



Black Nativity

*A Gospel Song Play
By
Langston Hughes*

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by
LANGSTON HUGHES



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(BLACK NATIVITY)

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Cover design by Susan Carle

ISBN 0-87129-192-4

BLACK NATIVITY

**A Gospel Song-Play
For a variable cast**

CHARACTERS
(In order of appearance)

WOMAN

MAN

SINGERS (Townsfolk)

NARRATOR

OLD WOMAN

FOUR SHEPHERDS (Ned, Zed, Ted, Jed)

ELDER

Non-speaking roles:

JOSEPH

MARY

THREE WISE MEN (Balthazar, Melchior, Caspar)

TIME: When Christ was born.

SETS: None—only a platform of various levels and a star,
a single glowing star high over a place that might
be a manger.

MOODS: Reverence, awe, joy and jubilation.

SONGS

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ACT ONE

(Prelude: Organ Music. Voices are heard offstage as MAN and WOMAN enter.)

(SONG: "JOY TO THE WORLD")

WOMAN.

**JOY TO THE WORLD!
THE LORD HAS COME—
LET EARTH RECEIVE HER KING.
LET EVERY HEART PREPARE HIS ROOM.**

MAN.

LET HEAVEN AND NATURE SING.

(PILGRIMS enter down aisles to join WOMAN and MAN on stage.)

SINGERS.

**JOY TO THE WORLD!
THE LORD HAS COME—
LET EARTH RECEIVE HER KING...**

(Light spots NARRATOR at side of stage.)

NARRATOR. IT CAME TO PASS IN THOSE DAYS, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made

when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city.

(The sunset lights left stage as MARY and JOSEPH enter.)

And Joseph also went up from Galilee to be taxed—out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, unto the city of David which is called Bethlehem—with his wife, Mary, being great with child...“I think—oh, Joseph—I think my time’s most come.”

(SONG: “MY WAY’S CLOUDY”)

SINGERS.

OH BRETHREN, MY WAY’S CLOUDY
SEND ONE ANGEL DOWN!

WOMAN.

THERE’S FIRE IN THE EAST,
THERE’S FIRE IN THE WEST,
THERE’S FIRE AMONG
THE METHODISTS.
SATAN’S MAD AND I’M SO GLAD
HE MISSED THE SOUL HE THOUGHT HE HAD
THIS IS THE YEAR OF JUBILEE,
THE LORD HATH COME TO SET US FREE.

SINGERS.

OH BRETHREN, MY WAY’S CLOUDY,
SEND ONE ANGEL DOWN!

(Almost, but not quite beneath the star, JOSEPH knocks repeatedly at the door. MARY, too tired to stand any

longer, sinks to the roadway. An irate INNKEEPER's words are heard.)

NARRATOR. "I have no room! Didn't I tell you *no*, before? Why do you come back? What do you keep knocking for? My inn's full. I've got no room for you and that woman there. This is no hospital. I keep no midwives about. I'm sorry, but there's no place here. No room! No, I say, no!"

SINGERS.

OH BRETHREN, MY WAY'S CLOUDY.
SEND ONE ANGEL DOWN!

NARRATOR. No room! No room at the inn! No room at the rich fine hotel. No room!

(JOSEPH lifts MARY to her feet. They struggle on, wandering through street after street searching for a place to stay.)

OLD WOMAN. Did you hear about it—a woman named Mary, they won't let her in the hotel?

WOMAN. Ain't that a shame?

OLD WOMAN. Did you hear about it? Big, rich, fine place—and no room for a poor woman to have her child! Did you-all hear?

WOMAN. Ain't it a shame!

(SONG: "NO ROOM AT THE INN")

WOMAN.

IT WAS ACCORDING TO THE WORD,
THERE WAS A VIRGIN GIRL.

**YOU KNOW THE MOTHER OF JESUS,
SHE WAS WANDERING AROUND AT NIGHT.
SHE WAS TRYING TO FIND A HOME
FOR THE SAVIOUR TO BE BORN,
BUT THERE WAS NO ROOM AT THE HOTEL.**

SINGERS.

**NO ROOM, THERE WAS NO ROOM
AT THE HOTEL! NO ROOM!
OH, LORD, NO ROOM!
IT WAS THE TIME FOR THE SAVIOUR TO BE
BORN
BUT THERE WAS NO ROOM AT THE HOTEL.**

NARRATOR. No room. No room for Mary anywhere! No room for Joseph. No room. In all the great city of Bethlehem, no room. The night is late. The air is cold. The doors are locked. The lights are out. Good folks have gone to bed. The streets are deserted. "I can't! Oh, Joseph, I can't go on."

(SONG: "MOST DONE TRAVELLING")

SINGERS.

