the Lord”. SV No. 154 “Change Me, O Lord” 《求主改变我自己》 has its own characteristics. It is spiritually insightful as it seeks God’s help in self transformation rather than seeking change in others when we experience unpleasant encounters in life. There are also 6 hymns placed under the column “Dedication” 虔诚奉献, which mainly reflect the inner voices of pastoral co-workers on the path of serving God. They sigh in times of hardship but are determined to renew their dedication from time to time.

4. *Genre and aesthetics*

Chinese hymns can be classified as classical, vernacular or popular. Classical Chinese poetry pays attention to rhythm and prosody, while vernacular new poetry is relatively free in style.

Zhao Zichen’s works adopt various genres. No. 148 “Golden Breaks the Dawn” 《清晨歌》 has the most popular line “Golden breaks the dawn, comes the eastern sun. Like a man of brawn, Set his course to run” 清早起来看, 红日出东方, 雄壮像勇士, 美好像新郎 describing the beautiful scenery in the morning

like a Chinese landscape painting, and it is perfectly combined with the Bible verse in Psalm 19:5. The music that accompanies it, by Hu De'ai 胡德爱, a student from the Music Department of Yenching University, is also very innovative, reflecting the simplest life interests and the spiritual sense of Chinese Christians. This piece had been translated and adopted in the hymn books of foreign churches even before the publication of *The New Hymnal*.

“Creator’s Artistic Brush” 《神工妙笔歌》 No.178 by Chen Zemin combines the great scenery of the motherland with God’s creation, and encourages “human construction” till the day the eschatological new world arrives. As he had written it in classical Chinese and adopted the form of Chinese zither music, it conveys both vision and a reclusive style.

Sun Yanli’s 孙彦理⁴⁴ lyrics written in the vernacular are very distinctive. For instance, in No. 309 “Happy Is Our Life” 《生活美好歌》 it says “flowers are blooming, birds sweetly sing, rivers and mountains praise God’s great might.” Christians do not complain about life, but rather are full of gratitude. The hymn’s melodic flow is also smooth and touching. Duan Yuzhen 段毓贞⁴⁵ wrote No. 151 “Worship God at Morn” 《清早敬拜歌》 and both the music and lyrics, depicting the scene of spiritual meditation in a beautiful natural environment early in the morning, have won universal praise.

44 Sun Yanli (1914-1995), a native of Changzhou, Jiangsu Province, graduated from Nanjing Theological Seminary and was a bishop. He was Chairman of Shanghai Christian Council and later, President of East China Theological Seminary.

Popular hymns also demonstrate the beauty of poetry. No. 369 “Arduous Though Our Work Can Be” 《欢乐服务歌》 is an adapted popular hymn. “Arduous tho’ our work can be, by it God is glorified. Plain our fare, coarse attire, fighting against elements dire.” The image of a Christian laborer emerges from just a few words, the verses are rhymed and the tune is catchy. In the *Supplementary Volume*, No.196 “I am a Drop of Dew”《我是一颗露珠》 shows the author’s dedication to the Lord through his use of analogies such as “dew,” “ young tree” and “little star.”

The *New Hymnal* mainly collected pieces in vernacular Chinese. In order to adapt to the habits of believers, many adopted the meter of western hymns, setting it according to the number of syllables in each line.⁴⁶ They are divided into stanzas, and some have a refrain after the verse. The lyrics are not confined to the level tone, but there are efforts to have them rhyme at the end of sentences. Generally, the last words of the first and second lines rhyme, and the last words of the third and fourth lines rhyme as well. Sometimes the last words of the first, second and fourth lines rhyme, but this is not always the case.

It is easier to chant when the lyrics rhyme well, and the functional words do not fall on the downbeat of the melody.

45 Duan Yuzhen (1930-2001), a native of Heqing, Yunnan, graduated from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. An elder of Shanghai Jingling Church, she has served as the editor of the Christian Joint Publishing House and the editor of the Publishing Department of the CCC&TSPM and has written many short songs.

46 On the regular notes of hymns, each hymn has meter, i.e. mathematical marks of melody, such as 8, 7, 8, 7, that is, four sentences. The first and the third sentence are eight syllables, thus eight Chinese characters, and the second and fourth sentences are seven words. Some write SM, that is, short meter (6, 6, 6, 6.). CM, that is, common meter (8, 6, 8, 6.), LM, that is, long meter (8, 8, 8.), and others are marked one by one.

There are also some lyrics that do not follow the western rhythm. “Gracious God, Our Father” 《慈父上帝歌》 No. 16 is a good example. The free style is quite common in modern new poetry. The refrain of SV No.163 “The Wonderful Love” 《奇妙的爱》written by Yang Bolun 杨伯伦 from Hong Kong⁴⁷ has a very large number of words in the third and the fourth sentences, and it works very well. After the editing of the *Supplementary Volume*, Ma Geshun once pointed out that the forms of new hymns in the mainland remain very conservative. In fact, we do not have to follow the western pattern in order to make a breakthrough.

