

As on the Night before this happie Morne

Song 46 – Christmas Day

in *The Hymnes and Songs of the Church*, London 1623.

Edited by Paul Willenbrock and Pierre Chépélov, 2020.

George Wither
(1588-1667)

Orlando Gibbons
(1583-1625)

Song 46

Songs 47 & 34

SONG. XLVII. SONG. XXXIV.

S. A Song of Joy THus Angels

AS on the Night be - fore this hap - pie Morne,
This fa - vour *Christ* vouch - sa - fed for our sake,

A. AS on the Night be - fore this hap - pie Morne,
This fa - vour *Christ* vouch - sa - fed for our sake,

T. AS on the Night be - fore this hap - pie Morne,
This fa - vour *Christ* vouch - sa - fed for our sake,

B. AS on the Night be - fore this hap - pie Morne,
This fa - vour *Christ* vouch - sa - fed for our sake,

3

A blessed *An - gell* un - to *Shepherds* told, Where (in a *Sta - ble*) he was poore - ly borne,
To buy us *Thrones*, hee in a *Man - ger* lay. Our *weaknes* tooke, that we his *strength* might take,

A blessed *An - gell* un - to *Shepherds* told, Where (in a *Sta - ble*) he was poore - ly borne,
To buy us *Thrones*, hee in a *Man - ger* lay. Our *weaknes* tooke, that we his *strength* might take,

A blessed *An - gell* un - to *Shep - heards* told, Where (in a *Sta - ble*) he was poore - ly borne,
To buy us *Thrones*, hee in a *Man - ger* lay. Our *weaknes* tooke, that we his *strength* might take,

A blessed *An - gell* un - to *Shepherds* told, Where (in a *Sta - ble*) he was poore - ly borne,
To buy us *Thrones*, hee in a *Man - ger* lay. Our *weaknes* tooke, that we his *strength* might take,

9

Whom, nor the earth nor Heav'n of heav'n's can hold Through *Beth - lem* rung This newes at their returne;
And was *dis - rob'd*, that hee might us a - ray, Our *flesh* hee wore, Our *Sinne* to weare a - way.

Whom, nor the earth nor Heav'n of heav'n's can hold Through *Beth - lem* rung This newes at their returne;
And was *dis - rob'd*, that hee might us a - ray, Our *flesh* hee wore, Our *Sinne* to weare a - way.

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And was *dis - rob'd*, that hee might us a - ray, Our *flesh* hee wore, Our *Sinne* to weare a - way.

Whom, nor the earth nor Heav'n of heav'n's can hold Through *Beth - lem* rung This newes at their returne;
And was *dis - rob'd*, that hee might us a - ray, Our *flesh* hee wore, Our *Sinne* to weare a - way.

2
14

Yea, An-gells Our Curse hee sung, That God with us was bore, That wee es-cape it born: And they made mirth, be-cause we us, that wee might

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Yea, An-gells Our Curse hee sung, That God with us was bore, That wee es-cape it may, And they made mirth, be-cause we us, that wee might

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Chorus

should not mourne. sing for aye. Their Angells - Ca - roll sing wee then; With Angells ther - fore, sing a - gen; To God on high all glo - ry bee, To God on high all glo - ry bee;

should not mourne. sing for aye. Their An - gells - Ca-roll sing wee then; With An - gells therefore, sing a - gen; To God on high all glo - ry bee, To God on high all glo - ry bee;

should not mourne. sing for aye. Their An - gells-Ca - roll sing wee then; With An - gells ther - fore, sing a - gen; To God on high all glo - ry bee, To God on high all glo - ry bee;

should not mourne. sing for aye. Their Angells - Ca - roll sing wee then; With Angells ther - fore, sing a - gen; To God on high all glo - ry bee, To God on high all glo - ry bee;

21

For Peace on earth be - sto - weth hee, And show-eth Fa - vour un - to men.
For Peace on Earth be - sto - weth hee: And show-eth Fa - vour un - to Men.

For Peace on earth be - sto - weth hee, And show-eth Fa - vour un - to men.
For Peace on Earth be - sto - weth hee: And show-eth Fa - vour un - to Men.

For Peace on earth be - sto - weth hee, And show - eth Fa - vour un - to men.
For Peace on Earth be - sto - weth hee: And show - eth Fa - vour un - to Men.

For Peace on earth be - sto - weth hee, And show-eth Fa - vour un - to men.
For Peace on Earth be - sto - weth hee: And show-eth Fa - vour un - to Men.

Of the 90 metrical verse texts comprising George Wither's *Hymnes and Songs of the Church* (London, 1623), only Songs 39 and 46 lack specific instructions indicating which of Orlando Gibbons' 17 fine tunes are to be used (e.g. "Sing this as the first Song"). As the text of Song 46, for Christmas Day, immediately precedes the **only** other Song in the collection with the same metrical form (10.10.10.10.10.10), which is for the same feast, it is (as previous editors have noticed) entirely logical to sing the words of Song 46 to the tune of Song 47.

However, in addition to its two 7-line stanzas, Song 46 has two 8.8.8.8 refrains, which seem to have baffled every editor of this attractive Song – perhaps the one in the collection that best satisfies modern taste, being very much shorter than most of the other Songs. Hitherto, all editors have simply ignored these two joyful refrains, failing to notice that in structure and text they are almost identical, word for word, to the single strophe of Song 34, *The Song of the Angels*:

Song 46 Their Angells-Caroll sing wee then;
To God on high all glory bee,
For Peace on earth bestoweth hee,
And showeth Favour unto men.

Song 34 Thus Angels sung, and thus sing wee;
To GOD on high all glorie bee:
Let him on Earth his Peace bestowe,
And unto men his Favour show.

The music of Song 34 fits perfectly, following on from that of Song 47, making a very effective, joyous little motet or carol, particularly suitable for Midnight Mass or Christmas Day. This edition adds alto and tenor parts, written by Pierre Chépe lov, to the original treble and bass voices, and retains the spelling and italics of the original. — Paul Willenbrock