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Bethlehem

YC 14503

HENRY S. KIRK

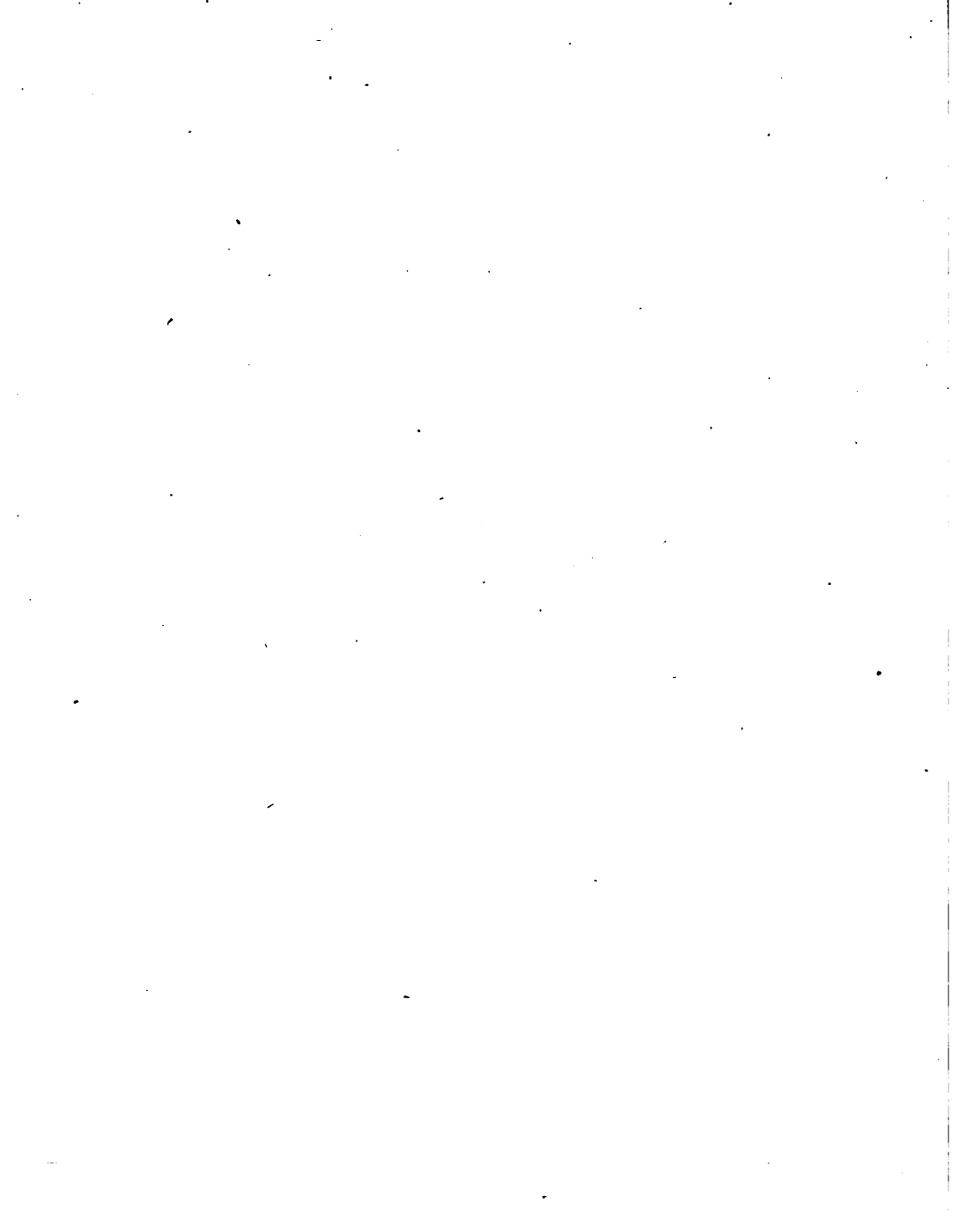
GIFT OF
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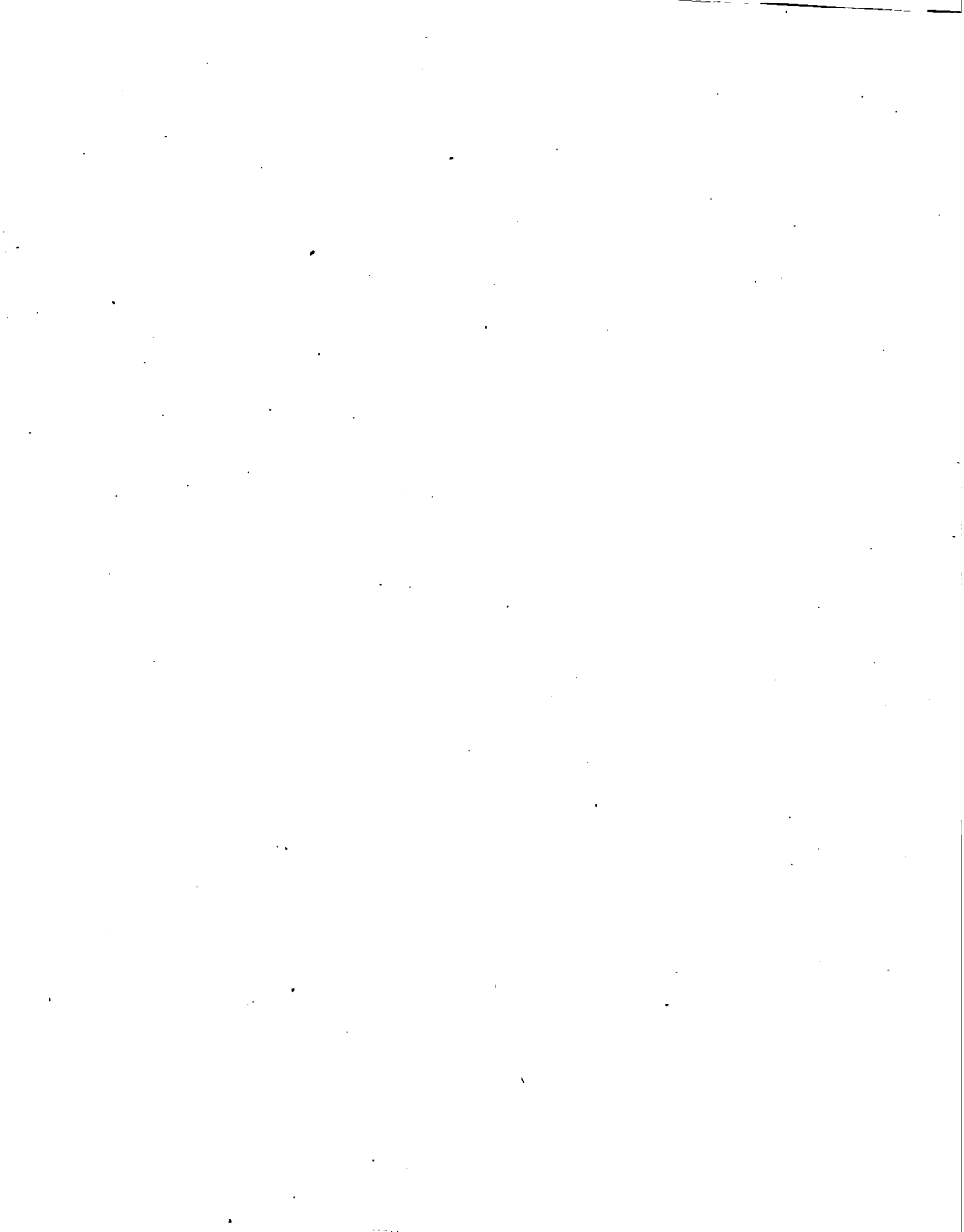


