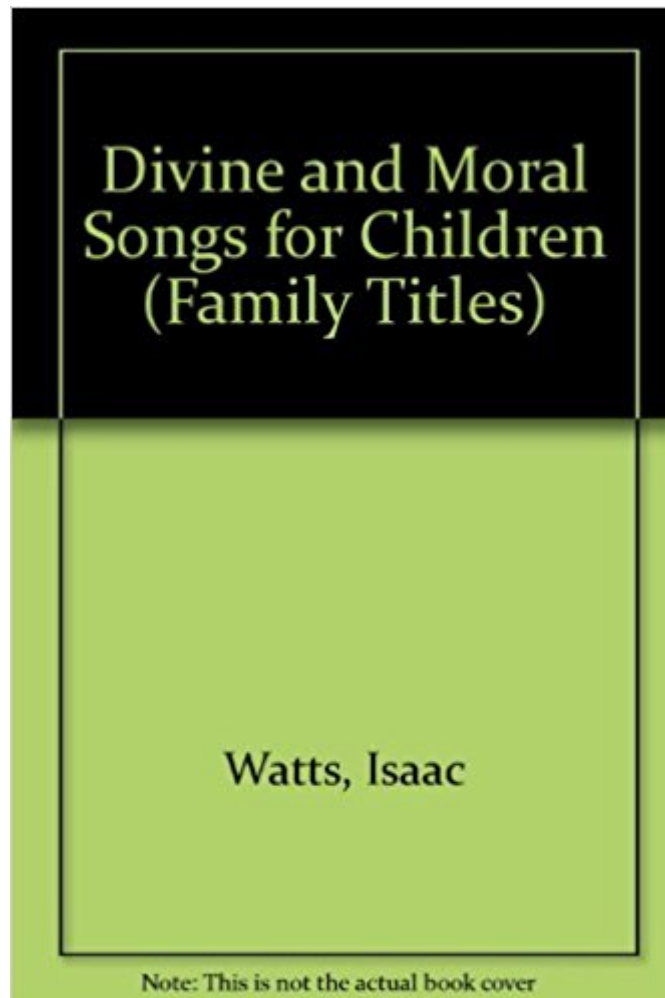




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Divine And Moral Songs For Children (Family Titles)



Synopsis

General Song of Praise to God. 1 How glorious is our heavenly King, Who reigns above the sky!
How shall a child presume to sing His dreadful majesty? 2 How great his power is, none can tell,
Nor think how large his grace; Not men below, nor saints that dwell On high before his face. 3 Not
of angels that stand round the Lord Can search his secret will; But they perform his heavenly word,
And sing his praises still. 4 Then let me join this holy train. And my first offerings bring; The eternal
God will not disdain To hear an infant sing. (Typographical errors above are due to OCR software
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Customer Reviews

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tremendous book by one of the greats

What kinds of songs does your church congregation primarily sing for its worship services? Most churches seem to have moved away from singing hymns to praise songs, and the use of the hymnal has been displaced with PowerPoint slides to project the lyrics at the front of the sanctuary (or should I say auditorium?). To some extent I suppose it's just a matter of preference and personal taste, but I have to say that the lyrics of many of the contemporary worship songs I hear seem so shallow and repetitive and lacking in content. And the melodies are often really tough to catch on to. I think it's really sad that a whole new generation of church goers are no longer learning the old hymns, song with lyrics that teach theological truths and focus on who God is and what He has done, not on man's feelings and needs. One of the greatest hymn writers of all time was Isaac Watts. Never heard of him? Have you heard of the song, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"? Or "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"? And if not those, then certainly you know, "Joy to the World." In the hymnbook our church uses, Watts has authored 42 hymns. Isaac Watts (1674-1748) was an English Non-conformist pastor (one who separated from the Church of England) and hymn writer, and has been called the "Father of English Hymnody". He wrote over 600 hymns praising the triune God, His works and His Word. Watts paraphrased most of the Psalms and adapted them into hymns. Besides hymns Watts also wrote many other works including catechisms, theological treatises, three volumes of sermons, essays on psychology, philosophy and astronomy, and a logic textbook. As a child, Watts showed an unusual ability for languages and verse. He would sometimes get in trouble for rhyming too much. This is an acrostic poem that Watts wrote as a seven-year-old boy, using his name: I am a vile polluted lump of earth, S o I've continued ever since my birth, A lthough Jehovah grace does daily give me, A s sure this monster Satan will deceive me, C ome therefore, Lord from Satan's claws relieve me. W ash me in thy blood, O Christ, A nd grace divine impart, T hen search and try the corners of my heart, T hat I in all things may be fit to do S ervice to thee, and sing thy praises too. Clearly he had been strongly taught biblical doctrine already by this age! As the story goes, Isaac Watts wrote his first hymn as a teenager after complaining about the dry, boring songs and unenthusiastic singing at church, to which his father issued a challenge: "Well then, young man, why don't you give us something better to sing?" Young Isaac took up the challenge, and not only wrote his first hymn, but proceeded to write a new hymn every week for the next two years for the congregation to sing. These hymns were collected and published with the title *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707). He wrote in the preface of this collection, "While we sing the praises of God in His Church, we are employed in that part of worship which of all others is the nearest akin to heaven, and 'tis pity that this of all others should be performed the worst upon earth." While he never married or had children of his own, Watts wrote many instructional poems and

