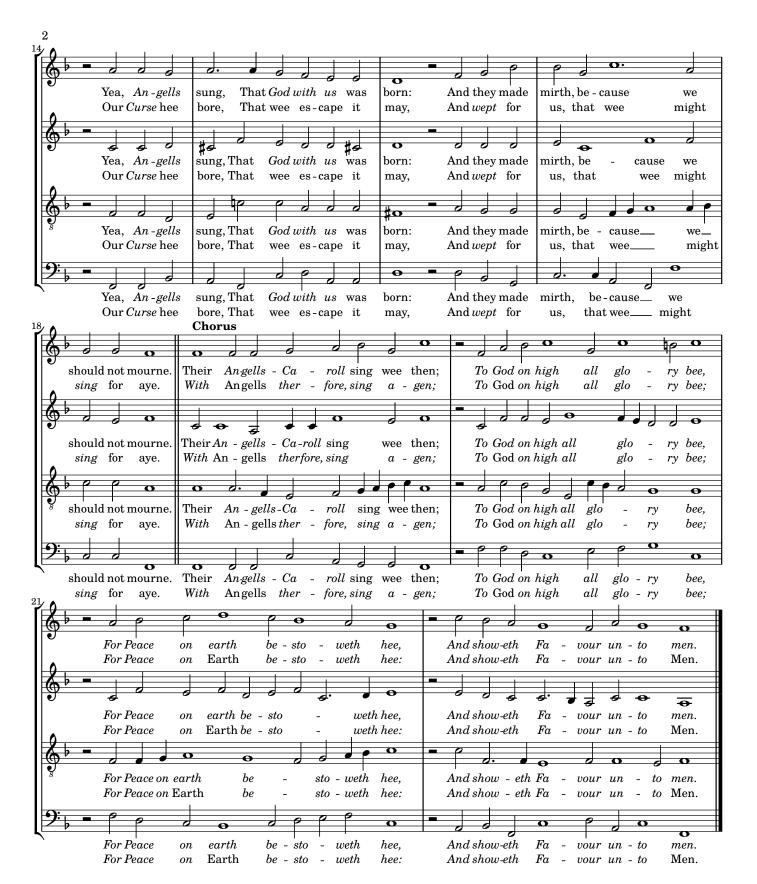
As on the Night before this happie Morne

Song 46 - Christmas Day

in *The Hymnes and Songs of the Church*, London 1623. Edited by Paul Willenbrock and Pierre Chépélov, 2020.



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



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 (10.10.10.10.10.10.10), 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 Chépélov, to the original treble and bass voices, and retains the spelling and italics of the original. — Paul Willenbrock