

Chapter 3: The Origin of the Christadelphian Anthem Tradition

The Birmingham ecclesia needed to find suitable music for worship and chose to use hymns, whether original compositions or taken from other churches. Similar musical developments took place in Scotland and the earliest Christadelphian-composed music that appears in today's hymn books came from a Scottish publication. The book, titled *The Disciples' Choral Service of Bible Themes: a Selection of Short Anthems and Motetts, in the Words of Holy Scripture*, was published in Edinburgh by George Dowie in 1864, prior to the publication of *The Golden Harp*. The reasons for choosing anthems as a preferred form of music for worship will be examined and will be traced through to current worship practices.

The Disciples' Choral Service was a collection of music composed by Christadelphian members, with text either taken directly from the Authorised King James Bible or newly written. The thirty five compositions within this volume were edited, arranged or composed by George Dowie, a journeyman bookbinder by trade³⁰. Nine of the anthems were original compositions by Dowie, while four others were Dowie's arrangements of Joseph Stones melodies. Joseph Stones (1831-99) was a member of the Nottingham ecclesia and regularly composed for this ecclesia. He also was a leader of song, choosing suitable anthems and hymns, particularly from the Scottish Psalter³¹. According to hymnologist Stuart Cowlshaw and Nottingham ecclesial records, Stones is attributed with composing two other anthems in *The Disciples' Choral Service*, titled "The Lord shall comfort Zion" and "Praise the Lord, O my soul". However, in *The Disciples' Choral Service'* index, both of these anthems are actually listed as the melodies being composed by W. Tudor of Nottingham ("The Lord shall comfort Zion") and Linley ("Praise the Lord, O my soul"). Many of *The Disciples' Choral Service* compositions had been written according to demand, as Dowie would present a piece or pieces of music periodically for the congregation to learn³². These were eventually issued in the form of *The Disciples' Choral Service* so that other meetings could use these original religious compositions. The collection was presented with traditional music notation in four part harmony as well as solfa notation. Dowie stated in his preface that:

"the whole has been carefully revised, so that nothing may be presented that is not easy for a church or choir - possessed of average musical ability, and disposed to bring that ability under proper training - to overtake"³³.

³⁰ Cowlshaw, 24.

³¹ Cowlshaw, Stuart. Brief biographies of some past Christadelphian hymn writers and composers. Bournemouth: Cowlshaw, 1991, 24.

³² Norrie, William. The Early History of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in Britain. Earlston, 1904, Vol III, 296.

³³ Norrie, Vol III, 296.

Figure 3. Title page and preface of *The Disciples' Choral Service*, published 1864.

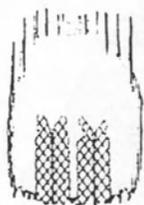
THE DISCIPLES'
Choral Service

OF
BIBLE THEMES:

A SELECTION OF SHORT ANTHEMS AND
MOTETS,
IN THE WORDS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Four-part Harmony—in both Notations.

EDITED, ARRANGED, OR COMPOSED
BY
GEORGE DOWIE.



EDINBURGH:

W. OLIPHANT & CO., 7 SOUTH BRIDGE: OR
THE EDITOR, 12 BEAUMONT PLACE.

1864

PREFACE.

THESE are collected a variety of the choice sentiments of Holy Scripture set to appropriate Music, and meant to be suitable for Congregational use—giving expression to worship, exhortation, or solace.

In order to make the collection strictly available for that purpose, some of the passages have been new set; other settings have been modified in their arrangement; and the whole has been carefully revised: so that nothing might be presented which it is not easy for a church or choir—possessed of average musical ability, and disposed to bring that ability under proper training—to overtake.

It is hoped that the setting of these pieces in both notations will be found serviceable in those companies where some have a preference for the one system, and some for the other.

G. D.

Edinburgh, January 1, 1864.