**POOR MARY'S ON THE ROAD—
MOST DONE TRAVELLING!
I'M BOUND TO CARRY
MY SOUL TO THE LORD!**

NARRATOR. They are strangers here. Her time has almost come. Joseph does not know what to do, and in this place he has no friends. "Joseph! Joseph, I must lie down now. I

must! Oh, I...Oh, no! I can't go farther! No! No...I can't."
Joseph begs, "Wait! Wait here, I'll find a place."

SINGERS.

POOR JOSEPH'S ON THE ROAD—
MOST DONE TRAVELLING!
I'M BOUND TO CARRY
MY SOUL TO THE LORD!

(MARY sits alone on the curb as the song dies and a new song begins.)

(SONG: OH, JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING")

SINGERS.

MARY, MARY, WHAT IS THE MATTER?
OH, JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING!
OH, POOR JOSEPH, WHAT IS THE MATTER?
OH, JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING!
NIGHT IS CHILLY, WHAT IS THE MATTER?
OH, JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING!
OH, POOR MARY, WHAT IS THE MATTER?
OH, JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING!
COWS A-LOWING, WHAT IS THE MATTER?
OH, JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING!
SHEEP A-BAAING! WHAT IS THE MATTER?
OH, JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING!
OXEN A-BAWLING! WHAT IS THE MATTER?
OH, JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING!

OH, POOR MARY, WHAT IS THE MATTER?
OH, JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING!

NARRATOR. And so it was that her days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger—for there was no room for them in the inn.

(The WOMEN among the SINGERS appear in the shadows lamenting.)

(SONG: "POOR LITTLE JESUS")

WOMEN.

**POOR LITTLE JESUS,
BORN ON CHRISTMAS
AND LAID IN A MANGER
WASN'T THAT A PITY AND A SHAME?
POOR LITTLE JESUS, SON OF MARY,
DIDN'T HAVE NO CRADLE.
WASN'T THAT A PITY AND A SHAME?
LORD, WASN'T THAT A PITY AND A SHAME?**

NARRATOR. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, All Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

(SONG: "WHAT YOU GONNA NAME YOUR BABY?")

WOMAN.

**MARY, MARY WHAT YOU GONNA NAME
THAT PRETTY LITTLE BABY?
GLORY BE TO THE NEW BORN KING!**

NARRATOR. Some call Him one thing—she's gonna call Him Jesus.

WOMAN.

SOME CALL HIM ONE THING.

SHE'S GONNA CALL HIM JESUS.

SINGERS.

GLORY BE TO THE NEW BORN KING!

NARRATOR. Some call Him Jesus—she's gonna call Him Emanuel.

WOMAN.

SOME CALL HIM JESUS.

SHE'S GONNA CALL HIM EMANUEL.

SINGERS.

GLORY BE TO THE NEW BORN KING.

NARRATOR. Some call Him Emanuel—she's gonna call Him Wonderful.

WOMAN.

SOME CALL HIM EMANUEL.

SHE'S GONNA CALL HIM WONDERFUL.

SINGERS.

GLORY BE TO THE NEW BORN KING!

NARRATOR. Some call Him Wonderful—she's gonna call Him the Prince of Peace.

WOMAN.

SOME CALL HIM WONDERFUL.

SHE'S GONNA CALL HIM PRINCE OF PEACE.

SINGERS.

GLORY BE TO THE NEW BORN KING!

NARRATOR. Some call Him Prince of Peace—she's gonna call Him Jesus.

WOMAN.

SOME CALL HIM PRINCE OF PEACE.

SHE'S GONNA CALL HIM JESUS.

SINGERS.

GLORY BE TO THE NEW BORN KING!

NARRATOR. And his name shall be called Jesus.

(Enter a group of PILGRIMS.)

(SONG: "WASN'T THAT A MIGHTY DAY!")

SINGERS.

WASN'T THAT A MIGHTY DAY,

WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN!

STAR SHONE IN THE EAST,

WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN!

THE ANGEL CAME FROM ABOVE,

WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN.

NARRATOR. Yes, His name shall be called Jesus.

(SONG: "JOY TO THE WORLD" REPRISE)**SINGERS.**

**JOY TO THE WORLD,
SO GLAD THE LORD IS COME!
LET EARTH RECEIVE HER KING.
LET EVERY HEART PREPARE HIS ROOM,
AND HEAVEN AND NATURE SING.
JOY TO THE WORLD,
HALLELUJAH, THE SAVIOUR REIGNS!
LET US THEIR SONGS EMPLOY,
WHILE FIELDS AND FLOODS,
ROCKS, HILLS, AND PLAINS,
REPEAT THE SOUNDING JOY.
JOY TO THE WORLD,
THE LORD IS COME.**

NARRATOR. Rejoice! Rejoice, for the Lord is come!**(SONG: "CHRIST IS BORN")****SINGERS.**