IV. Choice of music style of the New Hymnal and Supplementary Volume

Music itself makes no distinction between the sacred and the secular. Using familiar melodies for Christian lyrics has been a long-standing practice. For example, when Martin Luther advocated congregational hymns, he used secular folk tunes. Wang Xuexin 王雪辛,⁴⁸ a former member of the hymn Committee and an author of hymns, divided the nationalization of Chinese hymn music into three stages:

47 Yang Bolun 杨伯伦, born in 1931 in Xinhui, Guangdong, graduated from St. John’s University in Shanghai, studied violin at an early age, studied composition with Ma Geshun, and settled in Hong Kong in 1962. He has served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the World Chinese Christian Sacred Music Promotion Association. He compiled *A Complete Collection of Yang Bolun’s Hymn Compositions*.

48 Wang Xuexin, born in 1923, graduated from Fujian Music College, and once served as artistic director of the Art Troupe of China Railway Second Bureau and music teacher of Sichuan Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Appreciation of Sacred Music* (1996) and *Exploration of Nationalization of Chinese Hymn Melody* (2004).

stage one, filling in words based on the old tunes; stage two, recompose some parts of the old tunes, but maintain the original characteristics; stage three, out of the love and understanding of folk music, draw out its essence and turn it into a new musical language for composition.

The New Hymnal edition absorbed these three kinds of hymns.

1. *Writing lyrics for traditional tunes*

A very successful piece, No.195 “Friends of Years with Just One Heart” by Yang Yinliu was a recomposed *Guqin* (古琴) tune “Yang Guan San Die”《阳关三叠》. This hymn retains the feeling of separation from a friend, but “west of Yangguan there will be no acquaintance” 西出阳关无故人 into “was revised into “one in the fellowship of love” 天涯团契心心印, which further demonstrated the love shared among Christians. “Nature Glows with Colors Rare”《真美歌》No. 13 was originally a *Guqin* tune named “Blissful Songs”《极乐吟》. By giving it new lyrics, the hymn presents the internal relationship between Christian faith and truth, goodness and beauty. Chen Zemin recomposed the *Guqin* tunes “Three Stanzas of Plum Blossoms”《梅花三弄》 and “Shi Dan Zhang”《释淡章》, to provide the melodies for Psalm 100 and 103 respectively, thus producing No. 380 and 381 of the *New Hymnal*. These were well-received by the church.

“My Heart Looks in Faith”《我有主耶稣歌》, No. 101 is a piece that saw collaboration between Fan Tianxiang and Zhao Zichen, whose tune came from the work song of boat trackers. The tune of No. 138 “Praise Our Father for This Lord’s Day”《恭敬赞美歌》was adapted from Buddhist chant. The melody of No. 184 “Praise Our God Above for His Boundless Love”《收成谢恩歌》was the music used in a Confucian ceremony. These pieces are all noted as “Chinese traditional tunes” 中国传统曲调 in the *New Hymnal*

2. Adaptation of folk songs

To make it easier for believers to learn to sing, it was always a good choice to adapt hymns to folk songs. There are not many tunes adapted from folk songs in the *New Hymnal* with No. 51 “Fair Name of Jesus” 《耶稣美名歌》 being a typical one. It was adapted from the tune “Jasmine Flower” 《茉莉花》 and published in a *Chinese hymn collection* in 1911. The lyrics were written by C. Goodrich (1836-1925), a foreign missionary. No. 30 “Great Are Thy Mercies, Heavenly Father” 《天恩歌》 was given lyrics by Zhao Zichen according to the tune of “The Song of the Hoe” 《锄头歌》. The two songs were entirely based on the original folk melodies without any change at all.

No. 365 “Living Out Christ” 《活出基督歌》 is an innovative piece. The author provided the tune based on the existing lyrics. She was Pei Huizhen 裴慧真⁴⁹ a music worker in Guizhou province. She chose the tune of a Buyi minority 布依族 folk song “Hao Hua Hong” 《好花红》, which is consistent with the beautiful image of Jesus Christ in the lyrics. The original song is based on the Yu mode 羽调式 in Chinese music, but at the third line it is changed into Gong mode 宫调式, with a high note 5 added, imitating the sound of echos in the mountains, reaching its climax and then returning to the original mode, resulting in a very beautiful melody. The lyrics of SV No. 91 “United to Build up the Church” 《同心建教会》 was written by Pastor Luo Liguang 罗黎光, who once served as the director of the Hymn Committee. He wrote the song to celebrate the completion of his new church at Yushui District, Xinyu in Jiangxi province 江西新余渝水堂. The prototype of the melody is a folk song

49 Pei Huizhen, born in Shanghai in 1941, she graduated from Shenyang Conservatory of Music, and is a piano professor at the Conservatory of Music of Guizhou University.

“Da Chun Luo” 《打春锣》 from Yushui District. When the song was adapted, the composer made it 4 degrees higher, and revised the melody a great deal, but the original basic rhythm was kept to maintain the folk song flavor. The above two pieces are of local folk style.