The book was used throughout Scotland, but was considered unsuitable for easy instrumental accompaniment as Dowie had used the tenor clef in the notation of the four part harmony³⁴. Only a few compositions from Dowie's *Disciple's Choral Service* exist in today's *Christadelphian Hymn Book*. These anthems that Christadelphians use are those after the Anglican tradition, mostly from the early 19th century, but some being from the Handelian period (1730-1800) and the Victorian era (1875-1920)³⁵. These anthems are usually accompanied due to their complexities in texture. The anthems, like motets, are through-composed, in four parts, with texture being slightly more difficult for the congregation to sing than hymns. Some of these anthems are divided into sections, according to different time signatures. The principal melody is usually in the soprano line, but other voices are sometimes given solos. Dynamics, tempos and phrasing are often indicated within the music.

The ecclesia at Edinburgh, of which George Dowie was a member, considered itself to be "very happily circumstanced, with regard to music..." from its beginnings³⁶. There were

³⁴ Norrie, Vol III, 297.

³⁵ Davidson, 25.

³⁶ Norrie, Vol I, 198.

twenty members in its early days, with most being able to sing parts and three or four being able to lead the congregation when needed. William Norrie notes that as the congregation expanded, some attention was given to learning new styles of music that were “higher forms

Figure 4. George Dowie, editor of The Disciples Choral Service³⁷.



of ecclesiastical music than the psalm tune” as well as staff notation³⁸. In *The Disciples’ Choral Service*, music notation is presented in both staff notation and tonic solfa notation, indicating that the congregation could probably read either or both types of notation. As a member of the Edinburgh ecclesia, Dowie wrote in the magazine *Messenger of the Churches*, May 1858, describing how this congregation approached their choice of music and how they learnt new music. The article, titled *Musical Experiments and Experiences in Edinburgh*, depicts how the use of anthems originated from the dissatisfaction of singing Psalms. The congregation first used the Scottish version of the psalms, with a small collection of hymns, but found the variety of topics contained within these compositions too contained. The metrical form of these was considered “rude, although precise . . . hardly satisfactory”, so chanting was introduced to overcome this³⁹. After this, other forms of music were introduced to give more diversity. The congregation found that the subjects they wanted to include in musical worship were not covered by many other composers or hymnists. They instead found the Biblical texts they wanted to use and composed anthems and choruses to these texts. Anthems were the most preferred by the congregation, due to their exactness in lyrics (ie

³⁷ Wilson, Andrew. 355.

³⁸ Dowie, George. *Musical experiments and experiences in Edinburgh*. From Norrie’s *The Early History of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in Britain*. Earlston, Vol I, 1904, 198.

³⁹ Dowie, 198-199.

direct quotes from the Bible) as well as their musical variety⁴⁰. A choir was formed in February 1856, the original members consisting of⁴¹:

Soprano - Susan Mark, Jane Norrie, Jane Naismith, Margaret Swanson

Alto - John Forman

Tenor - James Watson, William Norrie

Bass - William Wilson, James Cameron, Grierson G. Mitchell, James Lawrie

Dowie was the conductor, as opposed to Leader of Song, of this choir and weekly rehearsals were held at his house. He notes that the choir performed publicly a number of times “very successfully, in connection with several benevolent and philanthropic institutions” in Edinburgh⁴². Their most successful concert was held on Wednesday, August 25, 1858, at Portobello, where they raised money so that an ecclesial library could be started for the Edinburgh Christadelphians. Robert Roberts joined this choir when he moved to Edinburgh around 1856 and subsequently married Jane Norrie, one of the choir members. It is of interest that Dowie, as a Minister of Matrimony, performed Roberts’ wedding ceremony, as well as composing a special Marriage Psalm and anthem to celebrate the occasion⁴³. As a journalist and member of Dowie’s choir, Roberts wrote a review on the Portobello concert, which appeared in the *Caledonian Mercury* where he described how:

“the last part [of the concert] was confined to an elucidation of the facts that home is the place where music ought to be cultivated, and that the influence of choral exercises on the family circle, conjointly and individually, is remarkably beneficial”⁴⁴.