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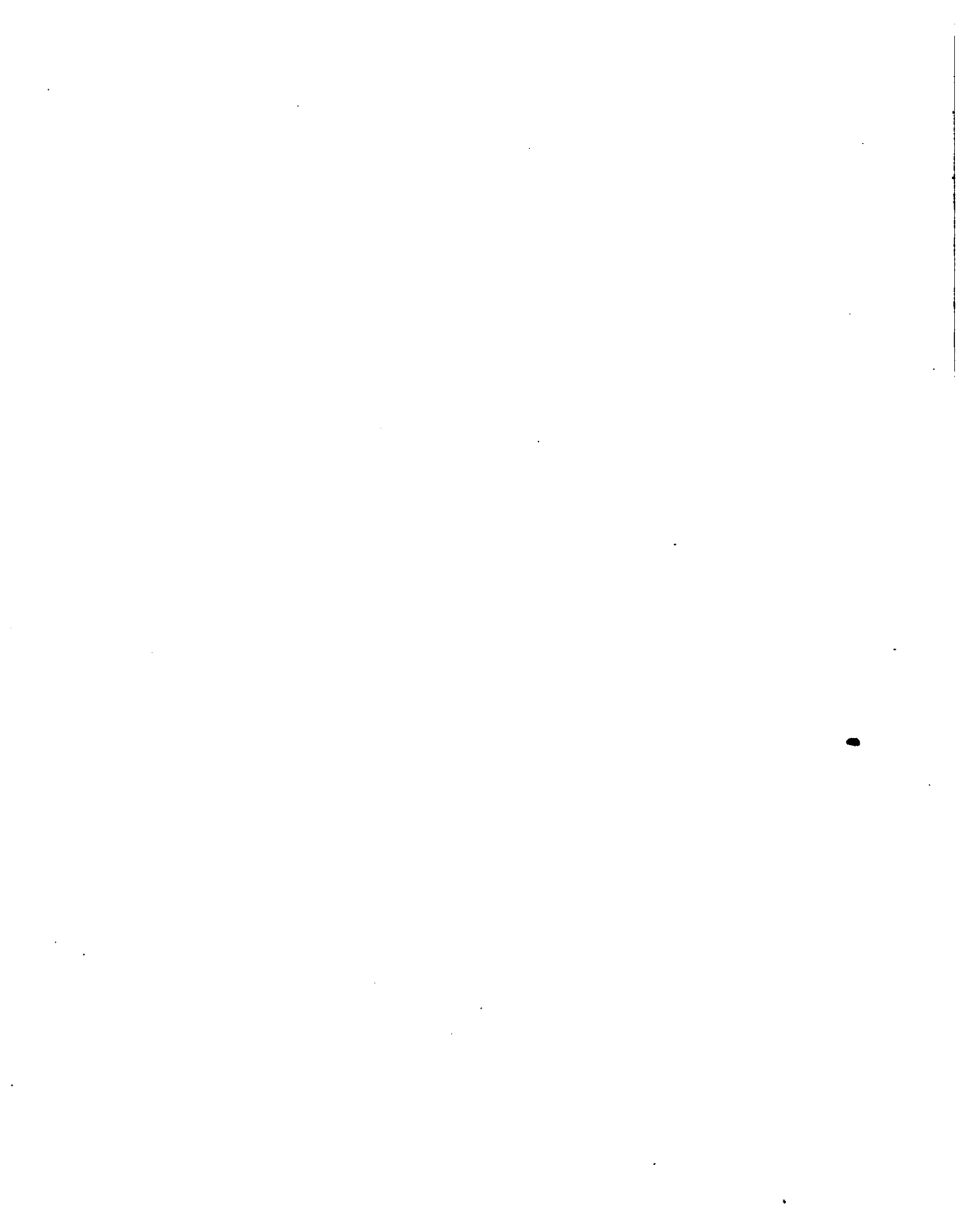
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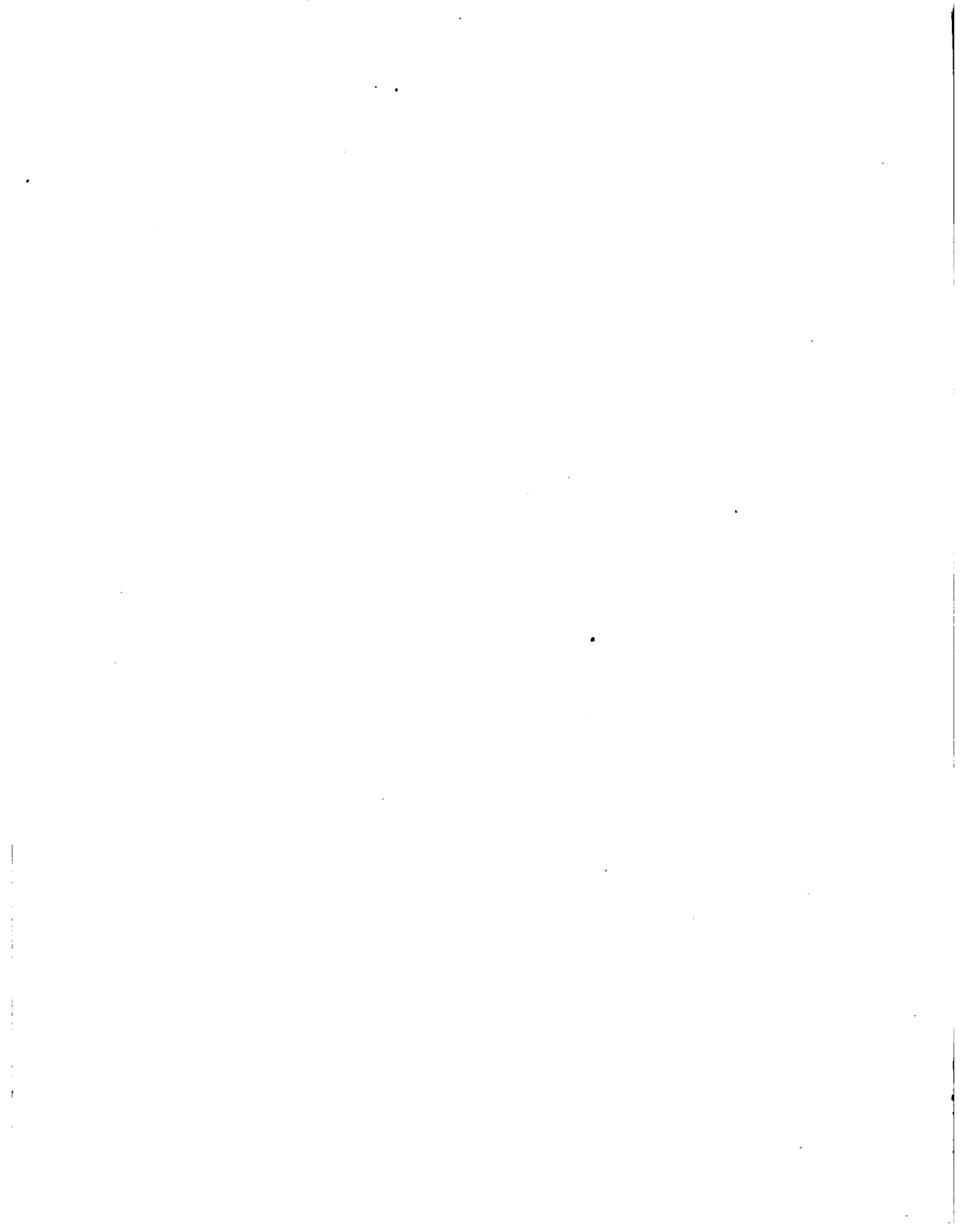
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Bethlehem