**CHRIST IS BORN IN THE LAND OF JUDEA
CHRIST IS BORN! CHRIST IS BORN!
BORN OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY!
CHRIST IS BORN! CHRIST IS BORN!
PRETTY LITTLE HOLY BABY!
CHRIST IS BORN! CHRIST IS BORN!
WHY DON'T YOU COME ON TO THE MANGER?
COME AND ADORE THE LITTLE STRANGER
BABY WHO NEVER HAD NO CRADLE,
AND HIS ONLY BED A MANGER
SEE THE WISE MEN FROM AFAR,**

**ALL WERE GUIDED BY A STAR.
HERALD ANGELS LEFT FROM GLORY
AND CAME TO EARTH TO TELL THE STORY.
TELL THE STORY OF HIS GLORY—
CHRIST IS BORN! CHRIST IS BORN!**

(A roadside leading to the pastures. Four SHEPHERDS enter, their talk leads into song.)

NED. My wife wonders why I have to tend sheep at night.

JED. So does mine. The old shepherds always get the best shifts—the day shift.

ZED. It's cold, dag-nab it! And I've got no coat.

JED. You're ragged as a goat herd without a goat.

(Song-speech into song.)

NED. I've got a coat—

(SONG: "NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!")

NED.

**BUT YOU WON'T GET MINE—
WASTING ALL YOUR MONEY
ON WOMEN AND WINE.
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!**

JED.

NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!

TRIO.

NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!

ZED. Aw, get off of it! Are you not your brother's keeper?

NED. No, not when my brother—
 AIN'T NOTHING BUT A SLEEPER
 YOU RUN AROUND ALL DAY,
 SLEEP ON YOUR JOB ALL NIGHT.

JED.
 IF YOU GONNA BE A SHEPHERD,
 BE A SHEPHERD RIGHT.

TED. I hear tell you lost a ewe and a lamb?

ZED.
 I LOST MORE THAN THAT—
 I LOST A RAM.

TED. What you gonna do when Master counts his sheep?

ZED.
 JUST GET UNDER A TREE
 AND GO TO SLEEP.

TED.
 WHAT GOOD IS A SHEPHERD
 THAT GOES TO SLEEP?
 SUPPOSE A WOLF WOULD COME,
 AND STEAL YOUR LAMBS AWAY,
 WHAT YOU GONNA TELL
 YOUR MASTER NEXT DAY?

NED.
 IF YOU TELL A LIE
 YOUR TONGUE MIGHT SLIP.

JED.

IF YOU TELL THE TRUTH,
HE MIGHT BUST YOU IN THE LIP.

TRIO.

NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!

NED.

SLEEPY-HEADED SHEPHERD!

TRIO.

NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!

NED.

YOU CAN'T PREACH ONE THING
THEN UP AND DO ANOTHER,

TRIO.

LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF
BUT TRY TO CON YOUR BROTHER.
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!

ZED. I'm a—

ALL.

NO NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!

TRIO.

WHAT GOOD IS A SHEPHERD
THAT CAN'T HERD SHEEP?

TED.

FOR IF YOU LOSE A EWE
THEN YOU CAN LOSE A LAMB.

NED.

IF YOU LOSE A LAMB
YOU CAN LOSE A RAM.

JED.

IF YOU DO NOT GET
YOUR LOST SHEEP BACK,
THEN YOUR MASTER MIGHT
GET MAD AND GIVE YOU THE SACK.

TRIO.

NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
LAZY OLD SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!
YOU CAN'T SIT AROUND
AND NEVER DO YOUR WORK WELL,
SAY YOU'RE HEAVEN BOUND
WHEN YOU KNOW YOU'RE BOUND FOR HELL!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!

ZED.

JUST A NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!

(ZED shrugs his shoulders, sits down and pulls a flute from the folds of his ragged clothing. But his melody is a series of screeches. The other SHEPHERDS put their hands over their ears in protest and cry aloud.)

NED.

WHAT GOOD IS A SHEPHERD
WHO CAN'T PLAY A FLUTE?

JED.

AND HOW IN THE WORLD
CAN YOU ATTRACT A GIRL
WHEN YOU SMELL LIKE SHEEP
AND YOUR FLUTE, IT WON'T BEEP?

NED.

AND WHAT GOOD'S THE MOON
OR NIGHTS IN JUNE
WHEN YOU'RE OUT OF KEY
AND YOUR FLUTE'S OUT OF TUNE?

TRIO.

NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
RAGGEDY SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!
YOU CAN'T SWEET-TALK GIRLS,
PULL TRICKS YOU KNOW AIN'T NICE
BE A SNAKE IN THE GRASS,
UNLESS YOU PAY THE PRICE.
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!

ZED. Oh, poor me!

