

In the Bleak Midwinter

144



1 In the bleak mid-winter, frost-y wind made moan;
 2 Our God, heaven can-not hold him, nor earth sus-tain;
 3 An-gels and arch-an-gels may have gath-ered there;
 4 What can I give him, poor as I am?



earth stood hard as i-ron, wa-ter like a stone;
 heaven and earth shall flee a-way when he comes to reign:
 cher-u-bim and ser-a-phim thronged the air;
 If I were a shep-herd, I would bring a lamb;



snow had fall-en, snow on snow, snow on snow,
 in the bleak mid-winter a sta-ble place suf-ficed
 but his moth-er on-ly, in her maid-en bliss,
 if I were a wise man, I would do my part;



in the bleak mid-winter, long a-go.
 the Lord God in-car-nate, Je-sus Christ.
 wor-shipped the be-lov-ed with a kiss.
 yet what I can I give him: give my heart.



Though this text describes winter weather in England rather than in Palestine, the poet is using familiar surroundings as a means of making the Nativity more immediate and personal. The tune name honors a Gloucestershire village near the composer's birthplace in Cheltenham.