A Christmas Poem



By

Henry S. Kirk
"

TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE
CLASS OF 1887



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1894.

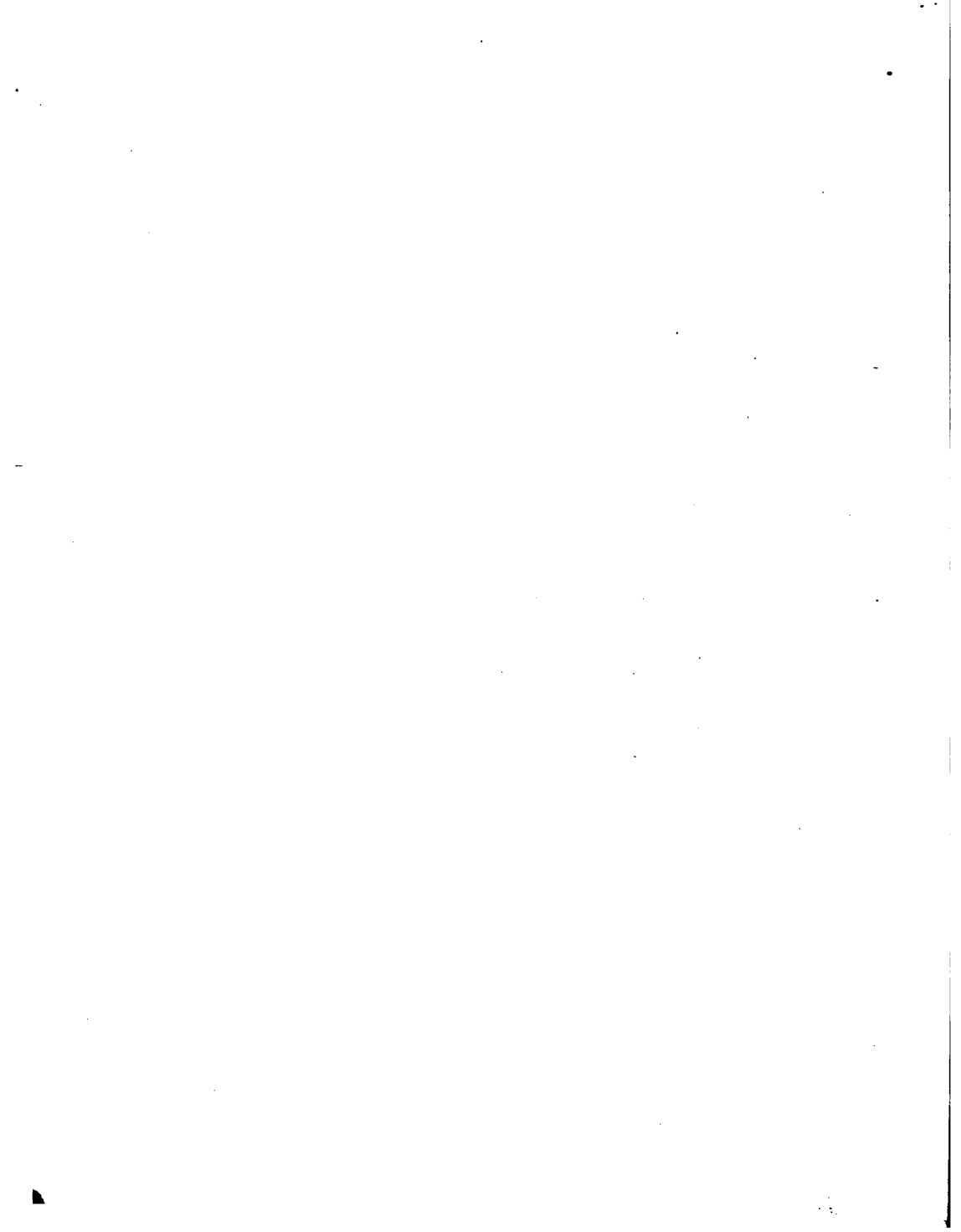


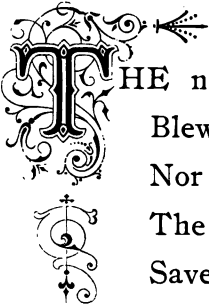
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THE SHEPHERDS.



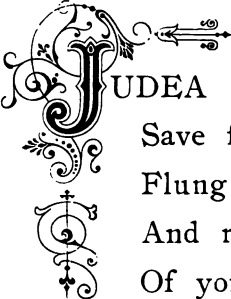
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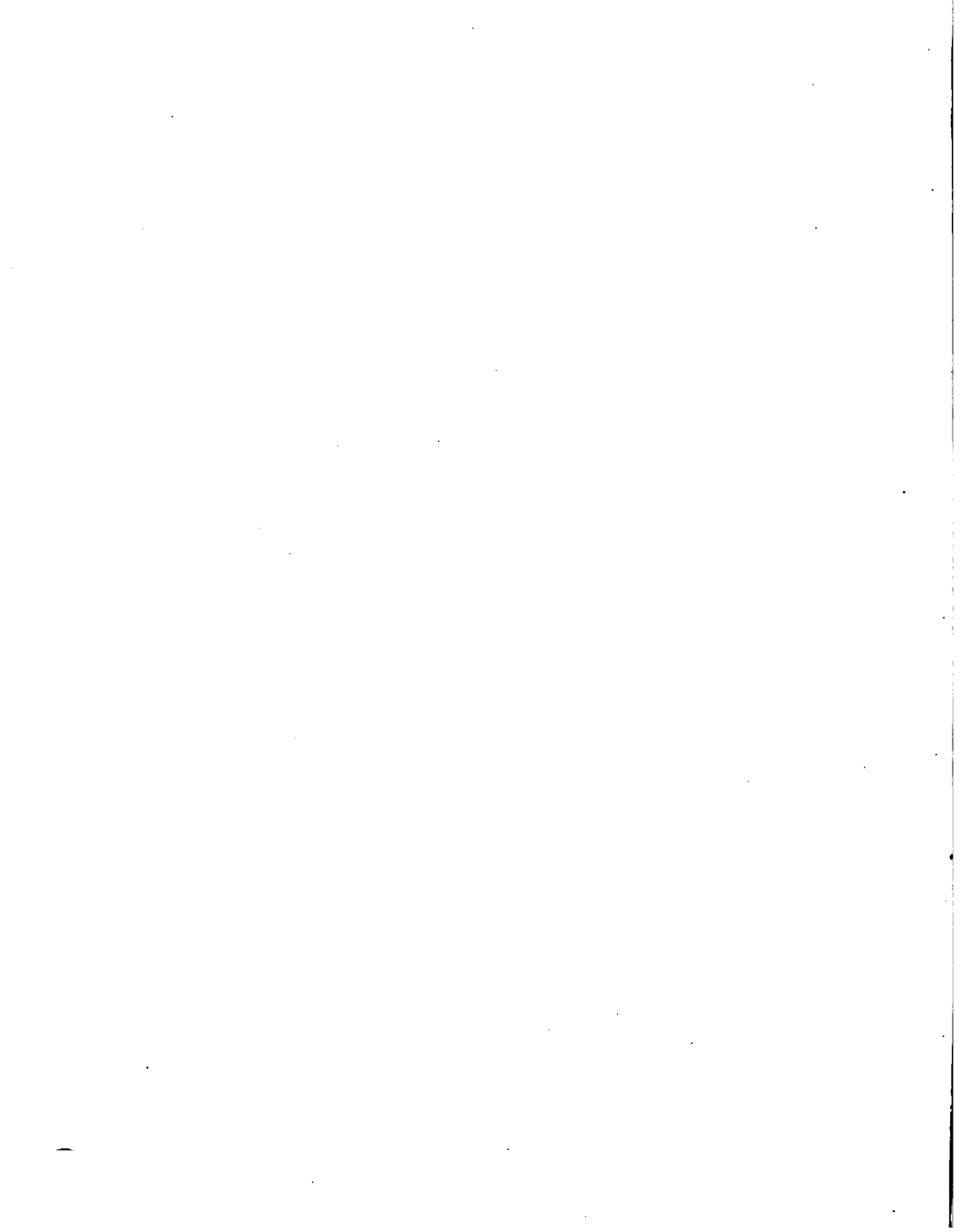