(ZED rises to sing dolefully.)

WHAT GOOD IS A SHEPHERD
THAT'S GOT NO GIRL?
MARY AND HER LAMB

HAD FLEECE AS WHITE AS SNOW.
I SAID, *LOVE ME BABE*.
BUT SHE SAID, *NO! NO! NO!*
SAID, YOU'LL HOLD MY HAND,
YOU'LL KISS MY EAR—
BUT WHEN I'M IN NEED
I CAN'T FIND YOU NOWHERE NEAR!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
JIVE-TALKING SHEPHERD!

TRIO.

NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!

ZED. She said—

YOU MEN SWEET-TALK GIRLS,
DO THINGS YOU KNOW AIN'T NICE—
DIRTY SNAKES IN THE GRASS,
YOU MAKE A GIRL THINK TWICE!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!

she said—

TRIO.

HEART-BREAKING SHEPHERD!

ZED.

NO! NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!

Oh, she gave me down-the-country—that woman did!

TED. It's a sin to betray a girl, Zed.

NED. And you are nothing but a sinner! Zed, you're a sinner!

(ZED hangs his head in shame as TED becomes serious.)

TED.

WHAT GOOD IS A SHEPHERD
THAT DON'T KNOW GOD?

TRIO.

WHEN OLD DEATH WILL COME
TO TAKE YOUR SOUL AWAY,
HOW YOU GONNA FACE
SAINT PETER THAT DAY?

TED.

IF YOU LIVE IN SIN,
WHEN LIFE DOTH END,
THEN WHO WILL YOU HAVE BUT
THE DEVIL FOR YOUR FRIEND?

TRIO.

NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
SIN-LOVING SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!
YOU CAN'T DANCE AND BALL
AND HOLLER, *HUH! COME SEVEN!*
THEN WHEN DEATH COMES BY,
EXPECT TO GO TO HEAVEN.
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD!
NO-GOOD SHEPHERD BOY!

(There is sudden thunder, a flash of light. Then a distant trumpet sounds. The SHEPHERDS are astounded. ZED backs away in fright and ALL flee. BLACKOUT. The spotlight centers on the NARRATOR as the scene changes. Lights fade, only NARRATOR is visible.)

NARRATOR. Hear again the Christmas story—

Christ is born in all His glory.
Baby laid in manger dark,
Lighting ages with the spark
Of innocence that is the Child,
Trusting all within His smile.
Tell again the Christmas story
With the halo of His glory;
Halo born of humbleness
By the breath of cattle blest,
By the poverty of stall
Where a bed of straw is all,
By a door closed at the Inn
Where only men of means get in,
By a door closed to the poor.
Christ is born on earthen floor
In a stable with no lock—
Yet kingdoms tremble at the shock
Of a King in swaddling clothes
At an address no one knows
Because there is no hotel sign—
Nothing but a star divine,
Nothing but a halo bright
About His young head in the night.
Mary's Son in manger born!
Music of the Angel's horn!
Mary's Son in straw and glory!
Wonder of the Christmas story!

(Now the Star shines very brightly.)

(SONG: "GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN")

WOMAN.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN,
OVER THE HILLS AND EVERYWHERE!
GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
THAT JESUS CHRIST IS BORN!

(The WOMAN carries the news to the whole city and everyone joins in the jubilation.)

SINGERS.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN,
OVER THE HILLS AND EVERYWHERE!
GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
THAT JESUS CHRIST IS BORN!

WOMAN.

AN ANGEL CAME FROM GLORY
TO HAIL THE SAVIOUR'S BIRTH,
AND THEN A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN
SHONE ON THE HEAVENLY PLACE.

SINGERS.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN,
OVER THE HILLS AND EVERYWHERE!
GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
THAT JESUS CHRIST IS BORN!

(The light fades to a spot on a SHEPHERD alone on a hilltop.)

NARRATOR. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shown round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not for behold, I bring you good tidings of your great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

SINGERS.

**WHILE SHEPHERDS KEEP THEIR WATCH
O'ER SILENT FLOCKS BY NIGHT,
BEHOLD THROUGHOUT THE HEAVENS
THERE SHONE A HOLY LIGHT.
GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
OVER THE HILLS AND EVERYWHERE
GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
THAT JESUS CHRIST IS BORN.**

WOMAN.

**THE SHEPHERDS FEARED AND TREMBLED
WHEN, LO, ABOVE THE EARTH
RANG OUT THE ANGELS' CHORUS
THAT HAILED THE SAVIOUR'S BIRTH.**

SINGERS.

**GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
OVER THE HILLS AND EVERYWHERE
GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
THAT JESUS CHRIST IS BORN.**

NARRATOR. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God, and saying: "Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men!"

(SONG: "RISE UP, SHEPHERD, AND FOLLOW!")

SINGERS.

