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THE EARLY EDITIONS OF WATTS'S HYMNS.

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Not many books were reprinted more frequently during the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century than the *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* of Isaac Watts. Few books became more familiar, and certainly but few played a greater part in the history of our American Presbyterianism, both in its worship and in its strifes. But with all this familiarity and multiplication of editions, the early history, textual and bibliographical, of the hymns has remained practically unknown. This is accounted for by the fact that by the time interest in such studies began to be awakened, the early editions of the book itself had disappeared from sight.

As long ago as 1854, Peter Cunningham, when editing the *Life of Watts* in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, stated that "a first edition of his *Hymns*, 1707, is rarer than a first edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, of which it is said only one copy is known." The second edition is not less rare. The Rev. James Mearns, assistant editor of Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, stated (*The Guardian*, London, January 29, 1902) that he had never seen or heard of a copy. Even now the British Museum possesses nothing earlier than the fifth edition of 1716. It has

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therefore seemed worth while to take advantage of the bringing together of copies of the first four editions of the *Hymns* for the purpose of recording here some account of their distinctive features.

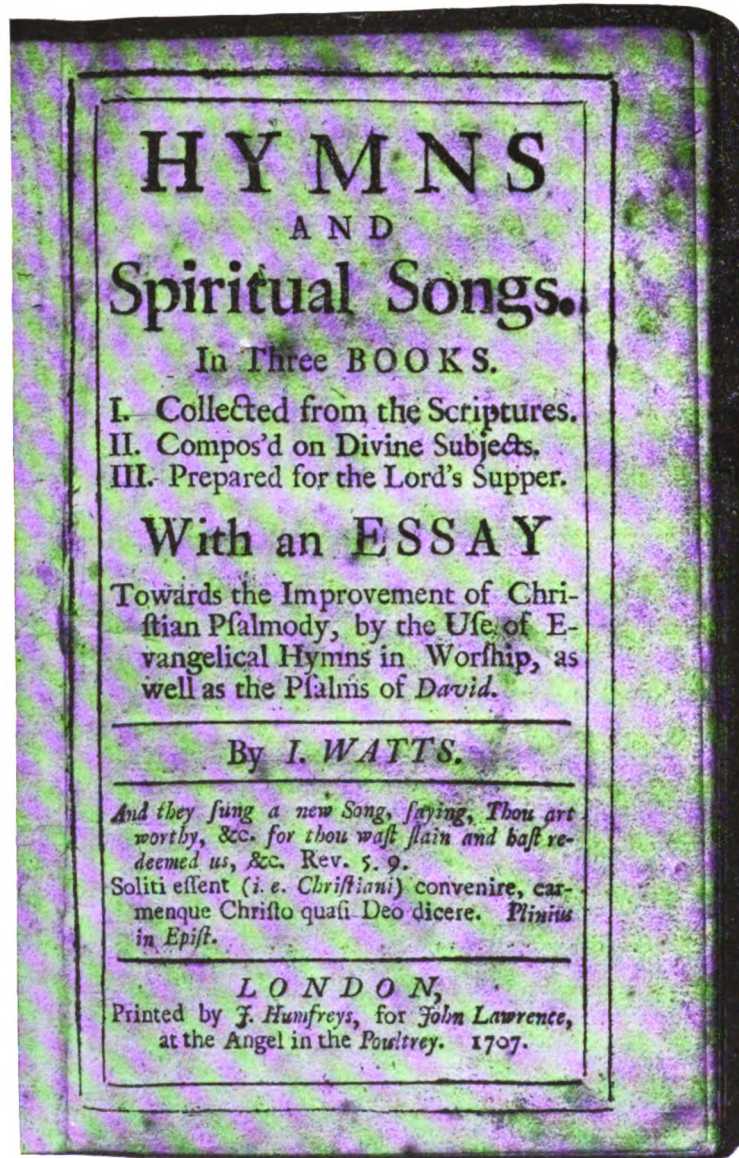
Considerable interest was aroused by the advertisement of the Messrs. Sotheby of London that a copy of the first edition would be sold at their rooms on Thursday, December 5, 1901; *The Athenaeum* (Nov. 16, 1901) calling attention to it as having "long since become one of the rarest books in the English language." This copy was sold on the day mentioned for £140 to the Messrs. Pearson, booksellers, of London, acting, it is said, for an American principal. While still in their hands this copy was examined by the Rev. Mr. Mearns, and in *The Guardian* (January 29, 1902) he printed a description of it, which is, so far as known to the writer, the first authentic information concerning the features of the first edition of the *Hymns*. "The binding," he states, "is in contemporary leather, probably done in 1709 by a craftsman too fond of the guillotine; and contains in the lettering the note, very unusual for such a book at that time, that it was a First Edition." A peculiarity of this copy is a *Supplement* bound up at the end, which Mr. Mearns describes as follows:

