

REVIEWS

Church Hymnary – Fourth Edition

Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2005. Full Music Edition, ISBN 1-85311-613-0

For ages before getting down actually to writing this review, I had chosen its title: 'From country quiet to city riot'. As soon as it was published, in 2005, *CH4* was acquired by the congregation of my then country parish, Alyth, Perthshire, and on my moving a year later, to Canongate Kirk in the centre of Edinburgh, it was, understandably, already here, since my predecessor was Secretary of the Revision Committee. So I thought I had cleverly come up with a natty title under which to offer a few random thoughts on *CH4* from the perspective both of a rural ministry and an urban one: 'From country quiet to city riot'. Except, of course, the hymn from which the title would have been taken – 'The God of heaven is present on earth' – has not been transferred from *Songs of God's People* to *CH4*! Which sort of sums up one of the difficulties in coming to terms with a new hymnbook, even after a couple of years, which is realising what's out and what's in.

Omissions first. According to the helpful and informative preface, almost a third of *CH3* was omitted from *CH4*. Whilst I'm perfectly happy to see the back of most of that third, so far I have searched in vain frustration for 'Lead us heavenly Father, lead us', 'Lord, in the fullness of my might' and 'Jesus, good above all other'. And I've missed the tunes as much as the words – both *Corinth* and *Mannheim, University*, and *Quem Pastores* respectively. When it comes to the nearest thing to a patronal festival we have at Canongate, marking the founding of the parish on Holy Cross Day, I find to my utter disappointment that 'Lift high the cross' has been lifted out altogether, along with its splendid processional tune *Crucifer*. Why, oh why, oh why? But all is not lost. For there are some equally splendid innovations, which should be of particular appeal to members of the Church Service Society. Top of the pops for me is 'How shall I sing that majesty', ancient, eloquent words to a wonderfully stirring, modern tune *Coe Fen*. 'Christ triumphant, ever reigning', modern words to the equally modern tune *Guiting Power* comes a close second. And 'Thanks to God whose word has spoken' is as welcome an addition to the section on scripture as its marvellous tune *St Helen*. In each case these are solid, singable, meaningful

hymns and most welcome additions to our repertoire. And there are several others.

Some excellent material has skipped a generation and several good and appropriate tunes have reappeared from the days of the *Revised Church Hymnary* of 1929, having been inexplicably left out of *CH3* in 1973. Though not my favourite hymn, it's a relief to be able to sing 'Summer suns are glowing' to *Ruth* once again. Same goes for 'Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts' to *Maryton*. Some old psalm tunes have made a welcome return to the fold: *Invocation*, *Orlington*, and *Wetherby* among them. Amongst the psalms logically laid out once again at the front of the book, they are more than complemented by admirable new settings like John Bell's 'I will always bless the Lord' (Ps. 34), set to his own haunting arrangement of the Gaelic traditional *Taladh Chriosta*, and Timothy Dudley-Smith's 'Safe in the shadow of the Lord' (Ps. 91), beautifully matched to the gentle *Creator God*.

No less a distinguished figure than Sir John Stainer was the musical editor of what we might euphemistically call *CH1*, the first *Church Hymnary* of 1898, and its index shows that out of a total of 650 hymns, 40 are set to his music. This might put our own John Bell's significant contribution to *CH4* into some sort of context – the Convener of the Committee, he is listed as composer or arranger of no less than 97 tunes and author, mainly with Graham Maule, of the words of 61 hymns. Even with a grand total of 825 items altogether, this is undeniably still quite a high proportion, which some will no doubt find excessive. Personally, I find some of his compositions very similar and would have been content to have fewer at my disposal. On the other hand, I'm relieved that, though Sir John Stainer's contribution has been seriously reduced since then, he is again represented by *All for Jesus*, after its omission from *RCH* and *CH3*.

If 'There's a wideness in God's mercy', there's also a wideness in a hymnbook like *CH4* which, by definition, has to encompass a much broader church than 'from country quiet to city riot', and stands no chance of pleasing everyone all of the time. On balance, I reckon the compilers have done a pretty good job with an impossible task of juggling material from the rich seams of music and words within our own tradition and heritage, from the global church, and from the contemporary church, whilst at the same time seeking to satisfy

the demands of political correctness. *CH4* has taken a long time to appear. It was in May 1994 that the General Assembly first gave its Panel on Worship the remit to 'Proceed with arrangements for the replacement of *The Church Hymnary, Third Edition*'. There is no doubt that what we will still call our 'new hymnbook' for some time to come has, therefore, been long in the making and is the final product of a great deal of discussion and deliberation by church men and women with a great deal of experience and expertise. If it has taken them time to compile and produce it, it will certainly take the rest of us time to get used to it. Two years after first exploring *CH4*, I'm still doing just that, getting used to it, and frequently finding myself pleasantly surprised and frustratingly disappointed in equal measure. In the words of another missing hymn:

*Jesus, good above all other,
Gentle child of gentle mother,
In a stable born our brother,
Give us grace to persevere.*

Despite its limitations, I'm glad to have *CH4*. It's worth persevering!

