

THE LONDON NATIVITY

- A winter celebration of the Christian fable
for people of all ages and beliefs -

Freely adapted from the English medieval mystery texts
By Phil Willmott

(The title can change to reflect any town city or village where the play is performed.)

CHARACTERS

God
The Angel Gabriel
Joseph
Mary
Elizabeth
Balthazar
Melchior
Jaspar
Herod's son
Herod
Zelomye
Salome
Simm
Hod
Coll
Other taxpayers and Shepherds

The Text

The text has been freely adapted from words and ideas in the nativity sections of most of the surviving "mystery plays". I have modernized the verse to feel immediate and accessible to a contemporary audience whilst attempting to retain a sense of the original poetry and rhythms.

Production

The plays can be performed in any conventional theatre set up however it has been devised to work as a promenade production with the audience led around several different locations. You really only need three or four empty spaces. In the 2004 production no theatre light was used – a café's lights for the early scenes, flaming garden torches for an outdoor middle section at Herod's palace and hurricane lamps and battery operated torches for the shepherds and the stable. This is a nod towards the medieval nativity plays when audiences would pass from one cart to another with a different incident in the story played out on each.

It can be performed in "traditional" costume incorporating "traditional" Christmas carols etc. however at it's 2004 performance it was played in modern dress – in fact the actor's own clothes – and until they stepped out of the audience and spoke in character no one would have guessed they were performers.

We used a mixture of medieval carols and pop songs.

If you are modernizing the look and feel of your production here's how this worked in 2004.

SCENE 1 – God's prologue, Mary & Joseph & The meeting of the 3

This section was played out as if the audience were standing at Mary and Joseph's wedding reception with the action erupting in their midst.

We made it appear as if Gabriel was simply picked out of the crowd by God and during the play he went from being scared, incompetent and bullied by Joseph, Simm etc to mastering his role.

God sent Gabriel to Mary dressed as a doctor and his proclamation first came as a diagnosis.

There can be an Eastenders soapy feel to these "whose baby?" scenes.

The Kings and Herod's son simply stepped out of the crowd. Broadly speaking Balthazar was an optimist, Melchior and pragmatist and Jaspas a slightly sinister pessimist.

There is no reference to the gender of the "Kings" within the script and they can be male or female.

SCENE 2 – Herod's Palace, Taxpayers and the lost shepherd

The audience were led outdoors by Herod's son and courtiers with flaming torches who flanked Herod's entrance.

When he appeared to be co-operating with the three drinks were served and we staged a series of photo calls with him shaking hands with each as modern politicians do.

The three put on crowns for their audience with Herod.

Taxpayers stepped out of the crowd with suitcases.

The midwives bustled Joseph around.

The lost shepherd arrived on a bicycle on which he went on to lead the audience to the other Shepherds.

SCENE 3 - Countryside protesters and the Angels

2004 had been a year of protest from the countryside Alliance so our shepherds stood with banners demanding rites for country people outside the town hall.

Any shepherds character can be male or female, just change the gender references.

Col was generally rather downbeat until he blossomed at the sight of the Christ child but tends to be their leader, Hod was a bit of a hot head and Simm was rather sweet in his honesty and good heartedness.

Simm, Hod and Col had accurate Somerset accents other shepherds came from different parts of the country but all should have rural accents.

SCENE 4 – The Journey to the Stable

We chose to avoid the better-known Christmas Carols.

SCENE 6 – The Stable

This was simply built from bails of straw.

The Sheep were basic puppets made from sheepskin coats.

As Mary and Joseph left for Egypt the cast and audience moved outside again and the holy family carried on walking and walking right off into the distance as we sang and watched there light disappear off into the darkness.

SCENE ONE

God's Prologue, Mary & Joseph & Meeting of the Three

GABRIEL AND THE HEAVENLY HOST APPEAR,
TO MUSICALLY HERALD THE ARRIVAL OF GOD.

MUSIC

GOD

For our purpose here today
It does befall that I'll portray
The Christian God as prologue to our tale
While for your pleasure we'll travail.
In seven days I made the heavens, earth and sea
Then beasts and man and woman free.
And endless is my rule and might
To save or to destroy as I delight.

But blessing now on you who stop to stand,
And listen to our story now
With silence or with mirth.

For the most the words you'll hear
Are based on verses spoke 800 years ago
In Coventry, Wakefield, Chester or in York

When like us, without playhouse stage,
With poetry, low slapstick and popular songs
Townsfolk would enact a pageant such as this.

We hope with our ancestor's words to show
Their Joseph marry Mary but as if today.
We'll see their Christ child born again
And of that joy angels shall sing once more.
Poor Shepherds shall appear as they did then
But worshipping the babe as they might now.
Today, as then, three wise ones will arrive
From far thence, A star led them the way,
With gold, with myrrh, and frankincense.
Alas they'll still tell Herod of their quest
And that they seek amongst his tribe
My son on earth, their king of kings.

So enjoy afresh this ancient play
With joy or hope or disbelief.

First the Christ child's parentage we'll learn
As Saint Luke speaks in his gospel
"From God in heaven is sent," says he,
"Salutations to a maiden mild",
Betrothed to a man is she
Of whom the name is Joseph,
The name of the maid free
Is Mary, who shall all restore.
In time to her shall be born
My son. The son of God!

TO GABRIEL

Go to her, Gabriel, newest made of angels.
Tell her she will give birth to the son of God.
Say that she is without woe and full of grace.
Her body shall be so filled with bliss
That she shall find your story credible.

GABRIEL

But what if she should stare and start
And fall quite mad to hear such news?

GOD

Hie thee! Go to her there apace,
Else the devil be there before thee.

TO AUDIENCE

How I my grace conveyed
To Mary in this manner
And what the angel said,
Take heed, all that will hear.

GABRIEL APPEARS TO MARY JUST BEFORE HER WEDDING

GABRIEL
Hail Mary, full of grace and bliss!

MARY IS UNWELL. HER COUSIN ELIZABETH SUPPORTS HER.

MARY
Gentle Sir, tis my wedding day
But of dread foreboding full am I.

ELIZABETH
She is sick with some strange malady
That makes her now laugh, now cry.

MARY
Now would I dance, now would I prey
In some rapt contemplation
Of what I know not and my belly
Seems to churn and leap in emptiness.

GABRIEL
Our Lord God is with thee,
And has chosen thee for his.
Ave gracia plena dominus tecum!
So full of grace there never was;
God would plant his blessed seed in thy body
The fiend's power for to fell.
Through the Holy Ghost,
God in thee will bide and dwell.
Among all women blessed are ye.

MARY IS ALARMED

No, dread you not, mild Mary,
Anything that may befall.
For you have found, most sovereignly
With God, a grace surpassing all.
In the chastity of your body
Conceive and bear his child you shall;
God's message I bring you. Now see
His name Jesus shall you call.