Many of the ideas he and his wife later expressed on musical leadership could have come from their early experiences with the Edinburgh Christadelphian choir and Dowie’s instruction in music. Roberts would have brought from Edinburgh to Birmingham, England the Scottish versions of the Psalms, which he published in his hymn compilations. He later states in reference to his publication of *the Golden Harp* that:

“the Scotch version of the Psalms is almost unknown in England, and even the English version is a book by itself and not in general use. I set to work and made a collection from various sources (including the Scotch Psalms) . . .”⁴⁵.

Another musical member who joined the Edinburgh Ecclesia later around 1865 was Mr Towert from America. Thomas sent a letter from America to Roberts, which was published in *the Ambassador of the Coming Age*, 1865, where he mentioned that they would be losing

⁴⁰ Dowie, 199.

⁴¹ Dowie, 200.

⁴² Dowie, 200.

⁴³ Cowlshaw, 10.

⁴⁴ Roberts, Robert. *Concert at Portobello*, *Caledonian Mercury*, Thursday August 26, 1858.

⁴⁵ Roberts. *Robert Roberts: an autobiography with an appendix by C. C. Walker*. 151.

their leader in song as Towert and his family were moving to Edinburgh⁴⁶. Other members of the Edinburgh choir became involved in composition and hymn writing, encouraged by their involvement in the choir. Dowie wrote many compositions and lyrics, some being written at short notice for a special occasion. Some of these were interspersed with choruses which would be sung by the choir, an example is given by Norrie under the title *the Psalms of George Dowie*⁴⁷. Other choir members who wrote poetical texts included Grierson G. Mitchell, who had five of his hymn texts published in the Dundee hymn book⁴⁸.

The anthem tradition is an important musical tradition in Christadelphia as the text comes directly from the Bible, so it is considered to be pure and correct, rather than being tainted with inappropriate human sentimentalities. Today, however, the use of anthems is fading out although they are still published in current Christadelphian hymn books⁴⁹. The continuation of singing anthems is dependent upon the skill of the accompanist, as many accompanists are not trained enough to be able to play the anthems. However, some anthems are still regularly sung at certain events. One main example is the use of the two anthems “The Lord bless thee” and “Blessed be Jehovah” at baptisms⁵⁰. It is unknown when these two anthems were sung together, but they are presented as a pair in *The Disciples’ Choral Service* and have appeared in all the Christadelphian hymn books since. These two anthems are usually sung immediately after a person has been baptised, as they are brought out of the water. Although it is a tradition to sing these anthems, it always sounds as though they are being sung spontaneously, as a response to the occasion. The first anthem, “The Lord bless thee” is a solemn anthem directed at the person who has been baptised. The anthem that follows this, “Blessed be Jehovah”, is a joyful proclamation. At baptisms, these two anthems are usually sung unaccompanied because the baptisms take place at rivers, pools, baths and other places that are not near keyboards. One person usually starts singing with everybody joining in immediately. At Hurstville ecclesia, Sydney, these two anthems are also sung when the newly baptised believer is accepted as a member into the ecclesia, on a Sunday morning as part of the memorial meeting. The new member is formally welcomed in, presented with a *Christadelphian Hymn Book*, Bible reading chart or some other book, and then the anthems are sung by the congregation, but accompanied. Another anthem that originated from *The Disciples’ Choral Service* and is still used today, is “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”, as

⁴⁶ Thomas. *Tour in the United States and Canada. The Ambassador of the Coming Age*. Ed. R. Roberts. No. 7, Vol 1, January 1865, 109.

⁴⁷ Norrie, Vol I, 351.

⁴⁸ I don’t know anything about this hymn book except that Grierson’s hymns were nos 2, 34, 43, 84 and 87.

⁴⁹ Appendix E, question 7.

⁵⁰ Audio example 4: “The Lord bless thee”. Recorded at 41st Australian Christadelphian Conference, Melbourne, January 1998, where it was sung by a vocal group for farewell. Music of traditional Hebrew origins. Audio example 5: “Blessed be Jehovah”, played by R. Hocking on pipe organ. Music from a Latin hymn. The music for these two hymns is in Chapter 4.

heard on audio example 5⁵¹. This example demonstrates variation in textures that are found within the anthems, as in some parts imitation and staggered entries are used between four voices.

