

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

Nahum Tate (1652-1715), ca. 1700

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind,
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind."

"To you, in David's town this day,
Is born of David's line
The Savior who is Christ the Lord,
And this shall be the sign:

The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the seraph, and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God and thus
Addressed their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high
And on the earth be peace,
Goodwill henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease."

Below are the Latin and Greek versions of the same biblical verse, of which an English version appears as the last strophe of the poem. The following two versions were deliberately added for the choral setting:

Latin: Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax, homínibus bonae voluntátis.

Greek: Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις Θεῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη, ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία.

Phonetic transcription for the Greek verse:

Dóxa en ipsístis Theó, kai epí yis iríni, en anthrópis efdokía.