

**BREAK OF DAY IN THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. A
HISTORY AND A SPECIMEN OF
ITS FIRST BOOK OF ENGLISH
SACRED SONG**

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Break of Day in the Eighteenth Century. A History and a Specimen of Its First Book of English Sacred Song by Cyprian T. Rust

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CYPRIAN T. RUST

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BREAK OF DAY
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

A HISTORY AND A SPECIMEN OF ITS

First Book of English Sacred Song.

300 HYMNS OF DR. WATTS,

Carefully Selected and Arranged, with a Sketch of their History.

BY

CYPRIAN T. RUST,

RECTOR OF WESTERFIELD, SUFFOLK.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE purpose I have in view in this publication will seem to most persons a very strange one,—it is, to call the attention of the public to Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns,—a book which has been circulated by thousands and tens of thousands over all the British possessions, a copy of which may be found to this day in almost every devout family, a large portion of which is printed every year in the various collections extant. Strange as the proposal may sound, there is not only good reason for it, but in the interests of true religion there is a necessity for it.

1st. The form in which the Psalms and Hymns appear is a great obstacle to their present and future circulation and use.

2nd. The multitude of new hymns is so great, that there is danger, in the Church Hymnals at least, that the nineteenth century hymns will exclude those of the eighteenth altogether. The first of these causes has stopped the sale of Dr. Watts' Hymns; the second threatens their complete banishment from Divine Service.

I propose, then, as a feeble but earnest protest against the wrong, and an equally earnest attempt at a remedy, to publish about three hundred of Dr. Watts' best hymns, carefully selected, re-arranged, and amended, and to give a history of their introduction into Divine Service in England. The following

considerations may help us to a more clear conception of the blessings which God, through this one man has conferred on this people and nation.

1. Dr. Watts was the first man in England who wrote hymns with the direct purpose of using them in Divine Service. Before his time, no evidence seems to exist that a *hymn*, properly so called,—“a mere human composition,” as the phrase went,—had ever been sung in any church or chapel in England.

2. This truly great man produced these hymns in the very darkest and dearest period of English Church history: at a time which all historians look back upon with awe as the very darkest hour before the dawn.

3. These hymns were written before any of the works of the most correct poets were published, before the New Version of Psalms had come into use, when Pope was only nineteen years old, four years before the *Spectator* appeared, before Charles Wesley was born! Instead of being full of the imperfections, the carelessness, the solecisms now complained of, the book must have appeared at the time to be a specimen of chaste and pure and elevated composition, such as might in vain be sought for anywhere else, even among the best poets of the age.

4. There are more of these hymns, and more of them in proportion to the number originally written, in actual use than can be claimed for any hymn writer living or dead. The number of the poems is about 750; in one collection, “The New Congregational,” 387 of them are found.

5. The field which Dr. Watts opened for himself in the year 1707 was occupied by himself exclusively for thirty, and with not more than one or two com-

petitors for forty, years ; in fact, till his decease in 1748. The first hymn-book published by John Wesley (if he did publish it) was selected for the Moravian Chapel, Fetter Lane, in 1738. The first Wesleyan collection did not appear till 1753.

6. The confessed design of Dr. Watts to compose hymns to be sung in Divine Service was so startling an innovation, so presumptuous a thing in itself, so sure to meet with deadly hostility and scornful ridicule from friends and foes, that the calm and dignified way in which he set about it seems like the inspiration of true genius, almost the prescience of a seer. - In his "Essay on Psalmody" he uses all the gentleness, the persuasiveness, and the reasonableness of which he was master, declaring at the same time that if the Church will not receive his compositions, he will be most thankful to give them for the comfort and blessing of those who will adopt them for private and devotional use.

I shall feel that this very humble effort is well rewarded if I can obtain not only a more ample recognition of the services of this great champion of our devotional poetry, but if, also, I may put some check upon the very unjust, supercilious, flippant, boastful comments of modern critics, who, I fear, have but little sympathy with, and still less knowledge of, this very amiable and modest, but yet bold and successful, writer.

In the *collection* of hymns I present those which are in use in the present day, not such as I or any individual might fancy, but those which, in spite of the thousands upon thousands of hymns which have been written since Watts' time, have kept their hold on the public esteem and are still loved and prized by