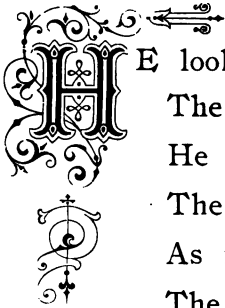


THE night was still: no wind nor sighing breeze
Blew down the sloping hillsides through the trees,
Nor stirred a leaf of olive in the grove;
The earth was hushed in peace — as from above;
Save for some dismal far-off jackal's cry
That moaned awhile, then in its echo, die.
Up in the heavens glowed the stars; the moon,
In all her mellow fullness, calmly shone,
And like a gracious queen enthroned in might
She reigned serene, mid veils of misty light.

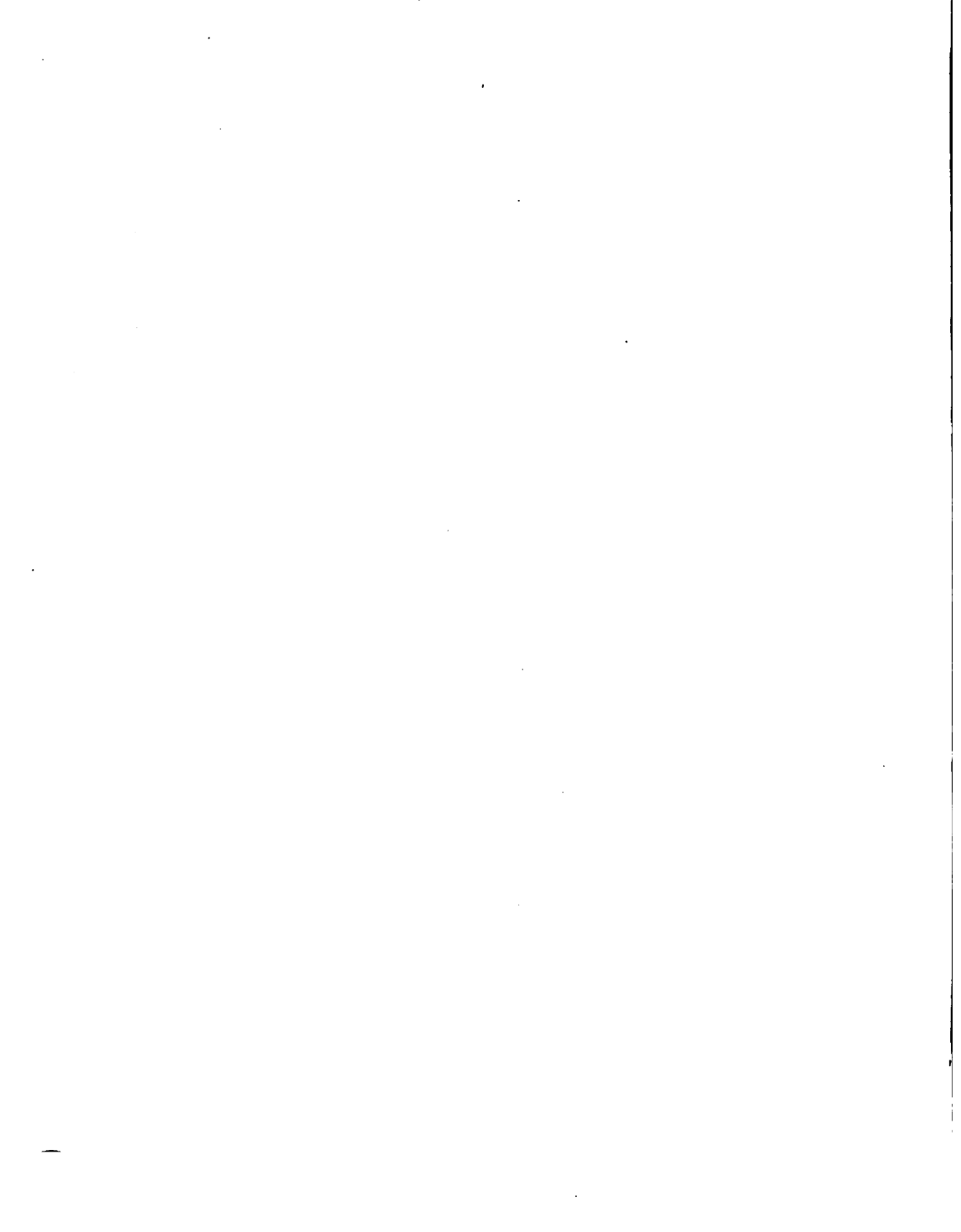


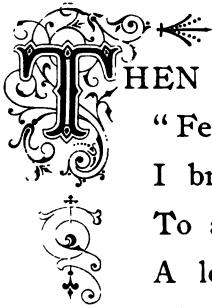
UDEA slept: no trace of life was seen
Save for a fire, that with fitful gleam
Flung weird shadows 'gainst a shepcot's wall,
And round the blaze, in easy reach of call
Of yonder silent sentinel, reposed
The forms of sleeping shepherds; midnight closed;
The watcher's task was o'er, he paused and turned
Towards the fire, when sudden round him burned
A wondrous light: the shepherd shook with fear,
While brighter grew the light, and yet more clear.