ELIZABETH

In what manner shall this be?
She guards her virginity for her husband.
For their marriage and their wedding night

MARY

Great shamefastness and great dread is in me.

GABRIEL CONSULTS GOD.

GABRIEL:

She guards her virginity for her husband.
For their marriage and their wedding night

GOD

Tell her I, as holy ghost, shall visit her
And through a miracle, shall bless her womb.
After that the Holy Ghost will in her grow.
Till he be born and called Jesus, Son of God.
In token her cousin, Elizabeth here,
Shall now conceive her husband's
Long wished for child.
Tell her to us nothing is impossible.

GABRIEL

God as Holy Ghost shall come to thee,
And see, Elizabeth, your cousin there,

MUSIC

She hath conceived a son as well --
Hear her that was called barren --
Nothing is impossible to God's usage.

ELIZABETH

As soon as his glad tidings
Came to my ears, and unto me,
I felt a child within me stir
A child inside my womb so young
Yet made great mirth unto thee.
Mary, my own cousin so dear;
This is a joyful tiding.
See.

SHE TAKES MARY'S HAND AND PLACES IT ON HER WOMB.

MARY FEELS A BABY KICKING. SHE IS ASTONISHED

I long to hear what you will say.

GABRIEL

Mary, come off and haste thee,
And take heed in thine intent
For the Holy Ghost, blessed he be,
Abides thine answer and thine assent.

MARY

Now, angel, blessed messenger,
Of God's will I hold myself well paid;
With all meekness I incline to his accord,
I love my Lord with heart full clear,
For all the grace he has for me laid.
As God's own handmaid, behold me here,
To do his will all ready made;
Be it done to me, in joyous cheer-
Through all your words, as you have said.

MUSIC

SHE FEELS A BABY KICK WITHIN HER.

Ah, now I feel in my body be
Perfect God and perfect man,
Without pain in flesh and bone!

ELIZABETH

Thus conceived never woman none
That ever had being in this life.

MARY

I cannot tell what joy, what bliss,
Now I feel in my body!
Angel, I thank you for this!
Most meekly recommend me to my Father's mercy.
To have been the mother of God, full little knew I!

ELIZABETH

Of every woman most revered,
And the fruit of your body
Blessed is, both far and near.

GABRIEL

Blessed are you, most worthy maid,
To God, through chastity.
You trusted, and yourself held paid

At his will for to be.
All that for you is said
From my lord so free.
Such grace for you is laid,
As is fulfilled indeed.

JOSEPH ARRIVES FOR HIS WEDDING.

ELIZABETH:

Have done, coz, and take good heed
Joseph, he is come hither.
Think now, what you may say
To stay his wonder at our news.

MARY

Dreadless to me he is, full dear;
Joseph, my spouse, welcome are ye.

JOSEPH

I thank you, Mary...say, what cheer?
Mary, my bird so bright?
Our wedding guests you've long kept waiting.
Tell me the truth, how is it with thee?

GOD

Return again, my Gabriel,
Unto Joseph for to tell
Such as my will is.
Bid him with Mary abide and dwell
For it is no other's son but mine,
That she is with.
Tell full well.

GABRIEL

Almighty God of bliss,
I am ready for to wend
Whither as thy will is
To go both far and wide.

JOSEPH

...Who has been here?
Your belly swells, it seems to me!

ELIZABETH

I can not lie your bride is with child full great!

JOSEPH

That answer it has almost slain me-

The child, I know, is not mine.
Therefore I know I am beguiled.
(TO MARY) You are with child! Alas, for care!
(TO ELIZABETH) Ah, ye coz, shame on ye,
That let her learn such fare!
That gives me now, sorrow unsought.
But why would not some other man take her?

ELIZABETH
Joseph! Do not believe
She had some weak affair!

JOSEPH
Believe no harm? Foolish wench, away!
Her sides show me she is with child!
Whose is't, Mary?
Well know I I'm beguiled
By me your flesh was never defiled.
And I reject it here, thereby.
TO ELIZABETH
Say, cousin, how is this?
Tell me the truth, I advise;
Unless you do, know this
You surely shall pay the price!

ELIZABETH
You can threaten as much as you can.
I have nothing to tell you, still.
For truly, here came never no man
To touch your bird so bright.
In her is God's grace.
For she did never amiss,
And ever witness will I.

MARY
Listen, my love, my strength, my dear.
There came a messenger from God
And greeted me fair and said "ave".
And furthermore to me gan tell
God should be born in my body
The fiend's power for to fell.
Through the Holy Ghost, as I well see,
Thus God in me will bide and dwell.
It was the will of God, as I you tell.

GABRIEL APPEARS TO JOSEPH

GABRIEL

Joseph, Joseph, harken unto God's will!

JOSEPH
Who's he?

GABRIEL
I am called Gabriel; from Heaven, God's angel;
He has taken your Mary into his keeping.
And I am sent here for this bidding to tell
Go cheer thy wife, with hearty will
And change thy cheer, amend thy thought!
She is a full clean May.

JOSEPH
Oh then I see well this meaning is,
For in an angel's likeness
With some foul trick you've her beguiled
And lain with her.

GABRIEL
I tell thee, God will of her be born
And she clean maid as she was before
To save mankind that is forlorn!
Go cheer her, therefore, I say.

JOSEPH
God's child! Thou lyeest in faith!
God did never jape so with a maid

MARY
The father of heaven and you, it is.
Other father hath he none.
I did never forfeit with man.
This child is God's and yours.
God's and yours, I say.

JOSEPH
Mary, why lie to me so
And feign such fantasy?
Alas, I am full woe!
For sorrow, why might I not die?
Oh me, this is a woeful case.
I dare look no man in the face.
-why am I not dead?
Loathsome is my life!
For pity, my heart is rife!
Alas, why wrought you so,
Mary, my intended wife?

Know Mary, all that you meet
Will know your words are wan.
Your womb shall still betray
You, that you have met another man.

MARY
Sir, it is God's by his will.
And yours.

JOSEPH
Nay, I have naught to do with this!
Name it no more to me, be still!
You know as well as I
That fleshly, you and I
Did never such deeds so ill.

MARY
None but yourself.

JOSEPH
Let be, for shame!
How, such sayings make me sorry.
Therefore, be not so bold;
Such tales should not be told,
But hold you still as stone.

MARY
Joseph, you are beguiled.
With sin was I never defiled.
God's word in me is seen.
Truly it is God's hand,
The maker of sea and sand.
From this I shall never go.

SHE LEAVES HIM AND PRAYS

Now great God, of his might,
Who accomplishes all things right,
Meekly to you I plead.
Rue on this noble, weary man,
That, in his heart, might light
The truth to trust and know.