"It has lost its title-page and begins with p. 3. It was evidently one of the copies meant for the use of those who already had the first edition, and was probably printed in 1709, before the type of the pages of the second edition was taken down. P. 3 is headed 'Hymns, etc., A Supplement to the First Book;' followed at p. 67 by the Supplement to Book II; and at p. 118 by the Supplement to Book III. It contains all the additional hymns of the later editions printed during the author's lifetime. Its purpose is clearly shown by the note at p. 125:

"'Reader, 'Twas at first design'd to give Notice of the several Corrections that are made in the second Edition of this Book; But they prove too many to give thee the Trouble of altering all those Lines with thy Pen, and therefore they are omitted.'

"The owner of this copy, therefore, has not only a complete copy of the First Edition; he has also what is virtually a copy of the Second Edition."

The publicity thus given to the rarity of the 1707 edition of the *Hymns*, and the large price obtained for it, brought forward, as so often happens in such cases, a second copy. It was



Title Page of First Edition.

advertised to be sold at the Messrs. Sotheby's rooms on March 21, 1902. It was reported upon, after collation by an expert, as being without the Supplement, but a fine copy in the original blind-tooled calf, and as respects condition, in every way preferable to the copy sold in December, 1901.* Indeed, the absence of the Supplement, with the fact that it has not been rebound, is of interest as proving it an early copy of the first issue. This copy was, however, sold at a price considerably less than the former, and is now in this country. From it the following description of the first edition of the *Hymns* is made.

The book measures $5\frac{1}{2}$ x $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches; the block of type being $5\frac{1}{4}$ x $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches. The title page is here reproduced in *fac simile*.

Verso of title blank. Preface, iii-xiv; Table to find any Hymn by the First Line, xv-xxiv; Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1-210; Table to find any Hymn by the Title or Contents of it, 211-230; Table of the Scriptures, 231, 232; A Short Essay, 233-276; the "Errata" following, on page 276.

A comparison with later issues reveals the distinguishing features of the first edition.

(1) The original Preface (without signature or date) is substantially the spicy and familiar one of later editions. In speaking of his effort to write down "to the Level of vulgar Capacities," especially in the first book of hymns, the author says: "As my whole Design was to aid the Devotion of Christians, so more Especially this part was written for the meanest of them." This unflattering epithet was omitted from later editions. What Dr. Watts had in mind in his repeated references to suiting his hymns to the plainest capacities appears from his preface to *Horae Lyricae*,† when he speaks of "The Worship of Vulgar Christians, to whom the Measures of Hop-

* In *The British Weekly* for February 13, 1902, its regular Scotch correspondent announced that a copy of the 1707 edition was in the possession of a "hymnologist in Scotland." Whether this is the same copy sold on March 21st (which contains no indications of former ownership), or still a third copy, has not appeared.

† This preface speaks of two hundred hymns as at that date (December, 1705), ready for public use, should the specimens given in the *Horae* be favorably received.

kings by Custom are grown Familiar and Natural, and esteemed almost Sacred by being bound up in the same Volume with Scripture." He aimed at a style not differing too much from that to which the people were accustomed in the Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter.

A paragraph, covering a page, called the attention of those "not yet persuaded that it is lawful to sing any thing in Divine Worship, but a meer Version of some part of the Word of God," to the subjoined Essay on psalmody. This went out with the Essay itself.

(2) The number of hymns contained in the first edition is as follows: Book I has Nos. 1-78 of the later editions; Book II has Nos. 1-110; Book III has Nos. 1-22, followed by the doxologies, etc., numbered 26-37 in later editions. As the original numbering is retained in all editions, it becomes a simple matter to trace the hymns added in the second edition (Book I, Nos. 79-150; Book II, Nos. 111-170; Book III, Nos. 23-25, and Doxologies, 38-45). These hymns of 1707 were confined to three metres, *Long*, *Common*, and *Short*; all hymns "in the metre of the 148th Psalm" being added in 1709.