THERE'S A STAR IN THE EAST
ON CHRISTMAS MORN.
RISE UP, SHEPHERD, AND FOLLOW!
IT WILL LEAD TO THE PLACE
WHERE THE SAVIOUR'S BORN.
RISE UP, SHEPHERD, AND FOLLOW!
IF YOU TAKE GOOD HEED
TO THE ANGEL'S WORDS AND
RISE UP, SHEPHERD, AND FOLLOW
YOU'LL FORGET YOUR FLOCKS,
YOU'LL FORGET YOUR HERDS.
RISE UP, SHEPHERD, AND FOLLOW!
LEAVE YOUR SHEEP, LEAVE YOUR LAMBS.
LEAVE YOUR EWES, AND LEAVE YOUR RAMS
RISE UP, SHEPHERD, AND FOLLOW—
FOLLOW THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.
RISE UP, SHEPHERD, AND FOLLOW!

NARRATOR. Look! Look there at the star!

I—I, just a poor shepherd—
I, among the least,
I will arise and take
A journey to the East.
But what shall I bring
As a gift for the King?
Shall I bring a song,

A song that I will sing?
A song for the King,
In the manger?
Watch out for my flocks!
Do not let them stray.
I am going on a journey
Far, far away.
But what shall I bring
As a gift for the Child?
What shall I bring to the Manger?
Shall I bring a lamb,
Gentle, meek and mild,
A lamb for the Child
In the manger?
Very poor I am
But I know there is
A King in Bethlehem.
What shall I bring
As a gift just for Him?
What shall I bring
To the manger?
Shall I bring my heart—
And give my heart to Him?
I will bring my heart
To the manger.

(Light fades as the SHEPHERD begins his journey toward the star. The SINGERS continue joyously in darkness.)

(SONG: "WHAT MONTH WAS JESUS BORN IN?")

SINGERS.

JUST TELL ME WHEN WAS JESUS BORN?
THE LAST MONTH OF THE YEAR.
WAS IT JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL,
MAY
JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER,
NOVEMBER,
THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF DECEMBER—
THE LAST MONTH OF THE YEAR.
HE WAS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY,
WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES
AND LAIN IN A HOLY MANGER
ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF DECEMBER—
THE LAST MONTH OF THE YEAR.

(The VIRGIN enters with the CHILD.)

NARRATOR. And so the news spread, and the people heard,
and the people came to see Him—sweet little Jesus Boy,
sleeping in a stable among the swine.

(A WOMAN stands above the seated MOTHER and CHILD.)

(SONG: "SWEET LITTLE JESUS BOY")

WOMAN.

SWEET LITTLE JESUS BOY,
THEY MADE YOU BE BORN IN A MANGER,
SWEET LITTLE HOLY CHILD,
DIDN'T KNOW WHO YOU WAS

DIDN'T KNOW YOU COME TO SAVE US, LORD,
TO TAKE OUR SINS AWAY.
OUR EYES WERE BLIND,
WE COULDN'T SEE—
WE DIDN'T KNOW WHO YOU WAS.
LONG TIME AGO YOU WAS BORN,
BORN IN A MANGER LOW.
SWEET LITTLE HOLY CHILD!
THE WORLD TREATS YOU MEAN, LORD,
TREATS ME MEAN, TOO—
BUT THAT'S HOW THINGS IS DOWN HERE
WHERE WE DON'T KNOW WHO YOU IS.
YOU DONE TOLD US HOW,
AND WE BEEN TRYING.
MASTER, YOU DONE SHOWED US HOW
EVEN WHEN YOU WAS DYING.
JUST SEEMS LIKE WE CAN'T DO RIGHT.
LOOK HOW WE DONE TREATED YOU.
WELL, PLEASE, FORGIVE US, LORD.
WE DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS YOU.
SWEET LITTLE JESUS BOY,
BORN LONG TIME AGO.
SWEET LITTLE HOLY CHILD,
WE DIDN'T KNOW WHO YOU WAS.

NARRATOR. They shall call His name Jesus, for he shall save His people from their sins. They shall call His name Emanuel which being interpreted is, God is with us, Jesus, Lord, Emanuel! Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came Wise Men from the East saying, "Where is He that is Born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

(The THREE KINGS enter down the aisle as the SINGERS burst into song and there is a glare of light.)

(SONG: "OH, COME ALL YE FAITHFUL")

WOMAN.

**OH, COME ALL YE FAITHFUL,
JOYFUL AND TRIUMPHANT!**

**OH, COME YE, OH, COME YE, TO BETHLEHEM.
COME AND BEHOLD HIM,
BORN THE KING OF ANGELS.**

(The WISE MEN, presenting their gifts, bow down before the CHILD as song fills the night and the SINGERS surround the manger.)

SINGERS.

