

Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs, Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children*.  
Coventry: J.W. Piercy, [n.d.]. 8vo, 4 woodcuts, 122 pages + plates.

Isaac Watts' *Divine Songs*, originally issued by M. Lawrence in 1715, was published in countless editions and became a fixture in the education of young Protestants for many subsequent decades. Isaac Watts (1674–1748) is considered the “Father of English Hymnody,” having penned roughly 750 hymns, some of which are still sung in churches today. His well-known lyric, titled “Against Idleness and Mischief,” is included as Song XX in *Divine Songs*. Its familiar first stanza reads:

How doth the little busy bee  
Improve each shining hour,  
And gather honey all the day  
From ev'ry op'ning flow'r!

Such verses do much to explain the enduring appeal of *Divine Songs*.

Beyond his prodigious talent as a writer of hymns, Watts was a noted author of works on logic and theology, among them his successful *Logick: or The Right Use of Reason in the Enquiry After Truth With a Variety of Rules to Guard Against Error in the Affairs of Religion and Human Life, as well as in the Sciences* (1763), which was printed in twenty editions. The book was the standard logic textbook at Oxford for more than a century and was used at Cambridge, Yale, and Harvard.

This book is part of the Douce Collection of Oxford's Bodleian Library. Francis Douce (1757–1834) was a British antiquary and the Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum from 1807 to 1811. His bequest of more than 19,000 volumes contained printed books from various periods, including nearly 500 incunables, as well as roughly 425 manuscripts. Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century children's books numbered among Douce's wide range of collecting specialties. On the front pastedown of this copy of *Divine Songs* is a red leather bookplate with gilt borders and lettering that reads “MISS HASKOLL, | S<sup>T</sup>. CATHERINE'S | HERMITAGE. 1797”; on the leaf opposite is the

inscription “M H Haskoll | 1797.” It is in a contemporary binding of boards covered with Dutch floral paper.

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