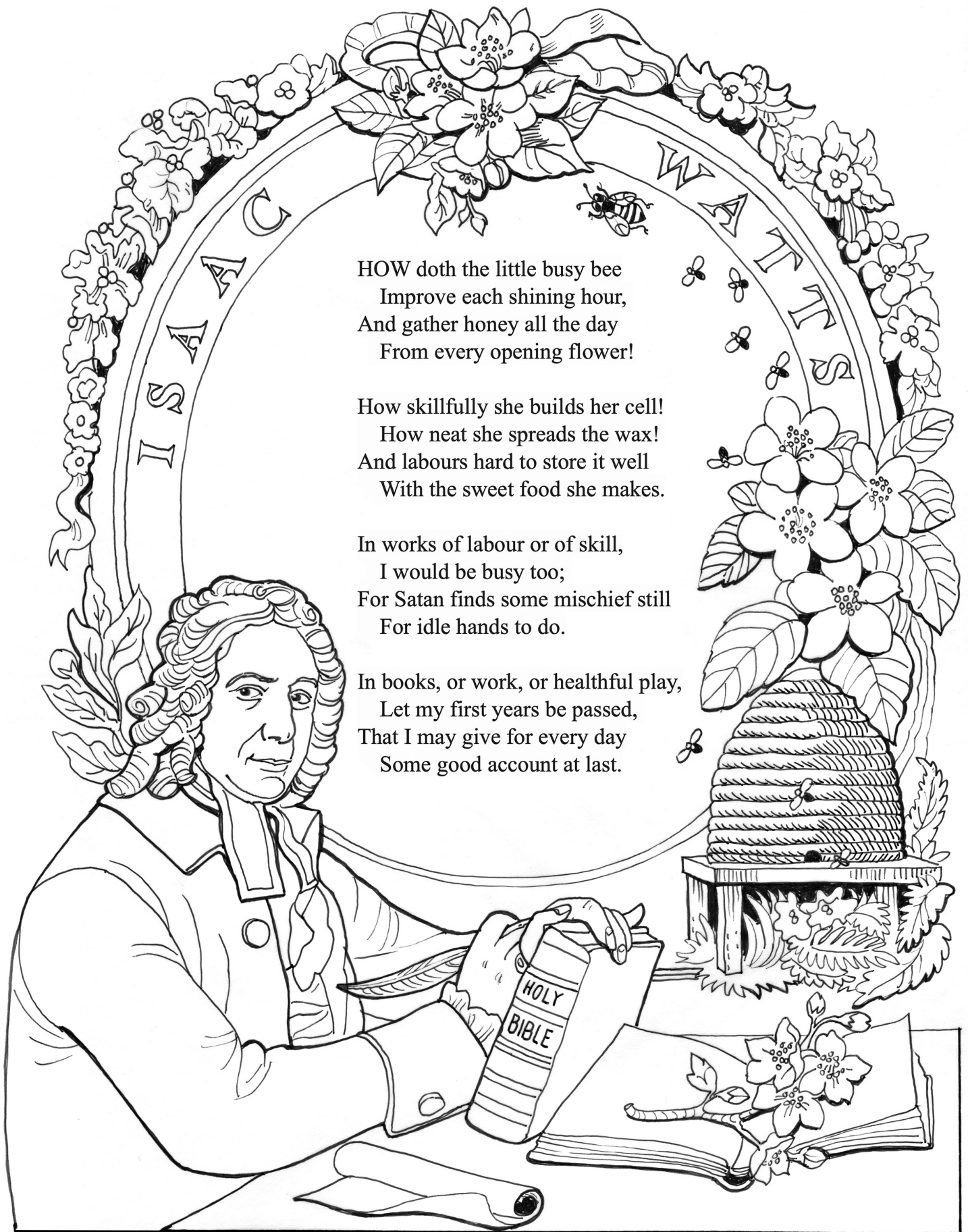


ISAAC WATTS –THE FATHER OF ENGLISH HYMNODY

1674—1748



HOW doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower!