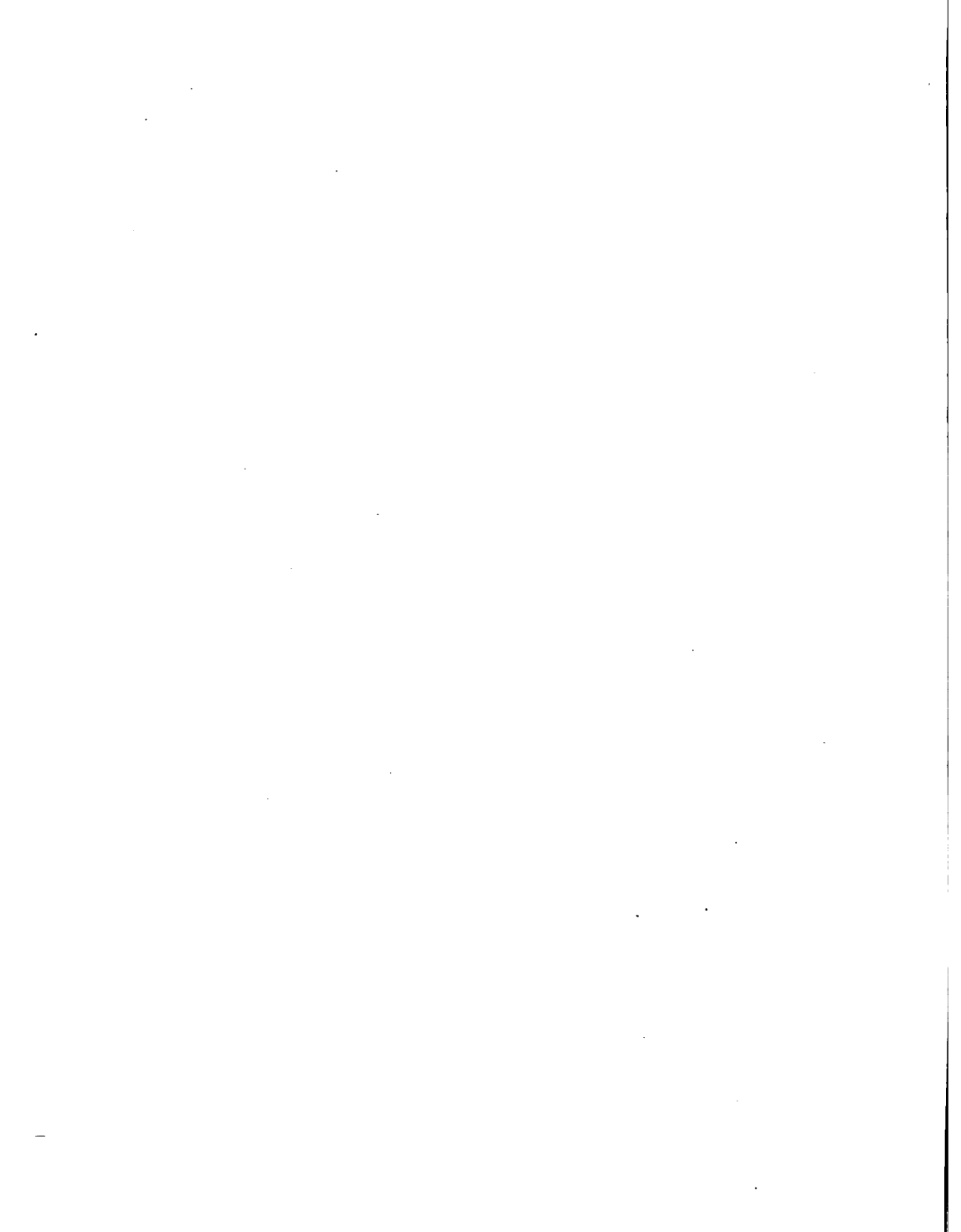


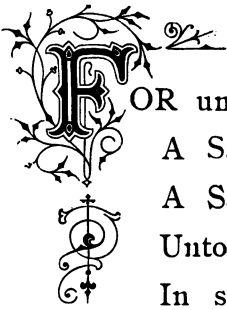
HE looked around him and could plainly see
The glen and hills, the rocks and every tree;
He looked above, no star shone in the sky,
The moon was gone, but there he saw on high,
As from a heavenly window, streaming,
The dazzling light; transfixed and almost seeming
Lifeless, he called aloud with terror'd sound,
“Awake, awake, awake,” and from the ground
The sleepers sprang, but at the blinding light
They fell upon the earth o'ercome with fright.