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Religion

edited by Colin MacLean and Kenneth Veitch, being Volume 12 of *Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, General Editor: Alexander Fenton

John Donald, in association with The European Ethnological Research Centre and The National Museums of Scotland, 2006.

The jacket of this large volume is not unduly modest in its claims.

'Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology is a major project of the European Ethnological Research Centre in fourteen volumes. Its overall aim is to examine the interlocking strands of history, language and traditional culture and their contribution to the making of a national identity. Each volume is a detailed examination of a societal topic and can stand alone. Together, the fourteen volumes set a cultural

benchmark for the new millennium and are of immense value to our understanding of what has shaped Scottish society today.'

To this reviewer such confidence does not seem misplaced, and one comment to be made right away is that the book, despite having thirty authors, is a pleasure to read.

After an Introduction by Gordon Graham, formerly of Aberdeen University and now of Princeton, there are five parts to the book. Professor Graham helpfully charts the scope of the study, and gives a brief outline of Scottish Church history, ending with 'it can be said with certainty that a marked feature of contemporary religion in Scotland is its marginalisation from the life of the major institutions.' Part One has four chapters dealing with Christianity from earliest times to the time of the Reformation. Part Two has ten chapters giving an account of the various Christian churches since the Reformation, together with the Jewish, Muslim, and other religious elements. The third part deals with Scots and Gaelic, literature and the media. Part Four is a collection of seven chapters in which home and foreign missions, the place of the minister, and the church in the community are sketched, while the fifth part, entitled 'Architecture and the Arts', includes 'Furnishings in the Reformed Church' and 'New Uses for Old Churches and Manses'. The authors, at least half of whom are known to the present reviewer, have been selected judiciously.

To begin with an essay four-fifths of the way through the volume, Elizabeth Henderson's account of her two Edinburgh parishes (Granton and Richmond Craigmillar) finely combines specific reporting of her ministry and the two parishes with stimulating suggestions of their place in a wider scheme. 'Granton and Richmond Craigmillar can loosely be considered a modern and a post-modern church respectively.' The modern can be categorised by 'respectability, order, institution, rationality, cohesion and nationalism' while 'the post-modern era (from the 1960s-1970s onwards) is a time where the emphasis has shifted towards fragmentation and globalisation and where there are a lack of agreed responses.' In other chapters also, there is a particular attractiveness in being given little vignettes of the local and the specific, with the colour which is associated with such glimpses. John R Watts' piece on Roman Catholics in the 17th and 18th centuries is rich in detail, as in: 'In an age when carriageways rarely extended far beyond the towns, it was the remoteness of most Catholic

communities that more than anything determined their daily lives and the practice of their faith. When William Harrison was appointed priest of Morar in the 1730s he encountered the problems at first hand. "We being remote from all posts, we can have no news here more than we were not in the world", he told a colleague in a letter that had to be borne across country by a team of runners. "My knee was my writing table and gun poulder my inck," he added in excuse for his handwriting. He was not even certain that he had in fact celebrated Easter on the correct date that year.' The appeal of the specific is found, too, in Professor James Whyte's reference to the 'cleansing' of churches at the Reformation: 'We today might bemoan their loss as works of art, but that thought had no place in the sixteenth century mind, Protestant or Catholic. It is, however, charming to go today to St Michael's, Linlithgow, and see on the corner of the building a statue of St Michael, which, by accident or design, escaped the otherwise wholesale cleansing of the building.'

For orderly structure and careful assessment, accompanied by many detailed references, it would be hard to beat Allan Maclean's chapter on Episcopalians, including specific mention of leading clergy and laity in each of the periods into which his study is divided. 'Bishop Alastair Haggart's intellectual views were considered highly both in the Churches in Scotland and overseas. Bishop Richard Holloway's doctrinal views hit the headlines, inspiring many in all Churches, but sometimes embarrassing and annoying both traditionally minded and evangelical Episcopalians. Canon Kenyon Wright had a high profile at the time when the Scottish Parliament was being established. Though not ordained, Professor Donald Mackinnon (1913-94) was an academic philosopher of great influence.'

To draw attention to the pictures in Henry Sefton's 'Occasions in the Reformed Church' is not at all to divert appreciation of the detailed, scholarly and stylish treatment which we would expect of him, but it may serve as a recognition of the helpful illustrations throughout the book. In that chapter we have eighteenth century Communion cups and a baptismal ewer, an open air Communion in Plockton, a baptismal certificate, a wedding group, and two pictures of funerals.

Donald Meek on Gaelic and the Churches, Andrew Ross on Foreign Missions, Douglas Galbraith on Music, Colin MacLean and Johnston McKay on

communication, and Mona Siddiqui on Islam in Scotland are only some of the other themes which are treated with authority.

This is not a book which need be read, chapter after chapter, from the beginning to the end, although that is how I read it. It could well be regarded as a reference book, with specific chapters consulted as required. One consequence, however, of taking it 'in one go' is the happy and grateful awareness of the consistently pleasing quality of the writing. It is full of good things, and will be a mainstay of reference and discovery for years to come.

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