Ethnic minorities in China have their own folk songs with distinguishing features. Christianity has many believers among the Miao 苗, Lisu 傣傣 and Korean 朝鲜 ethnic groups, but the hymns they sang were mostly translations of foreign hymns brought to them by missionaries. I remember Ma Geshun met them once when the choir of Miao Christians visited Shanghai. He praised them for singing the hymns in harmony but when he asked them to sing an ethnic folk song, no one could do it. This shows the neglect of Chinese culture in the missionary past, not to mention encouraging the composition of folk hymns. In the *New Hymnal* and the *Supplementary Volume* there are three hymns written by preachers from ethnic groups, that is, No. 34 “Worship in Truth” 《称颂崇拜歌》, No. 115 “Behold, There Came A Cloud” (tune) 《耶稣升天歌》 and SV No. 185 “People of the Borderland Praise the Lord” 《边疆信徒赞美诗》. This field has yet to be developed.

The adaptation of hymns from folk tunes does have the advantage of making it easy for believers to sing, but I think we need to pay special attention to the following aspects:

- 1) Existing folk songs, especially those that are well-received, have specific contents. Though new lyrics are given, they still remind us of the original contents, which is not the desired effect.⁵⁰
- 2) It is essential to examine whether the original lyrics deliver “unhealthy” content.

50 Cao Shengjie: “Hymns and Theology”, originally published in *Essays on Christian Sacred Music Road*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Chinese Christian Association, 1999. It has been reprinted in *Thinking in Circumstances*, p. 246.

- 3) It is necessary to assess whether its emotional appeal jives with the content of the hymn's lyrics.

3. *The expression of Chinese elements in tunes.*

Of all intervals, an interval of a fifth degree 五度 is the most important one, and *erhu* 二胡 and other Chinese musical instruments are stringed accordingly. In China, the five tones are called *Gong* 宫, *Shang* 商, *Jiao* 角, *Zhi* 徵, and *Yu* 羽, that is, 12356 in musical notation, commonly known as the pentatonic scale. Compared with the western heptatonic scale, there are two halftones missing, that is 4 and 7. Whichever of these five notes is taken as the keynote, will determine the mode of the song. For example, if 1 is taken as the keynote, the song will fall into the Gong mode, equivalent to the western "major." It seems more natural for the Chinese to sing in the pentatonic scale.

Hymns using the pentatonic scale generally deliver a Chinese style,⁵¹ such as No. 135 "Voice of Praise" 《颂主声音歌》 and No. 150 "God, Be Praised at Early Morn" 《早起赞美歌》. Among the existing songs, Yang Yinliu's No. 179 "The Grace of God Unbounded Is" 《心泉歌》 has been popular so far. Among the new pieces, No. 16 "Gracious God, Our Father" is a characteristic piece. The composer used the elements of folk tunes to match the lyrics written by his father. The lyrics are touching, and the tunes are beautiful. You know they have elements of Chinese folk music as soon as you hear them, and they closely correspond with the lyrics, especially at the ending, rising step by step, like praise reaching heaven. The tune of this hymn has been adapted into a contrapuntal score for the choir.

51 The pentatonic scale is not used exclusively by China, but also by Europe and America. For example, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" (*New Hymnal*, #28) is not a Chinese composition.

Chinese tunes are usually smooth and beautiful, with good organization. A typical example is No. 79 “Holy Night, Blessed Night” 《圣夜静歌》 composed by Shi Qigui. Because the lyrics of this song follow the same pattern as that of “Silent Night”, and both tunes match the atmosphere, No. 79 is called the Chinese version of “Silent Night”.

Some of the new hymns have been composed using the pentatonic scale. In order to enrich the tone, the use of the 4th or 7th tones is not excluded, but it is not put on the downbeat and does not affect the Chinese style. One example is No. 103 “Jesus Is My Lord” 《我信主耶稣歌》, a collaboration by Shi Qigui and Lin Shengben, whose tune is calm, and the song filled with piety. Generally, when a song is written, the lyrics precede the music. But this song began with the tune which was then followed by lyrics, showing the firmness of faith. It was included in *Hymns of Universal Praise* (new edition) published in Hong Kong in 2006.

The creative tunes collected by *The New Hymnal* are not limited to the use of pentatonic scales. For instance, the popular hymn No. 127 “We Love the Chinese Church” 《我爱中国教会歌》 does not entirely use the pentatonic scale. It is interesting to note that believers in urban churches often automatically sing the 7 notes in the first line and the first line of refrain as a high note of 1, and the following 4 note as 5.

What we need most now are compositions that can absorb the essence of Chinese music and, combined with the content of hymns, provide a Chinese flavor while at the same time be acceptable to Chinese believers. How to harmonize the tunes while retaining their Chinese charm is a problem to be explored. In the *New Hymnal* many pieces that are supposed to be sung in unison have accompaniment that is based on western notions of harmony and are very similar to western hymn traditions.