songs for children, which can be found in his collection of Divine and Moral Songs for Children (1715), the first hymnal written specifically for children. In the preface to this hymnal, Watts wrote, "...children of high and low degree, of the Church of England or dissenters, baptized in infancy or not, may all join together in these songs. And as I have endeavored to sink the language to the level of a child's understanding, and yet to keep it, if possible, above contempt, so I have designed to profit all, if possible, and offend none." It was said of Isaac Watts that, "He gave to lisping infancy its earliest and purest lessons." Trying to teach little children the Ten Commandments? How about this version, which Watts adapted into a rhyme for children: 1. Thou shalt have no more gods but me. 2. Before no idol bow thy knee. 3. Take not the Name of God in vain. 4. Nor dare the Sabbath Day profane. 5. Give both thy parents honour due. 6. Take heed that thou no murder do. 7. Abstain from words and deeds unclean. 8. Nor steal, though thou art poor and mean. 9. Nor make a wilful lie, nor love it. 10. What is thy neighbour's, dare not covet. Watts commends his book of divine and morals songs, "To all that are concerned in the education of Children" with these words: "The seeds of misery or happiness in this world, and that to come are oftentimes sown very early; and therefore whatever may conduce to give the minds of children a relish for virtue and religion ought, in the first place, to be proposed to you." When our children were young, we read many of Watts' children's poems with them and found them to be instructive and useful for disciplinary purposes. For example, when the kids started quarreling or say unkind things to each other, we might sit them down and read "Against Quarrelling and Fighting" or "Love Between Brothers and Sisters":

Whatever brawls disturb the street, There should be peace at home; Where sisters dwell, and brothers meet, Quarrels should never come. Birds in their little nests agree, And 'tis a shameful sight, When children of one family Fall out, and chide, and fight. Another one that was frequently read was "Obedience to Parents": Let children that would fear the Lord Hear what their teachers say; With reverence hear their parents' word, And with delight obey. I tell you, the line in that poem that says, "The ravens shall pick out his eyes, And eagles eat the same," made quite an impact. Straight out of Proverbs (30:17), no joke. We actually had our children learn a few of those poems by heart, so we didn't have to get the book out, but just had them face each other and recite the words, "Our tongues were made to bless the Lord, And not speak ill of men..." Got a kid who tends to be lazy? Watts wrote a poem about it. How about one who has trouble with lying or profanity? There's one for those too. Teaching kids why it's wrong to steal, or the importance of choosing good friends? Yep. There are also songs that teach truths about God, creation, the Bible, heaven and hell, providence, and general praise for God's goodness and mercy. Now I admit, the language is a bit antiquated, having been written in the 18th century, but you can use the poems as an

opportunity to teach children the meaning of some new words: sluggard, mock, scoff, railing, brawl, profane, and wanton. Of course, God's Word should be our first and primary resource for addressing issues of the heart and teaching children about sinful behavior. But since Watts' Divine and Moral Songs are based on scripture, they are useful for reinforcing these lessons and Biblical truths and for character building. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God." - Colossians 3:16

A friend lent me her copy and within moments I knew I had to have a copy for my children. In this day and age it is sometimes hard to find something to connect those little teachable moments we have with our little ones with the things we really want them to know. I know that the minutes right before they fall asleep when prayers are said and everyone is tucked in that this book becomes a tool that I can use to savor those moments and make them really worthwhile.

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