JOSEPH
Now, Lord God, that all things may
At your own will both do and dress,
Show me now some ready way
To walk here in this wilderness.

My heart so heavy is.

MARY

Now great God show you this,
And mend you of your miss
Of me, what so betide.
As you are king of bliss,
Send him some sign of this,
In truth that you might bide.

GOD

Harken, Joseph, and better keep
Your Mary, who is your fellow good.
You make her heart full sore,
Who loves you as she should!

JOSEPH

Alas, for joy, I quiver and quake!
Alas, what hap now was this?

GOD

In loyal wedlock, lead you!
Leave her not, I forbid you!
She bares our son of Heaven.
The child that shall be born of her,
It brings all joy and bliss forever,
And to mankind, of all, the most.
Jesus his name you'll call,
His people save he shall
From evils and trials all
Which now ensnare them fast.
Now the time is at hand
That the child is now to verify
Which shall save mankind
As is was spoken by prophecy.

JOSEPH

I thank thee, God, that sits on high
With heart and will and mind
That ever thou wouldst me bind
To wed Mary my wife,

GABRIEL

And since you would have her refused,
And blamed the one who ever was clear,
You must pray her to hold you excused,
As some men do, with full good cheer.

JOSEPH

Say, Mary, wife,...how fare you?

MARY

The better, sir, for you.

Why stand you there? Come near.

JOSEPH

My back fain would I bow,

And ask forgiveness now.

I hope you will me hear.

MARY

Forgiveness, sir? Let be, for shame-

JOSEPH

Yea, Mary, I am to blame

For words that some time past I spoke.

Ah mercy, mercy, my gentle mate!

Mercy! I have said all amiss.

Had thou not been a virtuous wife

God would not have been thee within

What I have said here, I forsake.

Your sweet feet now let me kiss.

MARY

Nay, let be my feet, not those ye take!

My mouth ye may kiss, and welcome unto me.

JOSEPH

Gramercy, my own sweet wife!

Gramercy my heart, my love, my life!

I shall never more make such strife

Betwixt me and thee.

Now, Lord God, full well is me

That ever I this sight should see!

I never was so light!

Now I thank God with speech and spell

That ever, Mary, I was wedded to thee!

JOSEPH CARRIES MARY OUT

GOD

Now these were the days of Herod the king, so when there came wise ones from afar saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" Herod got to hear of these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

GABRIEL AND THE ANGELS EXIT

BALTHAZAR ARRIVES

BALTHAZAR

Almighty God, who all has wrought,
I honour thee as is worthy-
Thou, who with your bright star
Has brought me far from home.
I shall not cease till I have sought
The hope your star doth signify.
But I am weary with my lonely sojourn.
God, grant me luck so that I might
Have grace to get good company,
In my quest.

MELCHIOR

Hail to you traveler far from your home.
Methinks by your words that you too seek
Our savior, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Cross continents I've followed far
The gleaming of some new made star.
The child will be born in a stable.
So the prophet tells. In these lands.

JASPAR APPROACHES THEM

BALTHAZAR

My name is Balthazar
Of that prophets' teaching I am aware.
My country's torn with faction's, discontent.
Therefore, I too the star have followed far
The wisdom of a maiden's child to seek.
My country's rich, I bring our red gold,
So reason he'll me teach.

MELCHIOR

Melchior my name is called
In Tars we are a starving people
By swollen banks and fields brown.
I have traveled by many a town
My lord's love to win for I believe
This birth can bring us hope.
Incense shall he burn for guidance
Priest before his father's breast.
And so I bring him incense sweet.
Of better times he'll be the root.
In all virtue found the most.

JASPAR

“On bitter tree he shall be bent,
Man and God omnipotent.
With bitter beating his flesh be rent
Until his blood be bled”
Greetings to you, I would you pray
You tell me more of your intent
Whither you go forth on this way?

BALTHAZAR

Full gladly, friend, I shall you say.
A sudden sight to us was sent
A royal star that rose ere day,
Before us, in the firmament.
That made us leave our homes,
The matter for to prove.

JASPAR

Surely, sirs, I saw the same
That makes us thus to move;
For, sirs, I have heard tell, certain,
It means some marvels shall betide.
Further knowledge I would gain;
That makes me this long road to take.

BALTHAZAR

Lord God, that all good has begun,
I think I have companions found,
My yearning faithfully to fulfill!
Friends, God save thee and thee!
And keep you ever from woe.

JASPAR

Jasper is my name known
In many countries that are my own
Back home in Hipotan and in Arkage
We wonder at strange prophecies.
A wondrous sage, a child, will make all clear
It's he I seek and I have traveled right far.
Through bitter blasts that begin to blow
I follow after the star.
I bring myrrh as my present, lo,
A bitter liqueur I tell you
For he shall suffer a bitter blow
Who in Madonna's flesh is clad.

BALTHAZAR

Friend, your fellowship to attain
We would be glad.

JASPAR
Now side by side,
God grant us, Encouragement
This wintertide.

MELCHIOR
Sir, here is Jerusalem
To search before we go.
Beyond is Bethlehem;
There shall we seek also.

HEROD'S SON INTERRUPTS THEM

HEROD'S SON
Strangers you must understand
(For wisdom now we all do need),
My father, Herod, rules this land,
And makes the laws, his land to lead.
I could you teach where he doth dwell wide
Up in this hide in pomp and in pride.

MELCHIOR
Sir, since Herod is at hand,
Unto his help we should take heed.
If in his blessing we may stand,
Then we may without fear proceed.

HEROD'S SON
His benevolence you shall reach.
From this stopping unto his dwelling
Is not far. Now you should glide.

JASPAR
To have leave of the lord
Is reasonable, indeed.

BALTHAZAR
To that let us accord,
And go, with all good speed.
Now lead us all to the king's hall.

MELCHIOR
Perhaps you can tell, we pray to thee
How we should best salute your King
So we may know how him to please

And gain his friendship.

HEROD'S SON

(TO THE THREE AND THE AUDIENCE)

Follow all anon upon this ground to the castle round
And I'll expound upon my father's state.

SCENE TWO

Herod's palace, the Tax Payers & the lost Shepherds

HEROD'S SON LEADS THE THREE AND THE AUDIENCE TO HEROD.

Lords and ladies accord my royal father due respect,
All other kings his crown may clearly command.
If there's anyone in this world that does dwell
That forges any felony; mercilessly he'll cast them down.
When traitors untrue will not attend his might
We love to lay them low, far from brightness and light.
We with happy vigor set them a sore reply, those fools.
Would be a loon would underestimate my father's sway,
That sot myself would seize, with care make him curse,
Yea, and work him to wail for woe, ere day's waning.
Then when he's brawling, his brain will I gladly burst,
And with countenances cruel I'll crack his skull.

