

THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD



When Jesus talked with His disciples, He often told them that God was His Father and also their Father. Dr. Maltbie Babcock had this same feeling about God and often expressed it, not only in sermons (for he was a minister), but also in poetry. Dr. Babcock loved God's outdoors – he often said he was “going out to see my Father's world.” It was a natural thing then, for him to write a poem in which he said, “This is my Father's world.” The three stanzas of our hymn are taken from a much longer poem called “Thoughts For Everyday Living.”

How many of the beautiful objects of nature mentioned in the hymn can you count? _____. Have you ever heard or seen some of the things about which Dr. Babcock wrote? _____. If we listen, it is possible to hear many sounds when we are out in the country, in the woods, by a lake, that we cannot hear in the hustle and bustle of the city.

Have you ever listened to the rustling of the leaves in the woods when the wind blows? _____, when someone walks through them? _____. Have you listened carefully to the “caroling of the birds?” _____.

Many hundreds of years ago people thought that the various planets and stars sent out sounds, each one having a different pitch. It was from this ancient belief that Dr. Babcock found the phrase “and 'round me rings the music of the spheres.” The spheres are his reference to the round planets out in space, for a sphere is a round ball. Can you imagine wonderful music being sent out from all the planets and bodies away out there in space? Wouldn't it be a terrifically great musical sound?

The tune called “Terra Beata” is thought to be taken from an old English melody that Mr. Franklin Sheppard's mother had sung to him when he was a little boy. There is an old English tune called *Rusper* that is very similar and has phrases or parts of the melody exactly like the tune we sing to the words of “This is My Father's World.” The words “Terra Beata” means *happy* or *blessed earth* in Latin.

Franklin Sheppard was a business man but was also a good musician and deeply interested in his church life. He was one of the persons who helped edit and publish one of the Presbyterian Hymnals many years ago. He also served as organist in the church in which he was confirmed as a boy. All through his life he was deeply interested in the musical life of his church and denomination.

Several Bible references help to show Dr. Babcock's thinking and deep interpretation of the Bible in his hymn. They are:

Genesis 1: 1-2

Psalms 24: 1

Matthew 10: 29-31