(3) The original text of the hymns is of course a unique feature of the first edition. But inspection shows the differences between it and the familiar text of later issues to be fewer and less important than one was led to expect.

The following are among the more interesting of these:

"Come, we that love the Lord," has for its closing lines:

"We're marching thro' *Immanuel's* Ground
To a more joyful Sky."

"Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove," has in the second verse:

"Look, how we grovel here below,
And hug these trifling Toys."

"When I can read my Title clear," closes thus:

"Nor dares a Wave of Trouble roll
Across my peaceful Breast."

"When I survey the wondrous Cross," has for its second line:

"Where the young Prince of Glory dy'd."

"Why do we mourn departing Friends?" has in the fifth verse:

"Thence he arose and clim'd the Sky."

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?" has at the close of the second verse:

“While the firm mark of Wrath Divine
His Soul in Anguish stood?”

“Now to the Lord a noble Song!” has in the fifth verse, “ye Skies” (for “ye heavens”), and at the close of the hymn:

“And play his Name on Harps of Gold!”

(4) Another feature is the presence of fourteen Psalm-versions, which were withdrawn after the first edition, appearing again (with alterations) in *The Psalms of David Imitated*, etc., in 1719. These are: Book I, Nos. 4, 22, 23, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 43, 44, 46, and 47. And No. 24 has four additional verses, likewise dropped, to make part of Psalm 49 in 1719. Two of these, much altered in 1719, were perhaps the most objectionable in the whole collection:

“5. There the dark Earth and gloomy Shades
Shall clasp their naked Body round,
And welcome their delicious Limbs
With the cold Kisses of the Ground.

“6. Pale Death shall riot on their Souls,
Their Flesh shall noisom Vermine eat,
The Just shall in the Morning rise
And find their Tyrants at their Feet.”

Four of these versions (Nos. 31, 43, 44, 47) had already appeared in the *Horae Lyricae* of 1706, in a little group designated as “*An Essay on a few of David's Psalms*,” etc., which was plainly the original nucleus of *The Imitations*. The preface of the first edition of the *Hymns* refers to the 1st, 2d and 3d Psalms especially as “a Specimen of what I desire and hope some more capable Genius will undertake.”

(5) The last of the characteristic features of the first edition is the Essay. This is not the same as the subsequent preface to the *Imitations*, but an independent plea for adapting the Psalms, and composing other hymns, for Christian worship. It was not again reprinted by Dr. Watts, but may be found in full in the collective editions of his works.

The first edition of the *Hymns*, as appears in an Autobiographical Table* prepared by Dr. Watts, was published in July

* Reproduced in “Isaac Watts; His Life and Writings. His Homes and Friends.” [By E. Paxton Hood.] London: The Religious Tract Society, n. d.

of 1707. In a letter to the Rev. Samuel Say, dated December 23, 1708, Dr. Watts says:

“My bookseller urges me to reprint my Hymns, and talks of another edition of the Poems.* I earnestly beg you to point me those lines in either which are offensive to the weak and pious, and shocking and disgusting to the polite, or obscure to the vulgar capacity, or, in short, whatever you think should be mended, and if you please with your amendment; but I entreat it especially for the Hymns in a fortnight's time.” †

In a letter to the same friend dated March 12, 1709, Dr. Watts explains the manner of his revision for the second edition, as follows:

“The method I took was, to collect all the remarks together, that several friends had made by word or letter, and got a friend or two together, and spent a whole day in perusing and considering the remarks; I agreed to their judgments I think in all things; in the whole, there are near half a hundred lines altered, I hope always for the better. Some that were less offensive were let pass; for the bookseller desired I would not change too much; besides that lesser faults would not be spied by the vulgar, nor much offend the polite. But I have added above a hundred, and most of them to the First Book. I hope all now more approvable, for their chief design, than the foregoing edition. ‡

He notes also the progress of the new edition through the press, remarking that “the printer, by the cold weather, and by working off a supplement of the New Hymns apart, has been made so dilatory, that he has not yet printed all the First Book,” || and inviting further criticisms on the second and third books “in a week or two.”