**OH, COME LET US ADORE HIM!
OH, COME LET US ADORE HIM!
OH, COME LET US ADORE HIM—
CHRIST THE LORD!**

NARRATOR. It all began that first Christmas in Bethlehem when the star shone over the manger and there was born in the city of David, a Saviour whose name was Christ the Lord.

SINGERS.

AMEN!...AMEN!...AMEN!

CURTAIN—END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

(The lights come up on two bands of CHRISTIANS entering from either side, marching in time to the music, as the NARRATOR sits to one side.)

(SONG: "MEETIN' HERE TONIGHT")

SINGERS.

THERE'S A MEETIN' HERE TONIGHT,
MEETIN' HERE TONIGHT,
MEETIN' ON THE OLD CAMPGROUND.

NARRATOR. And so the star of Bethlehem became a symbol. The manger became a church. The three kings became Princes of the Church. Wise men became its ministers. The heavenly hosts became the singers of God's praises all over the world—for almost two thousand years ago now in the Bethlehem of Judea, Christ was born—born to preach to the elders in the temple—to pass the miracle of the loaves and fishes—to turn the water into wine—to heal the sick and raise the dead—to cause the lame to walk and the blind to see. He was crucified, dead, and was buried, and on the third day arose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father—who gave His only begotten Son that man might have eternal life. Now, today, here in this place, nineteen centuries removed from Bethlehem—in a land far across the sea from Judea—we sing His songs and glorify His name. This church

where you see us gathered—this gospel church where His word is spread—is but an extension of His manger. Those gathered here are His worshippers who have come tonight to make—as the Bible says—a joyful noise unto the Lord.

(Exit NARRATOR as the ELDER comes to center.)

SINGERS.

**THIS IS THE WAY WE SING ON THE OLD
CAMPGROUND.**

**THIS IS THE WAY WE SING ON THE OLD
CAMPGROUND...**

ELDER. Praise God! Bless His name! There's a meeting here tonight, oh, yes! We've come to spread His word and glorify His name. And what shall we tell the world? Tell the world that Jesus was born in Bethlehem! Tell the world that Christ was born to save this earth from sin. Tell the world that this sweet little Jesus-Boy was born to save you—and to save me—to show us how to find the path of salvation, earn a right to the tree of life—to show us how to turn our eyes to God—to show the nations how to beat their swords into plow-shares. Yes! That's why He came! He came to make the lion lie down with the lamb, the mighty to be meek, and the meek to be lifted up! Oh yes! Jesus came to ride me on the wings of His glory, to take me up in the chariot of His love, to wrap me in His glorious glory.

(SONG: "HOLY GHOST, DON'T LEAVE ME")

SINGERS.

**OH, HOLY GHOST, PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME,
GUIDE ME ON MY WAY.**

**OH, HOLY GHOST, DON'T LEAVE ME—
JUST GUIDE ME ON MY WAY.**

WOMAN. We're going to sing for you now, "We Shall Be Changed—In The Twinkling Of An Eye!" Changed from mortal to immortality.

(SONG: "WE SHALL BE CHANGED")

SINGERS.

**WE SHALL BE CHANGED! WE SHALL BE
CHANGED!
CHANGED FROM MORTALS TO IMMORTALITY
IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE.
I'LL SHOW YOU A MYSTERY—
WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP,
BUT BE CHANGED IMMEDIATELY—
IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE.
WHEN THAT FIRST TRUMPET SOUNDS,
ALL THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE.
WE'LL MEET JESUS IN THE SKIES—
IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE.
WE'LL SHAKE OFF MORTAL,
PUT ON IMMORTALITY.
DEATH WILL BE SWALLOWED UP IN
VICTORY—
IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE.
IF A MAN DIES
AND HE DIES SERVING THE LORD
HE SHALL LIVE AGAIN—
IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE
I TELL YOU, WE SHALL BE CHANGED!
WE SHALL BE CHANGED!**

**CHANGED FROM MORTALS TO IMMORTALITY
IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE!**

WOMAN. One day when I was lost Jesus bled and died upon the cross. That's why I know it was His blood—yes, it was—that saved me.

(SONG: "THE BLOOD SAVED ME")

SINGERS.