4. *Psalms and short verses*

Strictly speaking, the singing of biblical verses does not constitute hymn singing but this is a common practice found in Chinese churches. In the northern and inland rural areas of China, the habit of singing Psalms with folk tunes has existed for a long time, and in some places, they have published such hymn books. Psalm 23, 121, 133 and 150 (NTH No. 379, 382, 383 and 384) were adopted in the *New Hymnal*. They were written by Su Zuoyang 苏佐扬,⁵² who notated the songs after listening to his classmates while studying at North China Theological Seminary. Its characteristic features are that the words follow the tunes, and Bible words remain unchanged. Lines vary in length to be embedded in tunes to be sung, which is easy to popularize among believers.

Most of the believers in China used to live in rural areas. Even among those in cities, the overall education level was below average. It was difficult for them to understand complicated lyrics, while simple short choruses were easy to sing. Some short choruses attached to the *New Hymnal* are lyrics of folk tunes, such as No.1 and No. 26. Some are selected from Su Zuoyang's "Short Choruses of Heaven and Man" 《天人短歌》, such as No. 16, 21, 24 and 25. There are also newly composed tunes, such as Nos. 30, 31, 32 and 37.

Chinese Christians love the Bible, and the most popular hymns are short scripture choruses, which use scripture (with some modifications) as lyrics. The advantage is that believers can sing these songs and recite Scriptures easily,

52 Su Zuoyang (1916-2007), born in Hong Kong, studied Chinese and Western musical instruments from an early age and graduated from North China Theological Seminary in Tengxian County, Shandong Province. He founded the magazine the *Voice of Heaven and Man*, and published the *Short Choruses of Heaven and Man*, and *Hymns of Heaven and Man* with a total of more than 600 songs.

making it a unique form of “Further Contextualization.” After the publication of *The New Hymnal*, the Hymn Committee tried to meet the needs of grassroots churches in 1995 by publishing *Short Choruses of Praise* (new edition)《赞美短歌(新编)》, with a total of 640 songs. The first 300 pieces are short scriptural songs, 90% of which are works from certain composers, and are highly popular in churches. Ma Geshun published *Rod-and-Staff Choruses*《杖杆短歌集》in 1950. The book falls under the category of short scriptural choruses. Its melodic compositions were aimed at matching the scripture used for Ma’s pastor’s sermons.

Editing and Use of the New Hymnal

1. Editorial requirements

The *New Hymnal* takes “further contextualization” as its editorial principle, and its implementation has been reflected in the following aspects:

1) Chinese innovative works account for a high proportion

The *New Hymnal* contains 46 old Chinese originated hymns (marked with *) and 56 newly collected hymns (marked with **), totaling 102 songs, accounting for almost a fourth of the collection of 400. There are 7 old hymns in the *Supplementary Volume*, and 54 newly collected ones, totaling 61, accounting for about one-third of a total of 200. Having such a high proportion of local compositions has never been done before in the hymnals published in China.

In achieving this goal, it was necessary to collect a large number of works and to enhance their quality. In the editing of the *New Hymnal* and the *Supplementary Volume*, hymns were collected from believers from all over the country through *Tianfeng Magazine*《天风》. The response was very enthusiastic, with 2,256 compositions collected during the

first round and 2,301 for the second round. Most of the lyrics consisted of the simple retelling of Bible verses or simple confessional statements. Many of the tunes were borrowed from familiar songs, including “March of the Volunteer Soldiers” 《义勇军进行曲》 and “Eight Notices and Three Disciplines” 《三大纪律八项注意》. The selection rate was low. Colleagues in the editorial office did a lot of work to modify lyrics, search for suitable tune compositions or substitute harmonies, and gain the approval of the original authors before publication. On the score book, pieces with only the main melody were marked as the “tune” by the author, while pieces with both tune and harmony were marked as “composed” by the author.

Collecting hymns was a process of gathering the talented composers and encouraging innovation. Pastoral workers had specific interests in writing hymns, and it was incumbent upon those who are gifted to do so. However, talents were not limited to pastoral workers – volunteers who had spiritual pursuits, compositional ability and professional training in music were also qualified. Because of the nature of hymns, the composers’ own understanding of the faith played a dominant role.

In editing the *Supplementary Volume*, no lyrics were found written in classical Chinese, and the tunes tended to be modern and cheerful. For example, No. 123 “Thank God in All Seasons” 《四季感恩》 has a 3/4 rhythm. New songs in the future will keep pace with the times in terms of lyrics and tunes. How to standardize composition in hymns is still an issue to be discussed and practiced.

- 2) The selection of translated works should be based on the actual needs of Chinese churches. We have considered the following three points:

The first is to introduce the treasures that have been widely used by churches all over the world.

“Further Contextualization” does not mean that our church is divorced from the historical and universal church tradition. Therefore, the *New Hymnal* includes many hymns that have historical and regional representation and are universally loved by believers. For example, No. 17 “The Spacious Firmament on High” 《创造奇功歌》 is a piece adapted from Haydn’s *Creation*, and No. 18 “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” 《快乐崇拜歌》 uses the melody from Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy* in the Ninth Symphony. Ma Geshun’s soprano solo piece in *The Anointed* 《受膏者》 was also adapted to No. 329 “My Soul Extols the Lord” 《尊主为大歌》, and the lyrics were expanded to make it easier for believers to sing it.