The second edition appeared in April of 1709. § It is printed from Pica type (as was the first), the size of the block of type ¶

* *Horae Lyricae*.

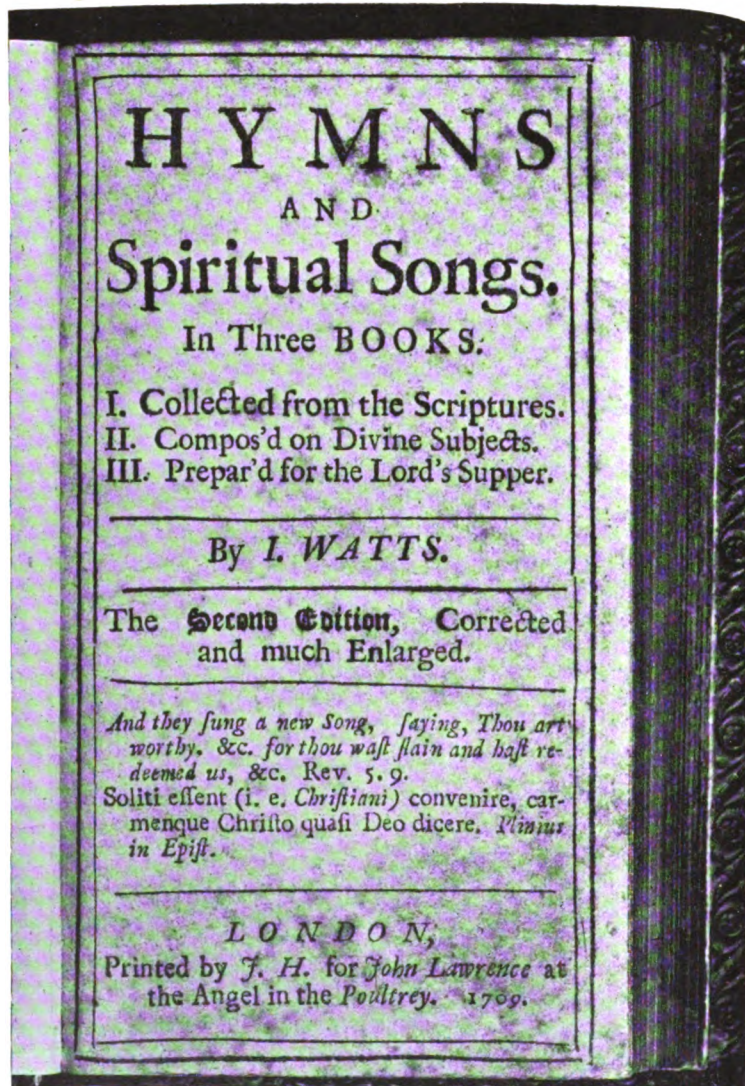
† *The Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rev. Isaac Watts, D. D.* By the Rev. Thomas Milner, M. A. London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1834, p. 229.

‡ Milner, pp. 229, 230.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 230.

§ Autobiographical Table. See *Life by Hood*, p. 345.

¶ The margins of this copy have been much cut away in rebinding it in Divinity calf. It was sold at auction, in 1901, to Charles Higham, bookseller,



Title Page of Second Edition.

being $5\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{8}$ inches. The changes in the title page are shown in the accompanying *fac simile* of it.

Verso of title blank; Preface and *Advertisements Concerning the second Edition*, iii–xiv; Table of First Lines, xv–xxiv; Hymns, 1–317; Table of Titles of the Hymns, 318–341; Table of Scriptures, 342–344. Page 344 contains also three lines of Errata, and is followed by two pages (unnumbered) of Books printed for John Lawrence.

In the preface the familiar paragraph beginning: "If any Expressions occur to the Reader that savour of an Opinion different from his own," etc., here first appears, and allusions to the earlier edition become necessary. The last paragraph, as thus modified, reads as follows :

"If the Lord who inhabits the Praises of *Israel* shall refuse to smile upon this Attempt for the Reformation of Psalmody amongst the Churches, yet I humbly hope that his blessed Spirit will make these Composures useful to private Christians; and if they may but attain the Honour of being esteem'd pious Meditations, to assist the devout and the retir'd Soul in the Exercises of Love, Faith and Joy, 'twill be a valuable Compensation of my Labours; my Heart shall rejoice at the Notice of it, and my God shall receive the Glory. This was my Hope and Vow in the first Publication, and 'tis now my Duty to acknowledge to him with Thankfulness how useful he has made these Compositions already, to the Comfort and Edification of Societies and of private Persons; and upon the same Grounds I have a better Prospect and a bigger Hope of much more Service to the Church by the large Improvements of this Edition, if the Lord who dwells in *Zion* shall favour it with his continu'd Blessing."