**I KNOW IT WAS THE BLOOD,
I KNOW IT WAS THE BLOOD SAVED ME.
ONE DAY WHEN I WAS LOST,
JESUS DIED UPON THE CROSS.
I KNOW IT WAS THE BLOOD SAVED ME.
HE SET THE SINNER FREE FROM SIN.
JESUS CAME AND TOOK US IN.
I KNOW IT WAS THE BLOOD SAVED ME.
WHEN THEY WHIPPED HIM UP THE HILL,
HE NEVER SAID A WORD.
THE DAY THE WORLD STOOD STILL,
HE NEVER SAID A WORD.
WHEN THEY HUNG HIM WAY UP HIGH,
JESUS NEVER SAID A WORD.
THEN THEY PIERCED HIM IN THE SIDE.
OH, HE NEVER SAID A WORD.
CAN'T YOU SEE HIM HANGING THERE?
HE WAS IN PAIN AND IN DESPAIR.
I KNOW IT WAS THE BLOOD,
I KNOW IT WAS THE BLOOD SAVED ME.**

ELDER. Jesus died upon the cross that I might have life, and have it more abundantly. Yes, he did! But we ought to try

harder to deserve God's love and goodness. We ought to look inside ourselves and see if we need fixing, need any personal repair work done. I examined myself one day, myself and my surrounding, and—

(SONG: "LEAK IN THE BUILDING")

SINGERS.

**I FOUND A LEAK IN MY BUILDING
AND MY SOUL HAS GOT TO MOVE—
BUT I THANK GOD I HAVE ANOTHER BUILDING
NOT MADE BY HANDS.**

ELDER.

**ONE DAY AS I WAS WALKING ALL ALONE
I HEARD A VOICE SPEAK TO ME,
LOOKED ALL AROUND BUT I SAW NO ONE
THEN HE TOLD ME, "BEFORE I'M THROUGH
I'M GOING TO TELL YOU WHAT TO DO."**

SINGERS.

**OH, I THANK GOD I HAVE ANOTHER BUILDING
NOT MADE BY HANDS.**

ELDER.

**I FIXED MY LEAK IN THE BUILDING.
I WENT ON MY KNEES IN PRAYER.
I LAID MY FOUNDATION WHILE I WAS THERE.
OH, YES! OH, YES! OH, YES! OH, YES!
AND I BUILT MY WALLS WITH GRACE,
I COVERED MY ROOF WITH FAITH,
AND I BUILT MY DOORS WITH LOVE,
AND I PLACED GOD'S NAME ABOVE,**

AND ABOUT THAT TIME MY LANDLORD CAME.
YOU OUGHT TO KNOW WHO I MEAN—
MY GOD AND YOUR GOD!
MY LORD AND YOUR LORD!
HE SAID, "I'M PLEASED WITH WHAT YOU'VE
DONE.
AND YOUR RACE HAS BEEN WON.
I'M HERE WITH YOUR KEY,
AND I'VE GOT YOUR DEEDS WITH ME."

SINGERS.

OH, I THANK GOD I HAVE ANOTHER BUILDING
NOT MADE BY HANDS, NOT MADE BY HANDS!

ELDER. Oh, yes, my soul had to move—but I moved with
my hand in the hand of the Lord. I moved knowing that I
may search the whole world over, but there's nobody like
Him.

(SONG: "NOBODY LIKE THE LORD")

SINGERS.

THERE'S NOBODY LIKE THE LORD—
NOBODY LIKE THE LORD!
YOU MAY SEARCH THIS WIDE WORLD
OVER AND OVER AGAIN,
BUT YOU WON'T FIND NOBODY LIKE HIM.
MOTHER'S MY FRIEND, FATHER'S MY FRIEND,
SISTER AND BROTHER, THEY ARE MY FRIENDS
BUT THEY CAN'T GO WITH ME EACH DAY
PROTECTING ME UNTIL THE END.
YES, YOU MAY SEARCH THE WIDE WORLD
OVER AND OVER AGAIN,

**BUT YOU WON'T FIND NOBODY LIKE HIM.
NOBODY, NOBODY LIKE THE LORD!**

ELDER. There's nobody like the Lord! No matter what we try to do, God is God all by himself. Sometimes we think he don't come when he ought to, but He's God, and he knows what we need, so he's always there on time. We tried him a long time ago and we know him. He supplied our every need. There's so many of us that are too busy complaining about things we already have that we should be thanking God for. We are so busy complaining that we overlook his goodness. There's so much to thank Him for—for the blood still running warm in our bodies when we get up each morning, for our loved ones, for the joy and beauty of living. If I were you, I'd thank Him while I have a chance. There was a man who complained about his shoes until he saw a man who had no feet. There was a woman who complained about her clothes until she saw someone on a bed of affliction and she thanked God for what she had. No matter what you think about things, God knows all, and His will must be done. Tell it in song, sister, tell it in song!

(SONG: "HIS WILL BE DONE")

WOMAN.