COURTIER

The storm clouds overhead make him rejoice,
Blending brutal blasts to blow where he bids.

COURTIER

His enemies harboring envy's thoughts
Listen to his thunder and lay themselves low.

COURTIER

This roof of red sky of clouds does he purge when
Thunderbolts thickly by the thousands he throws.

COURTIER

All the planets, proud in their light,
Shall brace forth their beams to bathe his body.

COURTIER

There is no lord of land in lordship like to him
None lovelier, none more lovesome, everlasting is my lay!

COURTIER

Of beauty and of boldness, he bears evermore the bell,

With main and with might, he master's every man.

HEROD ENTERS CRUEL WITH SICKNESS

TO THE AUDIENCE

HEROD

On pain of limb and land,
Cease your shouting loud
And still as stone now stand;
To my speaking, record!
You ought to give renown
And humbly bow down
To me, your lovely lord.

You ought, in field and town,
To bow at my bidding,
With reverence and renown,
As is right for such a king,
The lordliest alive.
As is right for your king,
The lordliest alive.
See there frozen terror, boy.

HEROD'S SON

We soon will bring them woe.
But I am annoyed now, so
That blithe I may not be.
My lord, some news! A Marvel.

HEROD

Tell the marvels - but I mean
The ones that will be mirth for me.

HEROD'S SON

Lord, even as I have seen,
The truth you soon shall see,
If you will, readily:
My lord, I saw this morn
Three great one's speak together.

HEROD:

Foolish Boy, you babble of naught!

MESSENGER:

Sir, there is no help for it.
Strangers three. Bearing rich gifts
Though not for thee. I met and spoke withal

Of a babe to be born who will be king
What they have meant, nor whither
They are bent I could not understand
But they agreed to come hither.

HEROD

Say, Lumpkin, if they're far or near?

MESSENGER

Father they await close by;
I planned it well, and never fear.

HEROD

Go fetch them hither.
Let every man make merry cheer,
That no sign should be seen
But of friendship and goodwill,
'Till we know what they mean
Whether good or ill.

HEROD'S SON

If they rave
Or seem mad
I shall them beat
Their wits defeat
Their heads split
Their blood to have.

THE THREE APPEAR BEFORE HEROD

HEROD

Welcome Strangers.
I am Great Herod, mighty lord & king,
High regarded ruler of this land
Through which you ride with rich array.
Cruel and curried in my crown now.
I sit under Caesar in my throne

BALTHAZAR

Hail to thee king on throne full high!

MELCHIOR

The lord that lends everlasting light
Which has us led out of our land,
Keep thee, sir king this winter night,
And all thy folk that here do stand.

JASPAR

Knowest thou ought of a child near by?
He is born here about of a virgin maid.

HEROD

This would be a wondrous thing.

BALTHAZAR

Each of us did doubt it, sire
Until a star stood us before
That made us soon enquire
Of he that is new-born.

MELCHIOR

Yes, such heartening have we all had.
We will not cease 'till we see the babe.

HEROD

Say, what babe might this be?
New-born? That burden I think bad;
And surely, unwise were you all
To leap over land to look for a lad.
Say, when did you lose him? Not long before?
All wise men will think you mad;
Therefore, mention this no more.
Now, give us news to understand.

JASPAR

That you shall know if that you crave
To speak not spoil, to save not slay.

MELCHIOR

The child is born to be your king,

BALTHAZAR

He shall be king even over every king.
And to him fain would we bow.

MELCHIOR

Indeed, he shall be king
Of all creation.

HEROD

King? In the Devil's name, dogs, you lie!
New well I see you rant and rave.
By any shimmering of the sky
How should you know either king or knave?
I'm great Caesar's King within this realm.

HEROD'S SON

Such tricksters may greatly grieve
To witness that which never was.

MELCHIOR

Now, lord, we ask but leave
By your power to pass to Bethlehem
Where it's foretold the Babe is born.

HEROD'S SON

False villains! Unless you get you home
You shall be beaten and bound in bands!

HEROD

(ASIDE TO SON)

Peace you screaming jay and harken,
Let all this wrath run off now; and
With sober mind support their aims.
Thus shall we clearly understand
Their mind and their meaning;
And take good heed thereto
To defeat this foul defame

HEROD'S SON

Father, surely, shall I do.

HEROD

(TO KINGS)

Now friends, to catch all care away,
Since you are come from lands a far
Against our former rage, now, nothing mark
On pain of losing life and limb.
And so that you the truth will say,
I grant you leave to pass herein.
Go you to find him whom you seek
And if you know such a leech
And him find, come again to me.
With reverence I shall seek him too
And honour him on my knee.

BALTHAZAR

Sir king, I see with joy we're
All of one accord. No doubt
Because a babe will be born
That shall be king and lord,
And heal those that are torn.

MELCHIOR

Sir, you need wonder at no thing
Of this same matter that gives us news;
For prophets foretold a star should spring
The sacred word's were true,
And such a star appeared.

JASPAR

Isaiah says a maiden young
Should bear a babe, among the Hebrews,
Who of all countries shall be king,
And govern all that on Earth grows;
Jesus is to be his name,
That is, "God's son of Heaven,"
And indeed this is the same
That we here to you mention.

HEROD (ASIDE)

Fie on them! Traitors! Fie!
Will they beguile me thus?

BALTHAZAR

Sir, the proven prophet Hosée
Did prophecy in town and tower.
A maiden indeed, said he,
Shall bear one like to the lily flower.

JASPAR

He means, a child conceived shall be
Without the seed of man.

MELCHIOR

And his mother, a maiden free,
And he, both son and saviour.

BALTHAZAR

I believe the star shines over
Bethlehem. There will he be born.

HEROD

Bethlehem!
Now surely, this is well said.
This eases all my pain.
Friends, friends, I hold me paid
Of all your purpose plain.
Go forth, your mission to fulfill,
For Bethlehem is here at hand.

BALTHAZAR

Surely, sir, we shall you say
The truth of that same child,
In all the haste we may.

MELCHIOR
The star has led us to your lands
May it guide us to that child so lovely.

JASPAR
Yon star will us teach the way full soon.
To save us from mischief God I beseech.

MELCHIOR
King have good day. I go my way
To seek The lord of might.

JASPAR
King full stern, by fell and fern, I go
To seek a king. He is dwelling in woe.

BALTHAZAR
If we him find, our king full kind,
By a maid, we'll come to you again.

THEY BOW AND EXIT

HEROD
Farewell! You are beguiled.
If you dare come again to me
That day shall you lie cold.

HEROD'S SON
Blabbering, boasting of some king but you?
Father, we must mar those of our subjects
That reverence too much and worship
This new king. And yet he's great they say.

