

Foreword

Three years ago, via the Internet Barnes & Noble, I bought a 200 year old book, an 1812 reprint of Isaac Watts' historic 1719 book: *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, And Applied to the Christian State and Worship*, by I. WATTS, D. D. That summer, I read the book. I found numerous passages so inspiring that I felt they should not remain merely historic, but should be brought forward to bless the singing world of the 21st century.

All the texts presented in "*In Melody and Songs*" are taken from Watts' psalm versions, the first half of my 1812 book.

In his audio book, *Christian Hymns, An Introduction to Their Story*, Erik Routley says Isaac Watts rebelled against singing only Psalter versions of the Hebrew psalms, at that time the only singing allowed in churches. Watts said Christian congregations should be able to sing about Christ, their Lord. As a teenager he wrote his first hymn, "Behold the glories of the Lamb." Routley says Watts brought "an absolutely new approach" to what congregations should be able to sing, and that he "had a perfectly extraordinary ability" to put great thoughts into memorable, straightforward, graceful words. Wholeheartedly, I agree! Watts' immense contribution earned him the sobriquet, the "Father of English Hymnody."

From Watts' psalm versions I gathered texts, stanzas that "spoke" to me and that exemplified Routley's evaluation. I chose stanzas which focus on God's goodness, his greatness, his forgiveness of sins, his love for his church and his children. Then, two years ago, I placed a "Call for Hymn Tunes for Isaac Watts texts" in three professional journals. I also asked for tunes from composers whose works DARCEY PRESS had already published. Wonderful tunes came in, of many styles, creatively conceived, harmonically interesting, ready to wed to the texts. The project has been incredibly inspiring.

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