

have the form of Hebrew poetry, and therefore it is reasonable to suppose that they were chanted after the manner of the Psalms. This gives us no hint of the music heard in heaven, for the angels would adapt themselves to their hearers so as to edify rather than astonish them.

14. We cannot go fully into all that has been written regarding this verse. The sense generally is that the event announced by the angel enhances the glory of God, brings peace to earth, and proclaims God's goodwill to men. The main controversy centres around the word "goodwill." There are two readings differing by only a single letter, "Peace on earth to men of goodwill," and the one in our Bibles. The former is adopted by the Revised Version, "peace among men in whom *...* is well pleased," i. e., men who are the objects of God's "goodwill." "The elect people of God." (Van Oosterzee). This reading has been thought by critics to be the best supported by ancient manuscripts, but it has not proved acceptable to English readers for reasons both sentimental and logical. The sentimental reasons are obvious, but apart from these, it does not seem a statement worthy of the occasion that there is peace to those with whom God is well pleased. No heavenly chorus was needed to tell men that. The most ignorant heathen knows it. But it was in every way suitable to the event to proclaim that God looked with pitying "benevolence" on the whole fallen race. (John 3: 16; Eph. 2: 7; 1 John 4: 9, 10). Godet says "*Men of goodwill*," meaning those on whom goodwill rests, is a mode of expression without any example." Dr. Scrivener says that the received text of our authorized version "has the virtually unanimous evidence of the Greek fathers, with an authority from which there is, or ought to be, no appeal." Ti. Lewis manuscript of the gospel, discovered in 1892 in the convent at Mt. Sinai, has the common reading "goodwill towards men." Great importance is attached to this by scholars. If the words be taken to mean "men possessed of goodwill," i. e., towards God (as in the English version), it is false theology, and although an angel from heaven declared it we would not receive him. (Gal. 1: 8). If God gave peace only to those who first manifested "goodwill" none would be saved. In the highest—i. e., in the heavens, as is shewn by antithesis to "on earth." Others understand it to mean (1) in the highest strains; or (2) among the highest angels; or (3) the most high God. This was a familiar doxology. (ch. 19: 38). "The song suggests that heaven and earth have been united, are in a certain correspondence, and may be simultaneously described; as the halo of glory spread out from God to all sides in heaven, so the halo of peace will spread out from God's people on all sides on earth." (Rom. 5: 1). (Lindsay). Peace—Isa. 9: 6. (1) Christ reconciles men to God by his atonement; (2) induces the sinner to lay down the

weapons of his rebellion; (3) bestows peace which passeth all understanding; and (4) infuses principles of kindness and goodwill amongst men, ultimately bringing about universal peace. The following clause stands in apposition and is explanatory of the reason why there is peace on earth. hence there is no connecting "and." There is peace on earth because God's kindness and compassion, his "goodwill," have found expression in this new-born babe, and are incarnate amongst men.

II. THE SHEPHERD'S VISIT. 15. Let us now go even unto Bethlehem—lit., "let us go, right off, as far as Bethlehem." The words imply that they were at some distance from the town. They did not say "let us go and see whether the news is true or not." They believed at once, and went to seek the Saviour.

16. With haste—In their eagerness they lost no time. Found—The word means "discovered" after searching. Manger—Ancient tradition states that the stable was a cave. "The monks of Bethlehem show a grotto beneath the great Christian church, lined with marble, which they claim to be the stable where the infant Christ was laid. I believe that this tradition is better founded than those of most holy places. The caravanserai, or inn, would naturally be where this is, just outside of the little town. It was founded by Chimham, son of Barzillai, in the days of David (2 Sam. 19: 37, 38; Jer. 41: 17), and was scarcely likely to be changed up to the time of Roman rule, when the early Christians consecrated it as a church. There are many natural grottos on the slope of the hill, and we frequently see in other places that the caves near a caravanserai have been enlarged and used as stables. The stable is very unlike ours. At the end farthest from the door is always an elevated dais or platform, usually made by enlarging the cavern, but leaving the floor of the platform about three or four feet higher than the area. In front of it is a long trough hollowed out, reaching from end to end—the manger. The forage is stored on this platform, out of reach of the cattle, and is pushed into the long manger as required. Here the camel drivers usually sleep, close to their animals. Now, the inn being full, Joseph and Mary would be compelled to avail themselves of this shelter, and to sojourn on this platform. Naturally, when the child was born, the manger would suggest itself as the only cradle available, where the mother could tend him lying by her side, and wrapped, as is still the universal Eastern custom, in a series of bandages from head to foot, like a mummy, till the babe looks like some limb newly set and bandaged with surgical skill." (Canon Tristram). Dr. Thompson in "*The Land and the Book*" says that such mangers make very excellent cradles indeed, and that his children have very often slept in them while spending the summer among the hills.

17. They made known abroad—They