

I. THE ANGEL'S SONG. 8. In the same country—rather “in the same place,” i. e. near Bethlehem. **Shepherds**—The sheep intended for sacrifice in the temple were pastured near Bethlehem. “Here on the road to Jerusalem, stood Migdal-Edgar, ‘the watch-tower of the flock,’ the station where the shepherds watched the flocks destined for the daily sacrifice in the temple. Animals straying from Jerusalem on any side so far as to Migdal-Edgar were confiscated to the temple service. It was a settled conviction among the Jews that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, and that previously he was to be announced from Migdal-Edgar. The beautiful significance of the revelation of the infant Christ to shepherds watching the flocks destined for sacrifice needs no comment.” (M. R. Vincent). **Abiding in the field**—There is no reason why this should not have been the case in December. In the climate of Palestine some of the finest weather of the year occurs in the latter part of this month. The precise day of our Saviour's birth is, however, not known. The event was not celebrated until after the middle of the fourth century, and then there was the utmost diversity as to date. Ultimately the usage of the Roman church prevailed. The saying of the Talmudists, on which the opposition to the December date rests, that the flocks were taken to the fields in March and brought home in November, is said to have referred to the pastures in the wilderness far away from the cities and villages. (See *Andrew's Life of Christ*). **Keeping the night watches** (R. V. marg.)—lit., “the watches of the night.” Meyer thinks that the plural refers to the different watch stations. The common view is that they kept watch by turn for a certain number of hours. It was necessary to guard against wild beasts and robbers. (1 Sam. 17: 34; John 10: 10, 12). 9. **An angel**—not “the” angel. **Came upon them**—R. V. “stood by them.” The idea is of a sudden appearance. He was there before they perceived his approach. **The glory of the Lord**—They recognized this as the *Shechinah*, the symbol of divine presence, testifying to the celestial messenger. (Ex. 24: 16; 1 Kings 8: 10; Isa. 6: 1, 3; Acts 7: 55; 26: 13; Rom. 9: 4). **Sore afraid**—lit., “feared a great fear,” “sore” in the sense of “very much,” denotes an intensely disagreeable sensation. Its use is poetic and archaic. Doubtless the shepherds were, like Simeon, “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” yet their fear was natural, not only from the sudden and unexpected character of the appearance, but from the consciousness that they were in the presence of a supernatural being. There was also the old belief that no one could see God and live. (Judges 13: 22; Ex. 33: 20). Compare Luke 5: 8; 24: 4, 5, 37. This fear may be connected with the consciousness of sin. 10. **Fear not**—Almost always the first words of a gracious

visitant. (Matt. 28: 5, 10; Luke 1: 13, 30; Gen. 15: 1). I bring you good tidings—This is one word in Greek. Wycliffe translates it literally, “I evangelize to you a great joy.” The angel was the first evangelist. **Joy**—Read Isa. 52: 7; 61: 1; Rom. 5: 11; 1 Pet. 1: 8). **To all the people** (R. V.)—i. e., to all the people of Israel. This was but the prelude to the more glorious anthem of the angelic host. The message was first to the Jews, and through them to the whole world and to all classes of men. (Gen. 12: 3; Ps. 72: 8; Isa. 2: 2; 42: 6; 60: 3; Ezek. 17: 22, 23; Micah 4: 1, 2; Matt. 28: 19; Luke 24: 47; Acts 13: 46, 47; Rom. 15: 8, 9; Col. 1: 23). 11. **A Saviour**—A deliverer, for whom the oppressed people prayed, and of whom their prophets had spoken. (Isa. 9: 6). He was a Saviour in a deeper sense than probably the shepherds understood. (Matt. 1: 21). **Christ the Lord**—“Messiah Jehovah” “the anointed one who is Jehovah.” “The Lord” is the common name for Jehovah in the Old Testament, and stands here in apposition to “Christ.” This is the only place in which these two names come together. In Acts 2: 36 we have “Lord and Christ,” which means the same. This is a distinct assertion of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. (Phil. 2: 11). The advent of the long expected Messiah is now announced. **In the city of David**—According to Micah 5: 2, to which the minds of these Bible reading shepherds would revert, and grasp more clearly the full meaning of the astonishing news. These words stand last in order in the original and by particularizing the place, and that close by, make the message more real to the ears of the shepherds. 12. **This is the sign** (R. V.)—the mark by which they should recognize the child, namely, he would be “a swaddled babe cradled in a manger, in Bethlehem.” This was not a sign vouchsafed to unbelief, for asking which Zacharias was struck dumb (Luke 1: 18-20) and which Christ refused to give to the Jews, but a mere mark of identification. The faith of the shepherds is perfect and child-like. **Swaddling Clothes**—i. e., wrapped around the body and limbs with a strong strip of linen about four inches wide. Mary seems to have been without the attendance so necessary at such a time.

13. **Heavenly host**—or “army,” a common designation of the angels. The figure is derived from the pomp and military display around the persons of earthly monarchs. Other appearance of these, Gen. 28: 12; 32: 1, 2; 1 Kings 22: 19; 2 Kings 6: 17; Dan. 7: 10; Rev. 5: 11; 19: 14. See also Matt. 26: 53. “They are participants in creation (Job 38: 7), at the giving of the law (Deut. 35: 2; Acts 7: 53), at the ascension (Ps. 68: 17; Luke 24: 4-7), at the judgment (Matt. 25: 31).” (Webster and Wilkinson). **Praising God**—It is assumed that these words were sung, but the narrative does not say so. They