Immediately following the preface come the interesting

*"Advertisements * Concerning the Second Edition.*

1. There are almost 150 new Hymns added, and one or more suited to every Theme and Subject in Divinity. Having found by Converse with Christ of London, and belonged to the late Alexander Gardyne, Esq., of that city. It contains a MS. note in his hand, stating that a copy of the 1st edition was also in his possession. This turns out to be the former of the two copies above described.

* Plainly the word is used in the older sense. These 'advertisements' are a part of the preface, and notify the reader of changes and additions in the 2nd edition. But the publishers (Hall & Sellers), of the Philadelphia reprint of 1767 have not so understood it, and (changing the form to the singular), have relegated the 'Advertisement concerning the Second Edition' to the end of the book, alongside of their publisher's 'Catalogue of Books.'

tians what Words or Lines in the former made them less useful, I have not only made various Corrections in them, but have endeavour'd to avoid the same Mistakes in all the new Composures. And whereas many of the former were too particularly adapted to special Frames and Seasons of the Christian Life, almost all that are added have a more general and extensive Sense, and may be assum'd and sung by most Persons in a worshipping Congregation.

"2. About 14 or 15 Psalms that were translated in the first Edition are left out in this, because I intend (if God afford Life and Assistance), to convert the biggest part of the Book of Psalms into Spiritual Songs for the Use of Christians; yet the same Numbers are still apply'd to the Hymns,* that there might be no Confusion between the 1st and 2d Edition.

"3. In all the longer Hymns, and in some of the shorter, there are several Stanza's included in Crotchets thus, [], which Stanza's may be left out in Singing without disturbing the Sense. Those parts are also included in such Crotchets which contain Words too Poetical for meaner Understandings, or too particular for whole Congregations to sing. But after all, 'tis best in publick Psalmody for the Minister to chuse the particular Parts and Verses of the Psalm or Hymn that is to be sung, rather than leave it to the Judgment or casual Determination of him that leads the Tune.

"4. The Essay concerning the Improvement of Psalmody by the use of Evangelical Hymns, which took up many Pages of the last Edition, is quite left out here, partly lest the Bulk should swell too much, but chiefly because I intend a more compleat Treatise of Psalmody, in which the Substance of that Essay will be interspersed, and I hope with fuller Evidence of the Duty of singing new Songs to him that sits upon the Throne since the Lamb is ascended thither too.

"5. I ought also to tell those who have provided themselves of the first Edition, that the Bookseller has been willing to oblige them so far as to print all the Additions that are found here in a Supplement by themselves, if they are not willing to be at the Expence of a new Book."

The third edition of the *Hymns* was published in 1712, unchanged in size and in the character of type, etc. The collation of the second edition serves for this also, by the addition at the end of a second leaf of "Books printed." In the title page the only changes from that of the second edition are in the substitution of the words, "The Third Edition" (the "Corrected and much Enlarged" not being reprinted here or in later editions), the change of spelling of the word "Poultry," and

*It was to accomplish this end that the notes that have puzzled so many were introduced to explain the blanks left by the fourteen abstracted hymns. Thus in this edition (and in all later ones), Book I, No. 4, reads simply: "Referr'd to the 2d Psalm;" and the fate of the four verses dropped from Book I, No. 24, is indicated by the note at the end of the verses retained: "The rest referr'd to the 49th Psalm."

the change of date to 1712. The changes in the preface are mostly of trivial character, made necessary in referring now to two former impressions. But on page xi occurs one of greater interest as showing the progress of the author's work upon the paraphrasing of the Psalms (first published in 1719). The corresponding passage of the preface to the second edition, after giving his views of the characteristics of the work needing to be done upon the Psalms, proceeds (in language doubtless offensive to many):

"After this manner should I rejoyce to see a good part of the Book of Psalms fitted for the Use of our Churches, and *David* converted into a Christian: But because I cannot persuade others to attempt this glorious Work, I have suffer'd my self to be persuaded to begin it, and have, thro' Divine Goodness, already proceeded half way thro'."