**IT MATTERS NOT TO ME
IF AGAIN I NEVER SEE.
HIS WILL MUST BE DONE.
HE IS MY STAFF, HE IS MY ROD
WHEREVER MY FOOTSTEPS TROD,
HIS WILL MUST BE DONE.
IN THIS ETERNAL DARKNESS
THAT COVERS ME TODAY,**

I LIVE FOR MY SAVIOUR
AND I'LL LET HIM HAVE HIS WAY.
MY LIFE IS IN GOD'S HANDS
AND I'LL MOVE AT HIS COMMAND.
HIS WILL MUST BE DONE.
IF AGAIN I NEVER SEE
GOD KNOWS WHAT'S BEST FOR ME.
HIS WILL MUST BE DONE.
LORD, WHEN I HAVE DONE ALL I CAN
I'LL BE STANDING RIGHT HERE
WAITING FOR YOU—
YOUR WILL MUST BE DONE.

ELDER. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Put your trust in Him. Talking about religion may kill your faith. People who really believe don't worry about it—because the Lord is going to make a way. Yes, He will! You know when I first got religion way back yonder in Alabama, I never will forget the day, seems like the trees were praising the Lord that day, seems like the sun was shining just for me. I don't know how it happened to happen so fast, but when I came to myself, I was seven and a half miles down the road. I don't know how I got there, but I was full of the spirit. The hand of God had touched me. I meant to keep my happiness to myself, but I couldn't.

(SONG: "SAID I WASN'T GONNA TELL NOBODY")

SINGERS.

I SAID I WASN'T GONNA TELL NOBODY—
BUT I JUST COULDN'T KEEP IT TO MYSELF,
WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR ME.
YOU OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN THERE

WHEN HE SAVED MY SOUL...
THAT SUNDAY MORNING
WHEN HE PUT MY NAME ON THE ROLL,
AND I STARTED WALKING,
AND I STARTED TALKING,
AND I STARTED SINGING,
AND I STARTED SHOUTING
ABOUT WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR ME.

ELDER.

I SAID I WASN'T GONNA TESTIFY—
BUT I COULDN'T KEEP IT TO MYSELF
WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR ME.

WOMAN.

I SAID I WASN'T GONNA SHOUT FOR JOY
BUT I COULDN'T KEEP IT TO MYSELF
WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR ME.

SINGERS.

I SAID I WASN'T GONNA SING MY SONG—
BUT I COULDN'T KEEP IT TO MYSELF
WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR ME.

(General shouting.)

VOICES. Bless God! Hallelujah! Amen! Yes!

SINGERS.

IF IT WASN'T FOR JESUS
MY SOUL, YOUR SOUL WOULD BE LOST...

WOMAN. Is everybody happy? Praise the Lord! I want to tell you tonight that God is real in my life. And I'm thanking Him this evening for keeping me. For one of these days, we all will come to the end of our journey. And when we come to the end of our journey, we must come down to the chilly banks of Jordan. And when I get there I don't want nobody to stop me. I want to be able to cross over to see my Lord.

(SONG: "GET AWAY, JORDAN")

SINGERS.

**GET AWAY! GET AWAY, JORDAN!
GET AWAY! GET AWAY, CHILLY JORDAN!
GET BACK, GET WAY BACK, JORDAN.
I WANT TO CROSS OVER TO SEE MY LORD.**

WOMAN.

**ONE DAY I WAS WALKING ALONE.
I HEARD A VOICE BUT I SAW NO ONE.
THE VOICE I HEARD SOUNDED SO SWEET,
IT RAN FROM MY HEAD TO THE SOLE OF MY
FEET.
IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE I'VE BEEN REDEEMED,
JUST FOLLOW ME DOWN TO JORDAN STREAM.
JORDAN WATER IS CHILLY AND COLD,
MAY CHILL THE BODY BUT NOT MY SOUL!
GET AWAY! GET AWAY, JORDAN!
I WANT TO CROSS OVER TO SEE MY LORD!**

WOMAN. I know there's nothing for Christians to be afraid of when we come to Jordan and cross over into the Prom-

ised Land. That's why I'm packing up—getting ready to go, ahead of time—because I'm ready, and I have no fear.

(SONG: "PACKING UP")

SINGERS.

I'M ON MY WAY TO NEW JERUSALEM
WHERE THE SUN NEVER GOES DOWN.
EVERY DAY IN PREPARATION—
PACKING UP GETTING READY TO GO.
I'M PACKING, PACKING, GETTING READY TO
GO.
I GOT MY SWORD, I GOT MY SHIELD...
GOT MY TICKET, SIGNED AND SEALED,
SO I'M PACKING UP, GETTING READY,
PACKING UP, GETTING READY TO GO.

ELDER. And it all began with that first Star in Bethlehem almost two thousand years ago—the Star that brought us to the Manger to kneel at the feet of Christ.

(SONG: "GOD BE WITH YOU")

SINGERS.

GOD BE WITH YOU, GOD BE WITH YOU,
GOD BE WITH YOU UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.
IF WE NEVER MEET HERE AGAIN,
WE SHALL MEET IN THE END.
GOD BE WITH YOU UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.
GOOD-NIGHT!

THE END