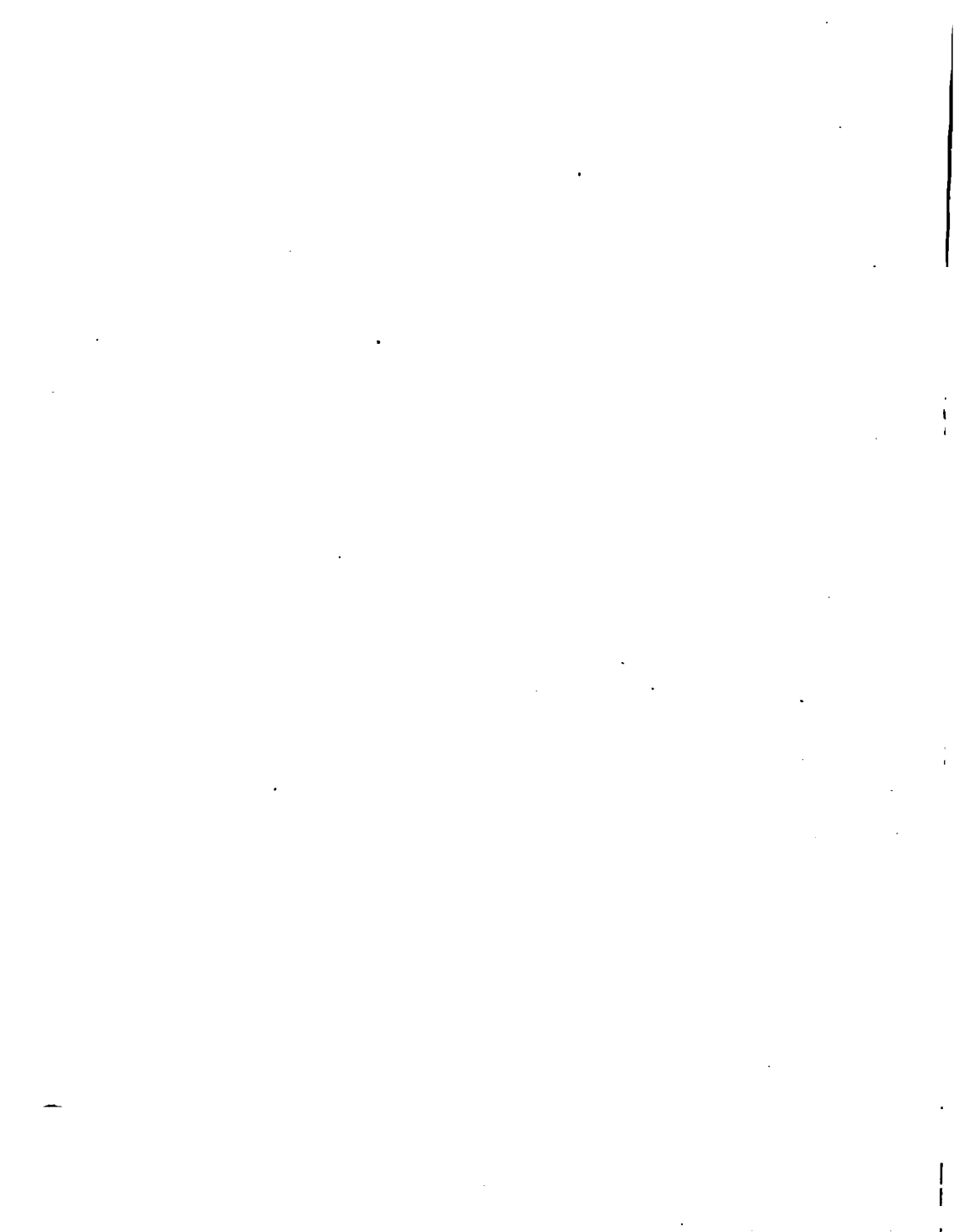


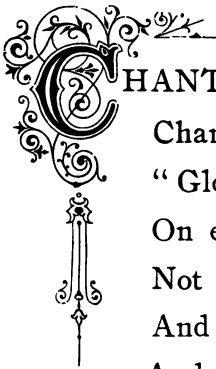
THEN spoke a voice, in tones like liquid gold,
“Fear not,” their hearts swelled quickly, “for behold
I bring you good tidings which shall be
To all people, great joy;” and there they see
A lovely youth arrayed in dazzling white,
Above his brow a star hung, far more bright
Than brilliant Hesperus. Their fear now fled,
And in their hearts with simple faith they said:
God’s glory is about us. And again
The angel spoke in even gladder strain.





FOR unto you this very day is born
A Saviour, in David's holy town,
A Saviour, Christ the Lord, and this shall be