In the 1712 preface this last sentence becomes:

* * * "perswaded to begin it, and had finished it before this time, if the necessary Duties of my Station, and other preventing Providences had not delay'd my Pursuit of it. I own my self much obliged to the World who have receiv'd so favourable an Opinion of it before-hand, that I am daily urg'd to proceed in the Work: and if God afford me Health and Leisure, I hope e're long to fulfil my Design."

The Advertisements concerning the second Edition are reprinted in the third with changes of a trifling character in the second paragraph, and the omission of the fifth paragraph concerning the Supplement. This omission gives room for the added matter in the preface without changing the arrangement by pages.

The body of the book, containing the hymns, is a page for page reprint of the second edition, showing to an ordinary inspection no changes other than an occasional rearrangement in spacing run-over lines, and the correction of the errors noted in the second edition.

The fourth edition appeared in 1714, with a new printer, to the advantage of the book, which has a cleaner and brighter page. The only changes in the title page are in the number of the edition, and in the imprint, as follows:

LONDON:

Printed by S. KEIMER, for JOHN
LAWRENCE at the *Angel* in the *Poultry*. M.DCC.XIV.

The dimensions and typographical arrangement correspond closely with the third edition, of which it is throughout a page for page reprint. No differences from the third edition either in the prefatory matter or in the body of the book disclose themselves to ordinary inspection.

For how long Dr. Watts continued to make any personal supervision of the frequent reprintings of his *Hymns* is difficult to determine. But in the seventh edition, issued in 1720, there appeared at the close of the *Advertisements* an interesting note announcing the completion of his work upon the Psalms, and recording his own feelings toward the now finished task. It is as follows :

“ *Note.*—Since the Sixth Edition of this Book the Author has finished what he had so long promis'd, (*viz.*) *The Psalms of David imitated in the Language of the New Testament*; which the World seems to have received with Approbation, by the Sale of some Thousands in a Year's Time. There the Reader will find those *Psalms*, which were left out of all the latter Editions of these *Hymns*, inserted in their proper Places. It is presumed that that Book, in Conjunction with this, may appear to be such a sufficient Provision for Psalmody, as to answer most Occasions of the Christian Life: And, if an Author's own Opinion may be taken, he esteems it the greatest Work that ever he has publish'd, or ever hopes to do, for the Use of the Churches.

“ March 3, 17 $\frac{1}{2}$.”

The above note is taken from a copy of the fourteenth edition, one of the seventh not being in the possession of the writer. It seems that with the seventh edition the prefatory matter had assumed the form intended by the author to be final. As reprinted in this fourteenth edition, the Preface itself reverts to the form it had in the second edition; the changes made in later editions to accommodate the language to the number of former issues, and to the state of progress upon the Psalms, being ignored. Then follow four sections of the *Advertisements*, with the date “April, 1709,” and finally the Postscript referred to, with its date, March 3, 1720. This plainly was the form of the prefatory matter adopted for the seventh edition, and maintained through the intervening issues until this fourteenth edition of 1740, which indeed was issued but eight years before Dr. Watts's death (Nov. 25, 1748).

In this fourteenth edition the title shows the addition of "D. D." to the "I. Watts" of early editions, the degree in Divinity having been conferred by Edinburgh and Aberdeen in 1728. The imprint also is changed, and now reads:

LONDON:
Printed for D. MIDWINTER, A. WARD,
T. LONGMAN, R. HETT, C. HITCH,
J. HODGES, and J. DAVIDSON.
M DCC XL.

Dr. Watts had early sold the copyright of the *Hymns* to John Lawrence, who had also been the publisher of *Horae Lyricae*. His own note of the date of the transaction is endorsed on a letter to him dated April 21, 1738, as follows: "I sold it for a trifle to Mr. Lawrence, near thirty years ago." * This leaves it probable that he parted with the copyright upon the completion of the revision in connection with the second edition (1709). † It would appear from the imprint of the fourteenth edition, that the proprietor had relinquished his sole right to issue the *Hymns* in favor of a number of the trade, the changed imprint forecasting later issues for the trade generally, and bearing the imprint "London: Printed for the Booksellers."