How skillfully she builds her cell!
How neat she spreads the wax!
And labours hard to store it well
With the sweet food she makes.

In works of labour or of skill,
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

In books, or work, or healthful play,
Let my first years be passed,
That I may give for every day
Some good account at last.

Christian Heritage Centre Colouring Competition 2024

Once again we are organising a Colouring Competition, and the subject of this year's picture is **'Isaac Watts—The Father of English Hymnody'**. The picture has once again been drawn for us by our dear Christian friend in America.

2024 marks the 350th Anniversary of the birth of Isaac Watts.



Born in Southampton, England, in 1674, Watts was brought up in the home of a committed Nonconformist. His father, also named Isaac Watts, had been imprisoned twice for his controversial views. In fact his father was in Southampton Gaol for 'religious offences' when young Isaac was born.

From his earliest days Isaac Watts was accustomed to hear his father reading the Word of God. Family Prayers was a special time for the Watts family, as it was for many at that time, and continues to be so for many Christian families to this day.

Even as a child Isaac had shown a passion for poetry, rhyming and 'talking'! His serious-minded father, after several warnings, severely reprimanded him, determined to rid his son of this 'rhyming nonsense'. The tearful Isaac is said to have helplessly replied, *'Oh father, do some pity take.... and I will no more verses make'*. One suspects he went a little too far! He was said to have whispered on one occasion during family prayers... *'There was a mouse for want of stairs, ran up a rope to say his prayers'*.

As a child, it is said he was sickly and unattractive, yet clever beyond his years. He began to study Latin at the age of 4, added Greek when he was 9, French at 11 and Hebrew at 13. Isaac was the eldest of nine, and when he was 11, his father wrote a letter to all of his children in which he exhorted them to *'frequently read the Scriptures and let your heart delight in them; above all books and writings, count the Bible the best, and read it most; lay up the truth of it in your hearts.'*

At the age of 15, Isaac Watts, unable to go to either Oxford or Cambridge on account of his non-conformity, went to a Dissenting Academy in London. And also at the age of 15....Isaac became a Christian, and he turned his talents to the service of the church and his great career in hymn-writing began.

As a teenager he complained to his father about the monotonous way that Christians in England sang the Old Testament Psalms. It is said that his father challenged him.. *'all right young man, you give us something better !'* Young Isaac Watts accepted his father's challenge, and so began his hymn-writing. **Carefully he wove New Testament teaching into the Old Testament Psalms and other Old Testament teachings, such as the offerings and the priesthood. The Christian world is indebted to him for his excellent labours. He set a standard and gave an example that was followed by many capable hymn writers after him. Christian Churches continue to sing many of Watts' hymns.**

Among his well-known hymns are... *When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of Glory died, and Jesus shall reign where'er the sun.* He never married but led a happy and purposeful Christian life, preaching, writing many hymns, and poems (particularly for children), in addition to a textbook on 'Logic'. He died in 1748 leaving an amazing legacy of hymns and writings. Many memorials can be found around the country, and in Southampton, in addition to a statue, a chiming clock at the Civic Centre which chimes the tune to Isaac Watt's famous hymn *'Our God, Our Help in Ages Past'*.

We would like to encourage children to take part from Home, Schools and Sunday Schools across the Country - there are no territorial limits!

- The pictures will be judged in 4 age groups. **3-4 years, 5-7 years, 8-11 years and 12+ years**
- The closing date for the Competition is **4th May 2024**
- Prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd in each age category.

Overleaf is a copy of the colouring competition sheet. This can be printed and distributed to as many people as would like to take part. Alternatively it can be downloaded from the website.

www.christianheritagecentre.org.uk

Important : Please clearly print your **name and age** (*your age on 4th May*) on the back of the picture, with your address and email address (or name of School/Sunday School)

...and post your entries, marked **'Colouring Competition @ CHC'** to:

Mrs A Burrows, 27 Beauty Bank, Cradley Heath, West Midlands B64 7HZ

Winners will be notified, and their names will be published on the website on 1st June 2024