The *Supplementary Volume* included No. 14 “How Great Thou Art” and No. 157 “Amazing Grace” and other popular hymns. Also chosen were famous songs from, for example, John Stainer’s *The Crucifixion*, namely No. 76 “Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow” 《耶稣十架》, and the black American spiritual No. 75 “Were You There” 《你在场吗?》. Hymns favored by overseas Chinese such as No. 77 “Because He Lives” 《因他活着》 and No. 180 “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow” 《我知谁掌管明天》 are also very popular among believers.

Second, the lyrics must conform to the trend in Chinese theological construction.

Guided by the Three-Self Principle, the Chinese church should always take heed of self-propagation and theological reconstruction. While we have inherited basic beliefs, we must also guard against one-sided and extreme theological orientations. For example, there are six hymns about eschatology (No. 116 to 121) in the *New Hymnal*. The message conveyed is not the horror of impending disasters, but that believers should wait for the Lord’s Second Coming with a watchful mind, and for them to be ready, at any time, to meet the beautiful New World to come.

The spiritual life of believers must be combined with their daily social lives. In the *New Hymnal*, there are 18 hymns under the column of “faithful service” 忠心服务. Included are popular ones like No. 351 “Oh Master, Let Me Walk with Thee” 《与主偕行歌》, No. 359 “God Make My Life A Little Light” 《生活如光歌》 and No. 366 “Brighten the Corner Where You Are” 《光照小地方歌》. In the SV, it is emphasized that Christians should care about social injustice, and console and serve people in need. Thus No. 141 “Christ, You Call Us All to Service” 《蒙主呼召服事》 and No. 142 “Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life” 《生命路程》 were selected.

Christians should love God’s creation and attach importance to environmental protection, but Christians in China have paid little attention to this in the past. Three hymns (No. 135-137) were selected in the *Supplementary Volume* to bring attention to these issues.

Third, the translation should not only conform to the original intentions, but also to the requirements of the Chinese language and be properly matched with the tunes.

Some pieces in the *Hymns of Universal Praise* employ conventional words in ancient Chinese and Buddhist vocabulary, such as “*Shen Ming*” 神明 and “*Miao Shen*” 妙身 in No. 1 “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty,” which caused some controversy. I have made some explanations.⁵³ It should also be noted that when the Bible was translated into Chinese, words that were borrowed included the Taoist word *Tao* 道 to clarify the meaning of “Logos,” which did not affect the truth of the Bible. Confucian terms such as “honoring courtesy” 顶礼 (*ding li*) and “seeking benevolence” 求仁 (*qiu ren*) (see No. 98 “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”) are the embodiments of traditional culture and should not be regarded as taboo.

53 Cao Shengjie: “The Past Exploration on Contextualization of Hymns,” in *Tianfeng* No. 10, 2016.

When the *Supplementary Volume* was edited, the Hong Kong Christian Literature Publishing House gave us free use of 64 hymns from *Hymns of Universal Praise*. Their translations were very loyal to the original text, but due to the differences in linguistic usage of Chinese between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the editorial office made modifications to some lyrics with the consent of the other party, and even retranslated some parts. For example, the original translation of the first line of the first and second sections of SV No.72 “What Wondrous Love is This” goes “What wondrous great love, my heart, my heart.” “何等奇妙大爱，我的心，我的心，” which may lead to the ambiguity that great love comes from “my heart.” The English original is “what wondrous love is this, o my soul, o my soul,” which means that my heart laments how wonderful the great love of the Lord is, so the editorial office changed “my heart” to “touch my heart” 感我心. It is not indicated in the notation that this lyric has been modified, because the amount of modification does not exceed one-fourth of the original text, and this principle is explained in the preface to this episode.

“Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus” 《当转眼仰望耶稣》 SV No. 176 was originally published in the *Hymns of Life* 《生命圣诗》, which is widely used by overseas Chinese churches. The translation of the last line of its refrain goes “In the light of the Savior’s glory and grace, things in the world appear as vanity” 在救主荣耀恩典大光中，世上事必然显为虚空，好像一切世上的事都没有意义，as if all things in the world are meaningless. But in fact, its original text was “show strangely dim,” which means that “under the great light of God, things in the world will be eclipsed, which is nothing”. So it seems more in line with the original intention to change it to “appear mediocre” 显得平庸. The word “mediocrity” 平庸 (*ping yong*) is not ideal, but it is used here because it rhymes with the word “mercy” 慈容 (*ci rong*) at the end of the previous line in Chinese.

The coordination between translated words and tunes is also a big challenge. For example, in No. 93 “Old Rugged Cross” 《十架永存歌》, the rhythm of each line starts with two semiquaver notes, except for the third stanza. In the original score, it fits both cases, because the English lyrics in the first stanza are one syllable short, so the two semiquaver notes are combined into one quaver note, and the second stanza is based on two semiquaver notes.