Example 3. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" by Lowell Mason, as presented in *The Disciples' Choral Service*, page 9. Reference nos. Appendix B, 805 and Appendix C, M90.

BIBLE THEMES. 9

d = 60 **PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM!** DR. MASON.
Key D

m : m . m | m : m . m | s : - . f | m : - | d¹ : - . d¹ | t : l . s | s : f e : | s : - ||

d : d . d | d : d . d | r : t₁ | d : - | m : - . m | r : m . m | r : - | r : - ||

Pray for the peace of Je - ru - sa - lem ! they shall pros - per that love thee.

s : s . s | s : s . s | s : s | s : - | d¹ : - . d¹ | r¹ : d¹ . d¹ | t : l . d¹ | t : - ||

d : d . d | d : d . d | t₁ : s₁ | d : - | l₁ : - . l₁ | t₁ : d . d | r : - | s₁ : - ||

Key G Key D

d^s : f . f | m : r | d^f : s | m : s . s | l . t :

s : f . f | m^t : r | d : t₁ | r¹ : r | d : d . d | d . f :

Peace be with - in , with - in thy walls , and pros - per - i -

s : f . f | m : r | d^s₁ : t₁ | d : s₁ | r¹ : t₁ | d : m . m | f . r :

Peace be with - in thy walls , with - in thy walls , and pros - per - i -

d^s : f . f | m^l : s | s : d¹ . d¹ | l . r¹ :

Peace be with - in thy walls , and pros - per - i -

s : s : f . f | m : r | d^s₁ : t₁ | d : s₁ | r¹ : t₁ | d : m . m | f . r :

Peace be with - in , with - in thy walls , with - in thy walls , and pros - per - i -

D.C.

d¹ . r¹ | m¹ : r¹ . d¹ | d¹ : t | d¹ : - | d¹ : t | d¹ : d¹ . d¹ | m¹ : d¹ | : s . s | l . - | s : - ||

m . s | s : f . m | r : - . f | m : - | r : - . f | m : m . m | s : m | : m . m | f : - | m : - ||

ty with - in thy pa - la - ces , pa - la - ces Hal - le - lu - iah ! Hal - le - lu - iah !

d¹ . t | d¹ : t . d¹ | l : s | s : - | l : s | s : d . d | d : s | d : - . d | d : - . d : ||

l . s | d¹ : s . l | f : s | d : - | f : s | d : d¹ . d¹ | d¹ : d | d : - . d | f : - | d : - ||

1st time. D.C. 2d time.

6?

⁵¹ Audio example 5: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem". Recorded 16.07.1993 at Strathfield, Sydney. Sung by congregation, unaccompanied. Anthem by Lowell Mason.

Again, the aim of the compilers of *The Disciples' Choral Service* was to find suitable forms of praise with appropriate text. Rather than writing new hymn texts, or adapting old texts, the Edinburgh ecclesia approached this aim by using direct Biblical quotes. Therefore there could be no question as to whether the text suited Christadelphian doctrines or not. The format of the Biblical quotations affected the structure and style of the music. Biblical quotes have a different structure to hymn texts, which are strophic and metered. Therefore, like the quotations that have no determined metre, the music had to be through composed with free rhythm. Word painting was often applied to these compositions by varying the key or the time signature to reflect the solemnity or joyfulness of the text. The idea that concert music was of a higher form of intelligence compared to contemporary parlour songs was reflected in the fact that some of the anthems were arrangements of well known concert hall works. For example "Thou hast loved us", an arrangement of Mozart's *Kyrie eleison* from the Twelfth Mass and "I know that my Redeemer liveth", from Handel's *Messiah*, both of which appeared in *The Disciples' Choral Service*. The search to find appropriate music for worship by the Edinburgh ecclesia resulted in the use of direct Biblical texts, anthems, and arrangements of concert hall music.