As time passed on, and the *Hymns* ceased to be the production of a living author, and came to be looked at in an impersonal way as a hymn book, quite naturally a tendency to abridge the prefatory matter showed itself. In the edition of 1780, the Preface and Postscript still appear in full in the form they had in the fourteenth, but the *Advertisements* have dropped out, the section explaining stanzas in crotchets being retained

* Printed, from the original, by Samuel Palmer, in his *Notes to Johnson's Life of Watts* (1791), which the writer has not seen. Mr. Palmer's originals happily are reproduced in the anonymous *Memoirs of the Lives, Characters and Writings of those two eminently pious and useful Ministers of Jesus Christ, Dr. Isaac Watts and Dr. Philip Doddridge*. Printed at Boston, by Peter Edes for David West, 1793: and partly also in Milner. The consideration for the sale of the copyright is stated by Mr. Palmer to have been ten pounds.

† The Author of the *Memoirs* in the Barfield edition of the Complete Works (Rev. George Burder), states that the copyright was sold in 1707, upon publishing the 1st edition, but gives no authority for the statement.

as a note. In many of the later issues the entire body of prefatory matter was discarded, and the *Hymns* lost its individuality by being bound up with the *Imitations*, as *Psalms and Hymns*.

It remains to make some inquiry as to the final text of the hymns themselves. A comparison of the later and earlier editions reveals the fact that no additions were made to the *Hymns* after 1709, during the life of Dr. Watts. He printed hymns in connection with his *Sermons* and elsewhere, but incorporated none of them with the earlier collection. After his death such later hymns were often printed in connection with the *Hymns* proper, sometimes as "Book IV," sometimes as "Select Hymns;" the *Imitations*, the *Hymns*, and the additions, coming to constitute "Watts' Entire."

Nor were any alterations made in the printed text of the hymns after the revision of 1709. Subsequent changes in the text represent rather the errors that creep into books frequently reprinted, often with incompetent proof-reading. Such changes are at a maximum, perhaps, in the 8vo trade editions of the Complete Works; but they are to be noted, if at all, merely for correction. The edition of 1709 must always remain the standard for the printed text.

But the question of the final text of the hymns has not been allowed to rest upon the evidence of the printed text. Certain claims have been made of an actual, though unpublished, revision of the text by Dr. Watts himself; and these, although made in the interests of theological controversy, seem to require some notice in this connection.

1. The Rev. Benjamin Williams, a Presbyterian minister of Salisbury, in the preliminary discourse to his "*The Book of Psalms, Translated, Paraphrased, or Imitated by some of the most Eminent English Poets*" (Salisbury, 1781), refers to Dr. Watts as

"of such unconfined Charity, that he wished to avoid Every Word and Syllable. that was likely to give the smallest Offence to serious Christians of any Denomination. And when he found in the later Part of Life he had not been so successful in this Respect, as he had aimed to be; he wished for nothing more ardently than sufficient Health and Time to revise both his *Psalms* and *Hymns*, in order to render them wholly unexceptionable to every Christian Professor."

Mr. Williams states in a note* that "this account was received from Doctor *Watts* himself, a few Years before his Death, by the late Doctor *Amory*, and by him given to one of his Pupils, who communicated it to the Editor;" and continues: "The Editor has also good Authority to add that the *Revisal*, so fervently wished for, was undertaken and finished, and would most certainly have been *published*, had not the Author's Death unhappily prevented."

In answer to this statement the Rev. Samuel Palmer, in his Notes to the *Life of Watts*,† remarks:

"Without impeaching this writer's veracity, the evidence of the fact is by no means satisfactory. What became of the copy thus corrected? Mr. Parker, the Doctor's amanuensis, knows of no such thing, and never heard of the author's having such a design. which appears indeed highly improbable. A man of Dr. Watts's knowledge of the world could hardly expect that he should be able to make every thing in these composures universally unexceptionable, as the alterations which would have gratified one party, would equally have offended another."

Mr. Palmer reports that he heard from Dr. Amory a conversation which took place between Mr. Henry Grove and Watts, which may have been the basis for Mr. Williams's statements. "Mr. Grove remarked that several of the hymns ‡ laid the stress of our redemption on the compassion of Christ rather than on the love of God; and expressed his wish that he would alter them in this respect, and make them more conformable to the Scripture doctrine. Mr. Watts replied that he should be glad to do it, but it was out of his power, for he had parted with the copyright, and the bookseller would not suffer any such alteration." ||

2. Thomas Belsham in his *Memoirs of the late Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, A. M.* (London, 1812),§ states:

* P. 6.