In fact, in Chinese translation, we do not have to follow such a pattern, but hymnals in the past coped with the problem in such a manner, so we did it the same way. Now, whenever I hear the congregation sing these lines, they will spontaneously sing two semiquaver notes, resulting in confusion in the matching of words. I feel very guilty about it. I think that if one word is added to the translation of this line, and the first to fourth stanzas are changed into “extremely humiliating and painful marks” 极其羞辱和苦痛记号, “the true God is kind to me” 对于我却是真神仁慈, “but I still take this cross as my holy one” 但我仍然以此架为圣 and “willing to bear Lord’s cross” 甘愿背负主十字宝架. It will be completely neat, and I hope it can be taken into consideration in future revisions.

3) The hymn collection is to meet the needs of the Chinese church.

The Chinese Church always follows the teachings of the Bible and pray for national leaders. In the 19th century, the hymns edited by foreign missionaries included the hymn “God Bless China” 《上帝保护中华》.⁵⁴ The same is true of hymn collections in the Republic of China, but most of them

54 “Hymns for the Lord”, 1871, Fuzhou dialect, 74, quoted from Sheng Xuanen: “Discussion on the History of Chinese Christian Hymns.” *Sacred Music Quarterly*, Summer, 1982.

used the tune of “God Bless the Queen” (from England) at that time, which was very inappropriate. When *Hymns of Universal Praise* was edited, Xu Dishan 许地山⁵⁵ composed No. 176, “This Land You Gave Us, Lord” 《神佑中华歌》 which was given a tune by Yang Yinliu based on the original melody. In addition, the *New Hymnal* also adopted the old work of Qi Yingmao 戚瀛茂 from Wenzhou, No. 175 “God Bless All Lands and All Peoples” 《为国求福歌》 and No. 177 “May God Bless China” 《求主福佑中华歌》 by Sun Yanli. The *Supplementary Volume* adopted Yang Bolun’s “God Bless China” 《主佑中华》 (SV No. 115), which was written before Hong Kong’s return to China.

“Lord, While for All Mankind We Pray” 《为国祈求》 SV No. 114 was written by a British in the 20th century. After its publication, it was pointed out that we should not accept the so-called patriotic works of the people who invaded China at that time. We chose this piece because it was commendable for its inclusive nationalism. However, there were other aspects that we failed to take into account. Now, we believe that hymns praying for blessings on our country are best written by Chinese Christians themselves.

World peace is also the wish and prayer of Chinese Christians. “Dedicate a Prayer for Peace” 《献上和平祷声》 SV No. 138 fills this gap. The Chinese nation has always had the virtue of respecting the elderly. The Chinese church holds worship services for the elderly every year, and No. 189 “Honor the Elderly” 《敬老尊长歌》 has almost become a “must-sing” song. After the reform and opening-up, many new churches were built in various places, so the hymns for dedicating churches emerged, such as No. 174 “We Thank

55 Xu Dishan 1893 - 1941, was born in Taiwan Province. A well-known novelist and essayist in modern China, he graduated from Yenching University, and once taught at the College of Liberal Arts and Religious Studies.

You Father” 《献堂感恩歌》 and SV No. 109 “Giving Thanks to God for the New Church Building” 《感谢我主新堂落成》. In the commissioning ceremonies of seminary graduates and in the ordination ceremonies of pastors, No. 170 “Learn To Be A Good Shepherd” 《学做好牧人歌》 has had a far-reaching influence.

Among believers, the economic conditions have improved, and the number of new houses or relocations has increased. They often hold thanksgiving prayers in their new homes, and thus “Celebrate We A New House Built” (*New Hymnal*, No.196) 《新屋落成感恩歌》（《新编》第 196 首）and “Our House and Home Are Thine” (SV No. 131) 《安宅歌》（《补充本》第 131 首）are fitting for such occasions.

It is a shortcoming that the indices of composers, translators, tune names and metrics have not been offered completely in accordance with international practice. This was due to time constraints for editing: The *New Hymnal* was done in a hurry and with inadequate human resources for the editing of the *Supplement*.⁵⁶ However, the index of the tune of the first sentence in numerical notation was added to the *New Hymnal*, which was relatively rare in the Mainland at that time. We follow these indices in the revised *Hymns of Universal Praise* (1977) from Hong Kong. For Chinese people who are familiar with the numerical notation, this retrieval method is very helpful.

Most of the translated hymns in the *New Hymnal* are works of the 20th century. In order to adapt to the familiarity of believers, gospel hymns account for a large proportion. Unfortunately, the awareness of copyright issues was not common at the time in our country. Some modern hymns have been selected in the *Supplementary Volume*, and

56 He Shoucheng: *The Study Book of Hymnology*. Hong Kong: Christian Literature and Art Publishing House, 2002, p. 240.

we now attach great importance to contacting the copyright owners of the original hymns and obtaining permission to use them. This process is time consuming and causes delays in the publishing time. Some hymns originally intended to be used had to be left out because of high copyright costs. However, I think we must abide by the law, and it is necessary to do so. Fortunately, most overseas church groups are friendly and give us great support.