Unto you a sign: the infant you shall see
In swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."
No more then said the holy stranger
But yet he stayed, and all around him grew
The glowing light, now turned to roseate hue,
And in the sky, with flashing wings, they see
Myriad angels, chanting in glad ecstasy.





HANTING in unison, in gladness and glee

Chanting a sweet strain triumphantly:

“Glory to God in the highest, and peace

On earth, good will towards men.” They cease

Not once, but many times their hymn prolong

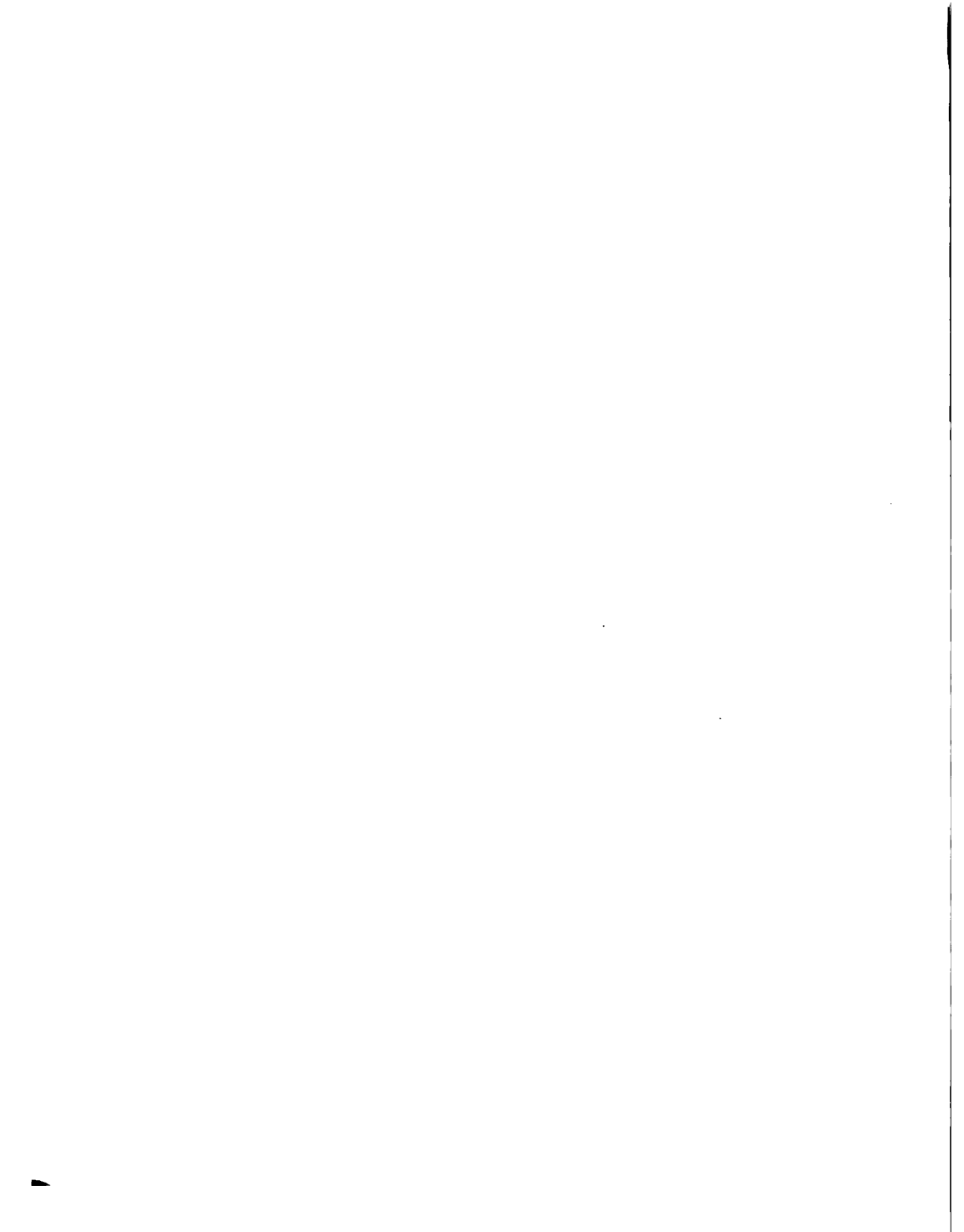
And echoes scatter sweetly from the song

