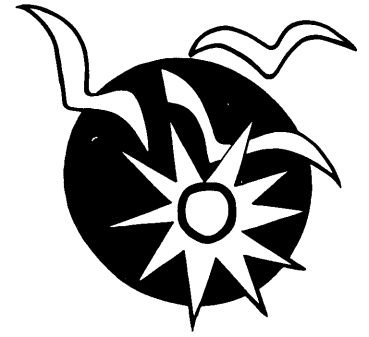


I SING THE ALMIGHTY POWER OF GOD



Three hundred years ago, on July 17, 1674, a boy was born who was destined to be called “The Father of English Hymnody.” His name was Isaac Watts. He was born in Southampton, England.

That word “hymnody” might be unfamiliar to you. However, the first four letters really show what the word is about – hymns! Hymnody means the study of writing of hymns. Isaac as a boy showed signs of becoming a poet for he often amused his parents with the rhymes he thought up.

During Isaac’s growing up years the churches of England (and many other countries, too) felt that only Psalms, or portions of the Psalms, out of the Bible should be sung in the services. For many years hymns such as we now sing in our churches were thought not to be sacred enough since they had all been written by ordinary human beings. Of course, the Book of Psalms was also written by humans but three hundred years ago this fact was disregarded.

At any rate Isaac Watts and several other church writers of his day felt that the arrangements of the Psalms that had been written were very artificial, unpoetic, contrived, and hard to sing. Too, the meaning was often lost through these “paraphrases.” This is the word used to describe these Psalm songs.

One day when Isaac ventured to speak to one of the officials of his father’s church about the dreary psalm-singing this man answered by saying, “Give us something better, young man.” Isaac, although only 18 years old at that time, accepted the challenge and his first hymn was sung the following Sunday evening. In that first hymn there was a note of prophesy as it said in part to: “Prepare new honors for His Name, *and songs before unknown.*”

That hymn met with such a warm reception that Isaac Watts was encouraged to write others. In the next two years he wrote nearly 210 hymns that appeared in his first Hymnbook titled *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*.

He wrote many of his hymns for children. Our hymn study “I Sing the Almighty Power of God” was one of these. This hymnbook for children carried the long, descriptive title “*Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children.*”

In our hymn Mr. Watts describes many of the gifts we’ve been given by God. How many can you count?

This is a wonderful song of praise and thanks to God our Creator.

The music used with this text is called “Forest Green.” It is a lovely, joyful tune that is an old English folk melody. In music study there is a word used often concerning the pattern of a melody. That word is *form*. To describe quickly the *form* of melodies each phrase is given one of the first letters of the alphabet. For example the first phrase or line is called A. If the second phrase or line is different it may be called B. If, however, those lines are the same both receive the name A. Our tune “Forest Green” has the AABA *form*. Only the third line is different so it is given B as its *form* name. Notice that the first, second and fourth lines of the tune are all alike. Now can you see the *form* of this tune? This makes it very easy to learn.

An interesting experiment that you and your choir might try is to sing the well-known Christmas poem “O Little Town of Bethlehem” to this tune. The mood and feeling of the words are quite different from the way we feel when we sing the melody with which we usually associate it, aren’t they? Did you enjoy the new tune with the familiar words?