2. *The use of hymns*

Hymnals are compiled for the use of believers. There are countless hymns composed by Christians all over the world, but only a limited number can be passed down over time, depending on the quality of the hymns, and more importantly, whether they are loved by believers and widely sung. To help believers accept them, the hymns should first be used to promote familiarity with them. The Church needs to introduce and consciously promote the hymns. Bishop K.H. Ting once suggested that every time the church worships, it should sing a hymn composed by Chinese believers, but unfortunately, it was rarely done.

It has been more than 30 years since the *New Hymnal* was published, with more than 15 million copies issued in the 20th century. Since the 1980s and 1990s, most churches in China have been using it and teaching hymn singing before worship.

The National CCC&TSPM published and distributed cassette tapes of the *New Hymnal* (later converted into CD-ROM), organized and directed by Ma Geshun and sung by the Shanghai United Choir Group. These served as a good demonstration.

In 1994, Wang Shenyin 王神荫⁵⁷ edited and published *Historical Notes of the Hymns in the New Hymnal* 《(新编) 史话》 on the basis of his previous *Textual Research on Hymns* 《圣诗典考》. The items about the new compositions were written by me after the editorial department of the *New Hymnal* had collected material from the authors. They were first published in *Tianfeng Magazine* in order to attract the attention of believers to these hymns.

Xu Mu,⁵⁸ who served as a member of the Sacred Music Committee, once taught the singing of hymns in the *New Hymnal*, “one by one,” in Wuma Road Church in Changchun, besides conducting sacred music training in churches in 26 provinces and cities across the country. According to her, believers accept hymns to different degrees. Believers in rural areas and small towns can quickly learn Chinese tunes like “Gracious God, Our Father” 《慈父上帝歌》 as they did a hundred years ago, while for foreign tunes with semitones, such as No. 283 “Jesus, I Come”, 《耶稣我来歌》 in the *New Hymnal*, they could barely learn one sentence in the morning. She thinks that 60% of believers prefer the hymns composed by Chinese people.

With the development of churches across the country, the need for hymns is diverse. Some local churches have introduced overseas hymns in large quantities, or compiled their own collections of hymns for use. It is worth noting that though there are some hymns of praise that are not officially published, they are sung in some grass-roots churches, among which there are some acceptable compositions.

57 Bishop Wang Shenyin (1915-1997), a native of Gutian, Fujian Province, graduated from St. John's University and attained a Master's degree at Toronto University. He served as Vice Chairman of the National TSPM and was Chairman and President of Shandong CCC&TSPM.

58 Xu Mu, born in 1937, was a soprano, soloist and member of the Chinese Musicians Association.

However, in contrast with those in the *New Hymnal* and its *Supplementary Volume*, the theological ideas and sentiments revealed in some of their lyrics tend to have the following features:

- 1) They place society and people around us in contending positions: A hymn uses the tune of “The Descendants of the Dragon” 《龙的传人》 but changes its title to “Some people say that China’s name is ‘suffering,’ 《有人说，中国的名字叫苦难》 because people are “not looking up to God,” and then asks God to “change this era.” Another hymn titled “Compatriots are not as close as those sharing spiritual affinity” 《同胞哪有灵胞亲》 emphasizes that “blood ties cannot compare with spiritual relations” and counterposes the love among Christians with the relationship between Christians and their relatives and fellow citizens (who are non-Christians).
- 2) They emphasize that one should leave his/her family in order to preach the gospel, disregarding the impact on their lives. There is a hymn entitled “It’s not because I am homeless” 《不是没有家》 which tells the family “not to care about me.” Believers are urged to trust that they are being led by the “Holy Spirit” and “worry not about loneliness because of the company of the Lord “不愁独行主为伴.” Such hymns often feature words like “We have to pay the price in blood and spread the seeds of the gospel all over “我们要付出血的代价，将福音种子撒遍,” even proclaiming that we should “strive hard and dare to die.”
- 3) They describe natural disasters as signs that portend the end of the world. For example, the lyrics of a song “Doomsday is Coming” 末日近了 are: “Famines are getting worse, earthquakes occur more frequently, the world situation is getting increasingly dangerous;

people attack people, countries attack countries, and disasters are getting worse. The end is near, and the revelation of love has become clear. Arise and save your soul, the end is near.” (饥荒越来越厉害了，地震越来越频繁了，世局越来越险恶，民攻打民，国攻打国，灾难越来越厉害了。末日已迫近了，爱的启示已显明了。起来抢救灵魂，末日近了。) The melodies of these hymns are close to folk tunes, so they are more easily spread, but their negative influence is obvious and worrisome.

3. *The national also belongs to the world*

The *New Hymnal* has attracted the attention and praise of overseas churches because of newly composed hymns. Some overseas friends, such as Jean Woo, enthusiastically introduced Chinese compositions to churches in the United States at the editing stage, which facilitated exchanges. In 1998, the San Francisco Diocese of the Episcopal Church specially invited Chinese Christians to sing Chinese hymns to their congregants.