HEROD
Fool! There's no king but I!
To Bethlehem must you wend,
To bring a shameful end
To that brat who'd master me.

HEROD'S SON
Full soon he shall be caught,
Of that I make my vow.

HEROD

Silence! Let me tell you how
To work when there you've come.
Because you know him not,
Just gather a great rout
Of the keenest knights alive,
And tell them to put to instant death
All boy infants there are found
In Bethlehem and all around;
Let them seek in every stead.
All around the town you'll need
To inquire and to spy.
Spare none that are still within two years.

HEROD'S SON

Yes, No matter how they plead.
Until that lad is caught
I shall never rest in bed.

HEROD

And our three guests shall then perceive
Their prophecies of hope will turn to tears,
I shall prune their suckling babe and prove him but a toad
When he painfully shall bleed.

HEROD'S SON

Father sure you've spoken well;
As you've said, every deal
I shall order done, indeed.

HEROD

Born so soon, so near! A child!
Such news it chills my blood!
For he is young and I, his king,
Am sick and old.

HEROD'S SON

Fear not my father, The streets
Of Bethlehem shall run with
Blood by sunrise!

GOD:

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all must go to be taxed, every one unto his city of birth.

And Joseph, with Mary his espoused wife great with child, also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, and arrived that night in the city of David, Which is called Bethlehem!

MARY AND JOSEPH AMONGST A THRONG OF TAX PAYERS IN BETHLEHEM

All

We would full fill the bidding of our emperor
To pay tribute. This duty is ours.
And being of the city of David
To keep ourselves from persecution
We all have come here to Bethlehem.

INDIVIDUALS -

King David's race must pay their taxes here.
It was cried in every borough and city by name.

Lord what travail to man is wrought!
Rest in this world befalls him not.

The emperor's commandments we must hold with,
Or else we were to blame.

But, Lord God, but the weather is cold!
The frostiest freeze that ever I felt.
And I am weak, and all weary,
And need to rest.

Lord, grant us good harbour this night
In Bethlehem.

So many people have come to town
That we can nowhere harboured be,
There is such press.

I have sought both up and down,
Through diverse streets in this city
And lodging is there none.

I pray, God help those that are old;
Especially those that are unwell
So may I say.

By great need we now are led,
For here is neither food nor bed,

JOSEPH

Ah sweet wife, what shall we do,
Where shall we lodge this night?
Say Mary, What shall we do?

My spouse, you be with child.
I fear you'll miscarry,
For it seems to me the night is wild.

MARY

God will advise full well, you'll see;
Therefore, Joseph, be of good cheer.
For born in this town he will be
Who shall save us from sorrows severe,
Both even and morn.
Husband, you know well, the time is near
He will be born.

JOSEPH

Then I wish we had light & shelter
Whatever befall.
It grows full dark within my sight
And cold withal.
Hail, worshipful sir and good day!
A citizen of this city you seem to be.
Of shelter for my spouse and me I you pray,

UNHELPFUL CITIZEN

Sir, shelter in this town know I none,
Wherein thy wife and thou may sleep.
Each house is full here, every one
People lie out in every street.

JOSEPH

Aye Friend, debate that will I not.

TAXPAYER

Within a house thou canst come not
Be thou once within the city gate,
Unless in the street a place be sought
Therein to rest without debate.

JOSEPH

Now gracious God, for your mercy,
Advise us best.
Unto the father of heaven pray we so
To keep us from the wicked night.
Almighty God in Trinity,
I pray, oh Lord, for your great might
For truly this woman if full weary
And fain at rest, sir, would she be.

KINDLY CITIZEN

Good man, one word I will thee say,
If thou wilt be advised by me.
Yonder is a horse barn that stands in the way
Among the beasts sheltered you may be.

MARY

But hark now, good husband, a new relation,
Which in myself I know right well.
The father of heaven, now may he thee shield.
To God in heaven, for you I pray.
He preserve you, wherever you be.
In your poor lodging my chamber I take.
Between my sides I feel him stirreth.
Go we hence, husband, for now the time is.

JOSEPH

God be thine help, spouse. It seemeth me sore
Thus feebly lodged and in so poor degree
God's son among beasts to be born.
His wondrous works fulfilled must be
In a house that is desolate without any wall.
Fire and wood none here is.

MARY

Joseph, my husband, abide in a stable I shall,
And there will be born the King's son of bliss.

JOSEPH

Therefore, will I now hence to find
Some midwife near to ease your travail.
TO KINDLY CITIZEN
Take care my wife I prey. I'll speedily return.
If you will ought else have, tell me your needs.
I shall try and find you something here,
Of meat and drink too.

MARY

Meat and drink need I right naught.
Almighty God my food shall be.
I prey you friend guide us to this place, I prey you.
My time is near.

JOSEPH

I will go seek some light to see
And try some fuel with me to bring.
Farewell true wife and blessed maid.
God be your comfort in Trinity.

MARY

May Almighty God you govern and lead
As he is sovereign of every thing
By his might and main;
And lend me grace by his loving
Myself to ordain.

Now will be born of my body
Both God and man together here.
Blessed must he be.
Jesus my son that is so dear,
Now born is he.

THE KINDLY CITIZEN HELPS MARY OFF TOWARDS THE STABLE

JOSEPH

Now God from whom comes all relief
In whom all grace to us is ground
So save my wife from hurt and grief
Till I some midwives for her have found.
Travailing women in care be bound
With great pain when they do groan.
God help my wife that she not swoon.
I am full sorry she is alone.
Therefore some midwife fain would I see,
Midwives, that may do her good,
Help my young spouse in haste, anon,
I dread me sore of that fair food.

TWO MIDWIVES ZELOMYE AND SALOME BUSTLE ON

ZELOMYE

Be of good cheer and of glad mood.
We two midwives with thee will go.
There was never in such plight stood
But we were ready her help to do.

SALOME

My name is Salome, all men me know
For a midwife of worthy fame.
When women travail grace doth grow
When I come, I have never had shame.

ZELOMYE

And I am Zelomye. Men know my name.
We two with thee will go together
And help thy wife from hurt and pain.
Come forth, Joseph, go we straight thither.

JOSEPH

I thank thee, dames, you comfort my life.
Straight to my spouse walk we the way.

THEY FOLLOW JOSEPH OFF

GOD

And there were in the same country shepherds
Abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

SIMM, A LOST SHEPHERD, ARRIVES.

SIMM

Now god that watches over shepherds
Save my fellows and me!
For I know not where my sheep nor they be,
Now is it near the middle of the night;
This night it is so cold
Theses weathers are dark and dim of light
And of them I have no sight,
But now to make my heart light
To them I'll cry with all my might
Full well my voice they know:
Hello! Fellows! Hello! Hello! Hello!

HE HEARS TWO VOICES CALL

HOD

Hark! Sym? Hark! I hear out Brother call!