† See *ante*.

‡ *E. g.*, Book ii, 36, 37 and 108.

|| Quoted from Milner, p. 281. See also the Boston *Memoirs of Watts and Doddridge* (1793), pp. 31. 32.

‡ P. 216.

“ It is well known that this learned and pious writer [Watts], in the latter part of his life, receded very far from those mystical opinions concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and particularly the person of Christ, which he held in his youth. His well-known volume of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, so much used in Calvinistic congregations, was published when he was very young, and contains many expressions, and many sentiments, from which, though regarded by great numbers as the standard of Christian verity, his judgment revolted in maturer years, and which he would gladly have altered, if he had been permitted by the proprietors of the copyright, who knew their own interest too well to admit the proposed improvement.”

In reference to this statement it may be remarked that Dr. Watts was a life-long student of theology, and with a peculiar independence of mind, and that it must freely be conceded that in the course of that life he made changes both in his conception and statements of the doctrine of the Trinity and the Person of Christ.* As to Dr. Watts's wish to alter the text of the hymns in conformity with later views, Mr. Belsham produces no evidence. The only evidence on the subject seems to be that produced by the Rev. Samuel Palmer in his Notes.† The Rev. Martin Tompkins printed in 1738 *A calm Enquiry whether we have any warrant, from Scripture, for addressing ourselves, in a way of Prayer or Praise, directly to the Holy Spirit, etc.*, containing in the preface a protest against the use of the doxologies contained in Dr. Watts's Hymns, and, in the body of the tract, quotations from Dr. Watts's later works in support of his position. In a letter to Dr. Watts, dated April 21, 1738, Mr. Tompkins put to him the direct question,

“ Whether you now approve of what you have said concerning the *Gloria Patri*, in your Book of Hymns; and whether, upon your present notion of the Spirit, you can esteem some of those Doxologies you have given us there, I will not say, ‘ as some of the noblest parts of Christian worship,’ but as proper Christian worship? And if not, whether you may not think it becoming you, as a lover of truth, and as a Christian minister, to declare as much to the world; and not suffer such forms of worship to be recommended by your name and authority,

* His last statement on this subject appears to be that contained in a letter to Dr. Colman dated Feb. 11, 1746/7: “ Scripture is express in determining, that Jesus Christ, at least his human soul, is the first of the creation of God.” See letter in Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc., 2d ser., vol. ix, p. 409.

† It is reproduced in full in the *Memoirs of Watts and Doddridge*. Boston, 1793, pp. 140-146, and substantially in Milner, pp. 282-286.

to the use of the Christian Church in the present time and in future generations?"

On the margin of this letter (then in Mr. Palmer's possession) Dr. Watts had endorsed some twenty remarks, and opposite the last paragraph wrote:

"I freely answer, I wish some things were corrected. But the question with me is this: as I wrote them in sincerity at that time, is it not more for the edification of Christians, and the glory of God, to let them stand, than to ruin the usefulness of the whole book, by correcting them now, and perhaps bring further and false suspicions on my present opinions? Besides, I might tell you, that of all the books I have written, that particular copy is not mine. I sold it for a trifle to Mr. *Lawrence* near thirty years ago, and his posterity make money of it to this day, and I can scarce claim a right to make any alteration in the book which would injure the sale of it."

In reviewing the whole matter brought forward by Mr. Williams and Mr. Belsham, it seems reasonably certain:

1st. That since 1709, and up to April 21, 1738 (within less than eleven years of his death), Dr. Watts had not executed any manuscript revision of his *Hymns*, and that he had at that time none in contemplation. We have also the assurance of his amanuensis, as reported, that Dr. Watts left no such manuscript revision among his papers at his death.

2d. That Dr. Watts would willingly have made certain changes in the hymns to accommodate them to his later doctrinal views, but that he was satisfied to let the text stand, rather than incur any risk of marring the usefulness of the whole.

3d. That Dr. Watts recognized the fact that in parting with the copyright he had practically put it out of his own power to make any real revision of his hymns.

It follows that the printed text of 1709 represents the author's final text of the hymns.