In order to make the *New Hymnal* better understood by foreign churches, we cooperated with Hong Kong Christian Literature and Art Publishing House and Lutheran Laymen's League (国际路德会平信徒联盟) in publishing the English-Chinese bilingual version of the *New Hymnal* in 1999. The difficulty of this work was in the translation of the newly composed hymns into English, which required not only expressing the meaning, but also taking care of the rhyme in English and matching it with the tunes.

At that time, among those we knew well, no one was competent enough to take on the venture except Shen Xianying 沈显瑛.⁵⁹ Fortunately, Dr. Huang Yongxi 黄永熙, the translation consultant, took the lead and sought the help of several former missionaries to complete this great project. It is said that some translators rested in the Lord not long after the project was completed.

In the 1980s and 1990s, overseas churches or publishing houses contacted us for copyright, asking for translation, reproduction, reprinting and adaptation, or singing our compositions on important occasions. According to incomplete statistics, 12 songs in the New Hymnal, accounting for more than one-fifth of the 56 new compositions were chosen to be used, including “Christ, the Everlasting Lord”《基督永长久歌》, “God be Praised at Early Morn”《早起赞美歌》, “Holy Night, Blessed Night” (Silent Night Song)《圣夜静歌》, “Gracious God, Our Father”《慈父上帝歌》, Winter Has Passed, The Rain Is Over《与主同去歌》, Birthday Greetings We Bring You《生辰感恩歌》, Creator’s Artistic Brush《神工妙笔歌》, Holy Spirit is Like the Wind《圣灵运行歌》, Neighbor at Our Side《邻舍就在身旁歌》, Honor God, Serve the People《荣神益人歌》, Open My Eyes, O My Lord《求主开启歌》, and We Sing His Praise, Our Maker God《欢乐颂扬歌》.

The churches or publishing houses requesting copyright are from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong China and Taiwan China. The earliest request was made by Sound the Bamboo (CCA Hymnal) edited by the Christian Conference of Asia. The Huaxia Shengshi《华夏圣诗》based in Singapore in the 1990s was also a frequent user. Chinese works are found in the hymns published by the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodist Church of America. In 1987, the World Chinese Christian Sacred Music Sunday chose to use “Gracious God, Our Father”《慈父上帝歌》.

59 Shen Xianying (1907 -1993), graduated from Shanghai Mateer’s Girls High School and was a piano teacher. In the bilingual edition of the *New Hymnal*, 10 hymns were translated by her.

The Lausanne World Evangelical Conference held in 1989 chose “Christ the Everlasting Lord” 《基督永长久歌》。In 1995, when the Council for World Mission held its 200th anniversary commemorative meeting, it chose to use “Winter Has Passed, The Rain Is Over” 《与主同去歌》.) “Dedicate a Prayer for Peace” 《献上和平祷声》 in the *Supplement* was introduced by Qiu Weizhen 邱维真,⁶⁰ a member of the editorial board, and it attracted the attention of German churches. All these show that Chinese-style hymns are welcomed by Christians all over the world.

4. Retrospect and Expectation

When China’s reform and opening-up brought about the revival and development of Chinese churches, the publication of the *New Hymnal* met an urgent need. In promoting the further contextualization of hymns, we can only talk about the role of connecting the past with the future. After all, its achievements were limited and its shortcomings obvious. Compared with the compositions of the older generation, there is a gap in the quality of lyrics and tunes. Some music experts have commented that “Based on the existing Chinese works, the melodies are still not beautiful enough, and the artistry is far from that of most western hymns.”⁶¹

60 Qiu Weizhen, born in Shanghai in 1952, is a senior middle school teacher. She studied in the Normal Department of Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Music Department of Shanghai Normal University and studied music education in Germany. She is the conductor of the Shanghai Community Church Senior Members Choir.

61 Chen Xiaolu, *The History of Christian Music*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2006, p. 619.

After the publication of the *New Hymnal*, the National CCC&TSPM underestimated the needs of local churches, and the Chinese Christian Hymnal Committee (once renamed the Commission on Sacred Music) stopped promoting more compositions. It has been suggested that Christian musicians should be sent to churches in the inland and border areas to learn about Chinese-style hymns that have been accepted by the churches, and to gain familiarity with folk music, so as to draw nourishment from them and facilitate composition. It is a great pity that this has not been done.

Most of the hymns in the *New Hymnal* are elegant. However, there are not enough of those with simple and popular words. Before the editing of the Supplementary Volume, there was no examination and study on the use of the *New Hymnal* for remedying its drawbacks. Moreover, after its publication, it was not promoted in a planned way, resulting in its low utilization rate in churches all over the country and failure to achieve the expected results.

It is important to know what kind of hymns are most often sung by large numbers of Christians in China. These should not only meet the needs of worship and reflect the spiritual experience of Chinese Christians, but also be loved by believers, providing them a guide to live a healthy church life. This should be taken seriously by the whole church. Today, some seminaries have established departments of sacred music, hoping not only to improve at the level of practice, but also to be attentive to the composition of new hymns.

I earnestly hope that China's Christianity will attain greater progress in the composition and use of hymns in the process of "the further contextualization of Christianity in China."

Rev. Cao Shengjie is a former President of the China Christian Council.