COL

Sym, Sym!

SIMM

This is their voices right well I know;
Therefore toward them let us go,
And follow their voice aright.

HE GUIDES THE CROWD TO THE OTHER SHEPHERDS WHO ARE PROTESTING AT
THEIR LOT.

SCENE THREE

The Countryside Protest and the Angels

See, See, where they do protest!
I am right glad we have them found!

COL

Brother, where hast thou been so long,
And it's so cold this night?

HOD

Lets raise our voices 'gainst the weather
And our Lords and Masters.

COL

No wonder as it stands if we be poor
We are so burdened with tax and oppressed
Our lives are made misery by taxations
Till we sleep not with worry for our kin.

SHEPHERD

Thus are country folk oppressed and beasts miscarry
By them that hold they us under,

HOD

Thus they cause such hardship
It were great wonder that ever we should we thrive.

SHEPHERD

Whilst they may get new painted gowns
Or new brooch for feast days
Woe to him that complains with any word
Our Norman master to reproach.

HOD

He can make
What demands he likes with threats and beatings

SIMM

And all is through lording over men that are greater

SHEPHERD

There came a Norman lord: as powdered like a peacock
He must take my land, my plough also
Thou I am full fane to grant it so.

SHEPHERD

Thus live we in pain, anger and woe by night and day

COL

He must have what is mine and if I should deny it
I were better be hanged then say him nay

HOD

Why fares this world thus?

SHEPHERDS LOOSE HEART AND DISPERSE LEAVING SIMM, HOD AND COL.

COL

Full soon will spring the daylight;
It drawith full near the time.
For awhile let us rest,
And repast ourselves of the best;
Till that the sun rise in the east,
Let us all here abide.

SIMM

Say fellows what - have you found any feast?
It fits I should have my part, indeed!

THE THREE SHEPHERDS SETTLE WITH FOOD

SIMM(NOTICING THE STAR)

Hey, Hod!

HOD

Hey, how?

SIMM

Listen to me.

HOD

Whoah, man, you go mad out of might!

SIMM

Hey, Coll!

COL

What care has come into thee?

SIMM

Brother, look up and behold!
What thing is yonder that shineth so bright?
As long as ever I have watched my fold,
Yet saw I never such a sight in field.
Step you forth and stand by me right,
And tell me then,
If ever you saw such a sight

COL

I? Nay, truly, nor never no man.
Hey, Hod, behold in the east

A wondrous sight then you shall see
Up in the sky.

HOD
Hey, tell me men, among us three
What makes you stare so steadily?

COL
As long as we have herdsman been
So wondrous a sight was never seen

HOD (SEES THE STAR)
Hey! No, Col, it comes new enough!
This star with piercing rays so keen
What think you two that it might mean?

COL
Ah, now is come the time foretold,
By ancient fathers from of old,
That in the winter's night so cold,
A maid should bear a flower bold.
Now it's fulfilled.
For now in her these words unfold,
And God is now born of maid.

HOD
I have heard say, by that same light
Our people shall be made free,
The Devil's forces will fall in fight,
And all of his power excluded should be.

COL
Beloved be God, the most in might,
That gives us grace to see this sight.
We praise him now as it is right
And kneel we here this holy night.
Almighty Lord,
We thank you for this star so bright
That through thick darkness sends such light.

THE HEAVENLY HOST SING

Go Tell it on the Mountain

*While shepherds kept their watching
Over silent flocks by night
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a holy light.*

THEY HUM THE NEXT VERSE AND CHORUS UNDER -

GOD

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid.
And the angel said unto them,

GABRIEL

Joy to God that sits in heaven,
And peace to men on earthly ground.
A child is born
Through whom the world shall be unbound.
Therefore I sing of joy in heaven
The flower of friendship now is found.
The God that dwells on high,
For his glory man's ghost shall win.
He has sent salvation for man's sin.
Peace is come to man's kin
Through God's sleights sly!

THE HOST

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

SIMM

Ah, ah, this was a wondrous note
That was now sung above the sky

HOD

What can it mean that thus is sung?
I saw a great light with shimmering shine.

SIMM

Brothers I am sore afraid.

COL

fear not this is some foolery
I counsel that we
Fly fast over these fells
And speak of something else.

SIMM

I can sing as well as they
And as a test it shall be soon
Proved, ere we pass

If ye will help, sing on! Let's see
For it was thus
I have that tune full well

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

COL
Nay you're wrong! So was it not

HOD
I have the song full well in tune
In my mind I thought the song was -

HOD & COL SING BADLY

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere*

SIMM (LAUGHING AT HIS FRIENDS)
Ha ha! These were merry notes!
By the death that I shall die,
I have so cracked my throat,
My lips are nearly dry

GABRIEL
You boast, my boys.
Now, what it was, to know would we
That made this noble noise.

GOD
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude
Of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

THE HEAVENLY HOST
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

GOD
And lo! above the earth,
Rang out the angels chorus
That hailed the Savior's birth.

SIMM
Saw I never such a sign
Shaped upon the skies.
It comes right over all this realm

Even above Bethlehem.

THE HEAVENLY HOST

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

THE HOST AND SHEPHERDS AND ALL

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

GABRIEL

Fear not for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying
in a manger.

OTHER SHEPHERDS RETURN

SHEPHERD

An angel brought us tidings too
A babe here in Bethlehem is born,
Of whom did speak our prophesies true.
And bade us meet him there this morn.
That mild of mood-
I would give him both hat and horn,
If I could see that noble sight.

COL

Him to find, we have no doubt,
And I shall tell the reason why
Yonder star will point him out.

ANOTHER SHEPHERD

Yeah, you say the truth, let's go thereby
Him to honour,
And making mirth with voices high
With song we seek our Saviour.

SCENE FOUR
The Journey to the stable

EVERYONE PROCESSES TO THE STABLE SINGING

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

*Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

AS THEY APPROACH THE STABLE -

GOD

And so it was, that, while they were there,
The time was accomplished that Mary
Should be delivered of the Christ Child.

SHEPHERD

Ah, Lord God, what light is this,
That comes shining thus suddenly?

SHEPHERD

In truth, it is a wondrous sight.

COL

The prophet's told full long before,
How a star should rise full high
And of a maiden should be born;
A son that shall our saving be
From cares keen.

HOD

Moon by night nor sun by day
Shone never so clear in their lightness.

SHEPHERD

At our saviour's birth, I too heard say
A star would shine out and signify
Delightful gleams as bright as day.

SIMM

The wonderful light makes me afraid.

JOSEPH AND THE MIDWIVES PUSH THEIR WAY THROUGH THE CROWD

JOSEPH

This has he ordained of grace,
My son so young
A star to be shining out a space
At his birthing.
Welcome! Welcome! Enter all!

