

REVIEW OF 'COMPANION TO CHURCH HYMNAL' Charles Jury

In the half decade since the beginning of the present century, the Church of Ireland has produced three books of outstanding liturgical merit, far in excess of its size in relation to other provinces of the Anglican Communion. The one which must, of course, take priority is the *Book of Common Prayer* (2004). This was preceded in 2000 by the fifth edition of the *Church Hymnal*. Now this year these have been followed by the *Companion to Church Hymnal Fifth Edition*, by Edward Darling and Donald Davison, and published, like the *Book of Common Prayer* itself, by Columba Press. That it was of considerable importance to the liturgical life of the Church, was underlined by the fact that it was officially launched at this year's General Synod.

"The authors of this book have loved hymns, and delighted in them, for as long as they can remember. One of us (ED) has had, as priest and bishop, a particular interest in way that hymns can enrich and complement the liturgy of the church; the other (DD) has been committed as an organist and choirmaster to the effective accompaniment and singing of hymns as a core part of the Church's music."(p. 16) The *Companion to Church Hymnal Fifth Edition* is a valuable resource for all in the Church of Ireland who are interested in the use of hymns in public worship. Not only does it contain a commentary on both text and music for each hymn in the *Church Hymnal*, but gives a history of the rise and development of hymnody in the Church of Ireland, and provides useful information on the proper liturgical use of hymns, and advice to organists and choirmasters on the key, tempo, mood, of hymns and clarity and length of introductions.

Different readers will naturally focus on different areas of the book. For those interested in the development of hymn singing, will find much interesting material to consider in the in the chapter on Hymnody in the Church of Ireland. Who would have thought, for example that Bishop Richard Mant, who, the authors remind us, wrote "Bright the vision that delighted" and "For all thy saints, O Lord", opposed the use of hymns in his diocese of Killaloe, and "exhorted his clergy in 1821 not to use 'all that variety of modern compositions under the name of hymns...' which could be considered as 'tricking out the chaste and matronly simplicity of the church with the meretricious trappings of the conventicle.'" (p. 24) We can only breathe a sigh of relief that such advice was *not* taken when the authors were at work compiling the Church Hymnal in the 1990s!

For those interested in the hymns themselves, the chapter 'Notes on the Hymns' is a valuable asset. One can 'look up' one's favourite hymns, and discover the origin of the text and more importantly the music. I suspect the average church-goer knows a hymn by its 'tune' rather than the 'words' – we all know the likely response when an old familiar hymn is sung to a new tune! In the case of the hymn "For all your saints in glory, for all your saints at rest" (CH 460) – an interesting hymn with a verse for each saint's day in the liturgical year – extra verses are provided for the three saint's days that have appeared in the calendar in the *Book of Common Prayer* since the publication of the *Church Hymnal*.

There is also useful liturgical advice to be found in the book. Take, for example the singing of the Alleluia (CH 713) before the Gospel. While this may be a novel feature in modern Church of Ireland worship, it is a very ancient custom. "The reading of the Gospel is the climax of the Liturgy of the Word in eucharistic worship....There is...a different introduction as the Gospel is announced, and this can be preceded by the singing of Alleluia. The ascription at the end of the Gospel can even be replaced by a further singing of Alleluia." (p.922). Interestingly, the use of Alleluia after the Gospel was specifically permitted in Canon 5 of the *1878 Canons*, which were notorious for *restricting* liturgical freedom throughout the Church of Ireland! There is also valuable information on the background of the Canticles in the entries dealing with the section in the *Church Hymnal* entitled 'Liturgical Material'. For those involved in selecting appropriate hymns for each Sunday's and Holy Day's liturgy, there is an appendix giving suitable 'control hymns' relating to the readings in the Revised Common Lectionary. There is also a full bibliography of other hymnal companions and other books and articles, which provides an excellent springboard for further research, and an index section to help the reader to find his or her way around the volume.

There is, of course, much more that could be said about the *Companion*, space alone being my main constraint. I hope that the volume will be widely bought and read, as it deserves to be. Having sung for many years in Donald Davison's choir in St John's, Malone, and served at the Altar under Edward Darling when he was Rector, I can witness to how much they both value the Anglican tradition of dignified, reverent and meaningful liturgy, and as a result they have given to the Church a most valuable book to guide and help all who are interested in, and concerned with, hymnody, which is such an essential part in the worship of the Church.