SCENE FIVE
The Stable

EVERYONE GOES INTO THE STABLE AS A CAROL IS SUNG

SIMM, HOD AND COL REMAIN OUTSIDE TO ENTER LATER

IN THE STABLE MARY CRADLES THE CHRIST CHILD.

AS THE COMPANY GATHER AROUND MARY IN THE STABLE -

INDIVIDUALS -

Yea, indeed this same is he.
Honour and worship both day and night,
Everlasting lord, be done to thee,
Always as worthy;

Lord, to your service I promise me
With all my heart wholly.

Hail in a manger
All laid in a stall!

Hail, that father, and hail, his son;

Hail, my lord God, hail prince of peace;

Hail, sovereign Lord, all sins to cease;

Hail, flower of flowers, fairest found!

Hail pearl peerless, prime rose of price!

Hail bloom on bud! We shall be unbound
With thy bloody wounds and works full wise.

Hail greatest God! I greet thee on the ground.

SALOME

The greedy devil shall groan through his lies
When thou winnest this world with thy wide wound,
And putttest man, rejoicing, again in Paradise.
To love thee is my delight.

SHEPHERDS

Hail, blessed might thou be!

Hail maiden, fairest in sight!

Hail Christ who has taken our kind!

Hail worker of well who with us we find!

Hail prince of Paradise!

Hail Lord over lords that lieth so low!

Hail king over kings, thy kindred to know!

WITH EVERYONE NOW IN PLACE -
JOSEPH

O Mary, what sweet thing is in your arms?
All hail maiden and wife, I say,

MARY

It is our son, the truth to say,
That is so good.
It is my gracious son indeed,
Whom prophets had foreseen.

MARY

Son, as I am a simple subject of thine
Permit, sweet son, I pray to you
That I might take thee in these arms of mine,
In this poor weed to cover you.
Grant me your bliss,
As I am your mother chosen to be
In faithfulness.

GOD

And she wrapped him in swaddling clothes,
And they laid him in a manger;
Because there was no room for them in the inn.

JOSEPH

(TO THE BABY)

Now welcome, flower fairest of hue.
I honour you with main and might.
Hail, my maker; hail, Christ Jesu;
Hail, royal king, root of all right;
Hail, Saviour;
Hail, my lord, gleamer of light;
Hail, blessed flower.
Now, lord that all this world shall win
To you, my son, this do I say
Here is no bed to lay you in.
Therefore my dear son, I do pray,
Since it is so,
That here in this crib I might you lay.
Midwives behold, she had in birth no travail
Mary for to comfort in childbed this day
Two good midwives I brought here.

SALOME

Come near, good sister Zelomye!
Behold her child clean, as I first said,
Not, as others be, all foul arrayed,
But clean and pure both mother and child.
Of this matter I am dismayed
To see them both thus undefiled.

ZELOMYE

(TO MARY)

Sweet sister how fare ye?
I shall you comfort and help right well
As another woman, if you have pain.

MARY

Of this fair birth that here is mine
Pain nor grieving felt I right none.

SALOME

It is not true, it may never be.
And both be clean. I cannot believe
That a maid milk have. Never man did see
A woman bear a child without great grief.

SALOME SNATCHES THE BABY UP.

GABRIEL

Woman, thy sorrow may be allayed!
Worship that child that there is born.
Touch the clothes where he is laid,

For he shall save all that is lorn.

HE RETURNS THE BABY TO MARY

SALOME STANDS PARALYZED.

SALOME

Now as a wretch for false belief
That I showed in doubting of this maid
My body's dead and doth me grieve.
Alas that ever I her assayed.
Oh lord of might, thou knowest the truth
That I have ever had dread of thee.
Both wife and widow that asketh for thee
And friendless children that have great need
I did them cure and all for thee
And took no reward of them nor meed.
Oh glorious child and king of bliss,
I ask you mercy for my trespass.
I acknowledge my sin, I judged amiss.
Oh blessed babe, grant me some grace
Of your maid also here in this place.
Most holy maid grant me solace,
Some word of comfort say now to me.

MARY

As God's angel to you did tell,
My child is medicine for every sore.
Touch his clothes by my counsel
Your body soon he will restore.

MARY PLACES THE BABY IN SALOME'S ARMS.

SALOME IS RELEASED.

SALOME

Ah now blessed be this child for ever more!
The son of God truly he is.
He has healed this body that was forlorn
Through false belief and judging amiss.

ZELOMYE

I'm glad I lived to see this day,
To see this sight.
In every place I shall tell this.
Of a clean maid that God is born
And in our likeness God now clad is,
Mankind to save that was forlorn.

MARY

You merciful maker most mighty,
My God, my Lord, my son so free,
Your hand-maiden in truth am I;
And to your service I promise me
With all my heart entire.
Your blessing now I beseech,
Now grant all those who are here.

SIMM HOD & COL BURST IN LATE, CARRYING SHEEP.

SIMM

Brothers, be all blithe and glad
Here's the stable where we should be

HOD

Lo, here is the house-and here is he.
In that same place are we now had;

COL

Yes, indeed, this is the same,
Look, where that lord is laid,
In ragged clothes within a manger,
Just as the angel said.

THE SHEEP LIKE THE BABY.

JOSEPH

O Mary, behold these beasts so mild
They offer praise in their manner,
Like they were men.
In truth, it seems well by their cheer,
Their lord they ken.

COL

Their lord they know, I witness well.
They worship him with might and main.

THE SHEEP LIE BY THE BABY

HOD

The weather is cold, as you can tell
They want to warm him where he's lain
With their warm fleece;

SIMM

And breathe on him as it is plain

To warm him with.

MARY

O, now sleeps my son; blessed must he be
And lies full warm, these beasts between.

COL

The angel said that he should save
The world, and all that live therein.
Therefore, if I should something crave,
To worship him I will begin,
Since I am but a simple knave,
Although I come of courteous kin.
Lo, here such baubles as I have,
A simple brooch with a bell of tin
At your bosom to be.
And when you shall wield all,
Good son, forget not me,
If any good befall.

HOD

Oh Master, that shall save both sea and sand,
See to me, since I have sought.
I am too poor to cross your hand
As my heart would, and as I ought.
Two cobble-nuts upon a band-
See, little babe, what I have brought.
And when you're lord of all the land,
Do good again, forget me not.
For I have heard declared,
By cunning clerks and clean,
That bounty asks reward,
Now you know what I mean

SIMM

Now look on me, my lord so dear,
Although I shove not forth with these
You are a prince without a peer
I have no present which could please.
But look, a horn spoon I have here,
And it will harbour forty peas.
This will I give you with good cheer;
Such novelty may not displease.

MARY

Now you, well may you be!
For your homage and your singing
My son shall reward you in heaven, you'll see.

JOSEPH

But Friends be not still,
But say your will
To many a man.
How God is born
This merry morn
He that is forlorn
Be saved now he can.

COL

Farewell babe and bairn of bliss!
Farewell, lord, that lovely is!
Farewell my own dear darling,
I know thou art a right fair thing.

HOD

Farewell my lord and my sweeting,
Farewell, born in poor array!
All this world may joy of thee.

SIMM

We shall tell
By dale and hill
How the harrower of hell
Was born this night
Mirths to mell
And fiends to quell
That were so fell
Against his right.

KINGS ARRIVE AT THE DOOR

MELCHIOR

Behold the star, as we foretold
Above where he is born!
Lo! Here is the house at hand;
We have not failed this morn.

SALOME

Whom seek you, sirs, on journeys wild,
With talking and traveling to and fro?
Here dwells a woman with her child
Her husband also, and no more.

MELCHIOR

We seek a ruler and a child;
His certain sign has told us so.

And his mother, a maiden mild;
Here we hope to find the two.

ZELOMAYE

Come near, travelers, and see;
Your way to its end is brought.
Behold, sirs; hear and see
The same that you have sought.

BALTHAZAR

Loved be that lord by night and day
Who has us guided courteously
To travel many a difficult way,
And come to this pure company.

JASPAR

Let us make now no more delay,
But bring us forth our treasury
And ordained gifts of good array,
To worship him; this is worthy.

MELCHIOR

He is worthy to wield
All worship, wealth, and win.
Brother, we do yield
To you; you shall begin.

BALTHAZAR

Hail be thou king in cold clad!
Hail with a maiden's milk fed!
Hail! I come to thee with gold glad
As wise writings bear it record.
Gold is the richest metal
And for wearing most royal
Gold I give thee in this hall
And know thee for my lord.

MELCHIOR

Lord, I kneel upon my knee.
Sweet incense I offer to thee.
Thou shalt be first of high degree,
None so much of might.
In God's house, as men shall see,
Thou shalt honour the Trinity,
Three persons in one God free,
And all one lord of might.

JASPAR

Lord I kneel down by thy bed.
In maiden's flesh thou art hid.
Thy name shall be widely spread
And king over all kings.
Bitter myrrh to thee I bring
For bitter dents on thee shall blow,
And bitter death shall be thy ending,
And therefore I make mourning.

MELCHIOR

For solaces certain now may we sing!
All is performed for which we prayed.

BALTHAZAR

But, good babe, give us thy blessing,
For a good fortune before you is laid.
Let us return to Herod the king;
To hear of this he shall be repaid,
And shall come himself and make offering
Unto this child, for so he said.

GABRIEL

Now, wise ones three, to me be attent,
And turn away quickly, yourselves to defend.
From God himself thus am I sent
To warn you as your faithful friend.
Herod the king in malice has meant
To destroy you all; your lives he will end.
And so, to avoid that man malevolent,
By other ways God shall you send
Even to your own country.
And if you ask him a boon,
Your protector shall he be
For this that you have done.

BALTHAZAR

Friends, God has kindly warned us three;
His angel here now heard have I,
And how he said.

JASPAR

And so did we.
He said Herod is our enemy,
And readies himself our killer to be.

MELCHIOR

Sirs, fast I suggest we go
Each to his own country;

May the source of wisdom show
Us the way, and with you be.

GABRIEL

Joseph, now, have no dread;
For quickly you shall hear;
Therefore, to me take heed.
For I am sent to thee
Gabriel, God's angel light
Is come, to bid you flee
With Mary and her boy so bright.
For Herod the king will now destroy
Every newborn baby boy
Less old than two.
'Till he is dead and gone,
In Egypt stay must you,
'Till I call you again.

JOSEPH

But, why does the Herod hate us?
We never did the king offend.
What is this fury that makes him kill
Small, helpless babes that never did ill
In word or deed by night or day?
Since he would be our end,
Dear Lord, I you pray
That you will be our friend,
For though his madness might be great,
Against his power, you can defend.
Now, surely-this is hard to say-
There is no choice, but we must flee
From hence where we have found such friends.
With all due speed we must be gone,
Both you and I.

ZELOMAYE

Why do they hate him so,
To make for him this strife?

SALOME

Herod ought to be ashamed
To make war on these babes unblamed
That never did ill,
This one to kill,
Though he knows not why.

MARY

Ah, why should I let go

My sweet son's only life?
I would be lost,
If my dear son should die,

JOSEPH

That sweet son if you would save,
We must quickly pack all our gear,
And such small baggage as we have.

MARY

Alas, Joseph, for grievance great,
When shall all our sorrow cease?
For I do not know where we go.

GABRIEL

To Egypt – t'was prophesied long ago.

MARY

But where is that place?
I should love to know this.

JOSEPH

How should I know?
I know not where it stands.

MARY

How can our Lord be so crazed,
To make us go such lonely ways?
He does great sin
From kith and kin
He makes us flee.
Alas, Joseph, for woe.
No one was ever so distraught.

JOSEPH

Stop this, Mary, and say not so,
For you shall have no cause for that.
For know this well God is our friend.
He will be with us until the end.
No man may do us harm;
You have our help here, in your arms.
He will us defend
'Till our journey's end
From treachery.
Let us go with good cheer.
Farewell, and have good day;
God bless all people here.

INDIVIDUALS

God show you your ways.

In all your journey, God be your speed

And of his mercy, that lord you bless
And never offend more in word, thought nor deed.

The blessing of that lord that is most mighty
Spread on you in every place.

Of your enemies to have the victory
God that best may, grant you his grace.

Hail, through whose might
All this world was first begun
Darkness and light.

THE COMPANY SING AS THEY WATCH MARY AND JOSEPH WALK AWAY INTO
THE DISTANCE.

ALL

*Lully, lullay, thou little tiny child,
bye, bye, lully lullay.*

WOMEN

*O sisters too, how may we do,
for to preserve this day,
this poor youngling for whom we sing,
bye, bye lully lullay.*

MEN

*Herod the king in his raging,
charged he hath this day,
his men of night, in his own sight,
all young children to slay.*

ALL

*Then woe is me, poor child, for thee!
And every morn and day,
for thy parting not say nor sing
bye, bye, lully lullay.*

*Lully, lullay, thou little tiny child,
bye, bye, lully lullay.*

THE AUDIENCE ARE GIVEN WORD SHEETS AND SING WITH THE COMPANY

OH LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

*Oh little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by
Yet in they dark streets shineth, the everlasting light
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

*For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above
While mortals sleep the angels keep their watch of wondering love
Oh morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth.
And praises sing to God the king, and peace to men on earth.*

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.*

*Oh holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us, our lord Emanuel.*

BOWS TO "GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN"

THE END