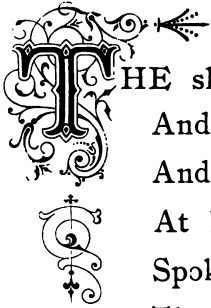
And echo o'er again. The angel spread

His shining wings and vanished overhead,

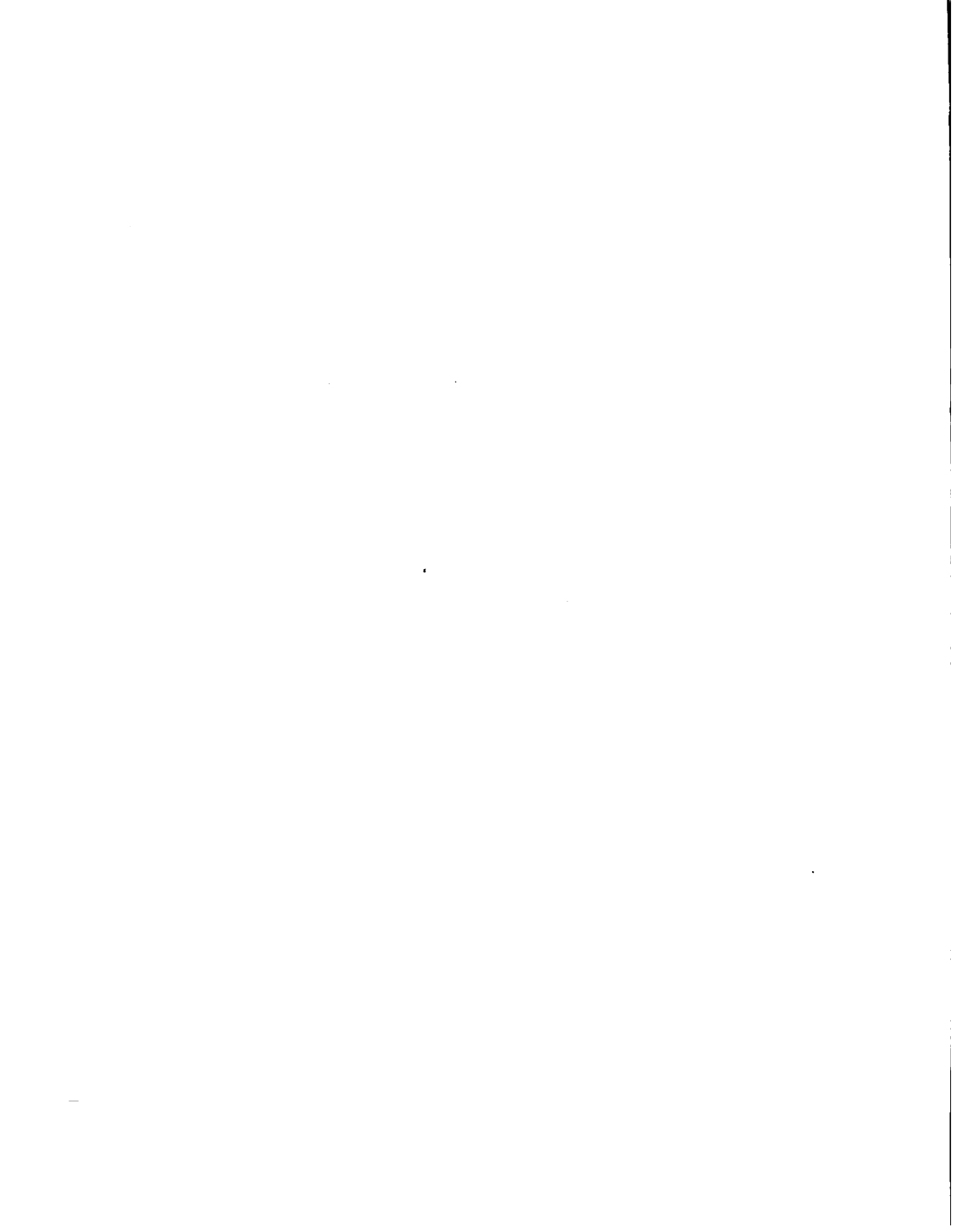
But yet they heard, though slow it fainter grew

The chorus sweet, 'till last it faded too.





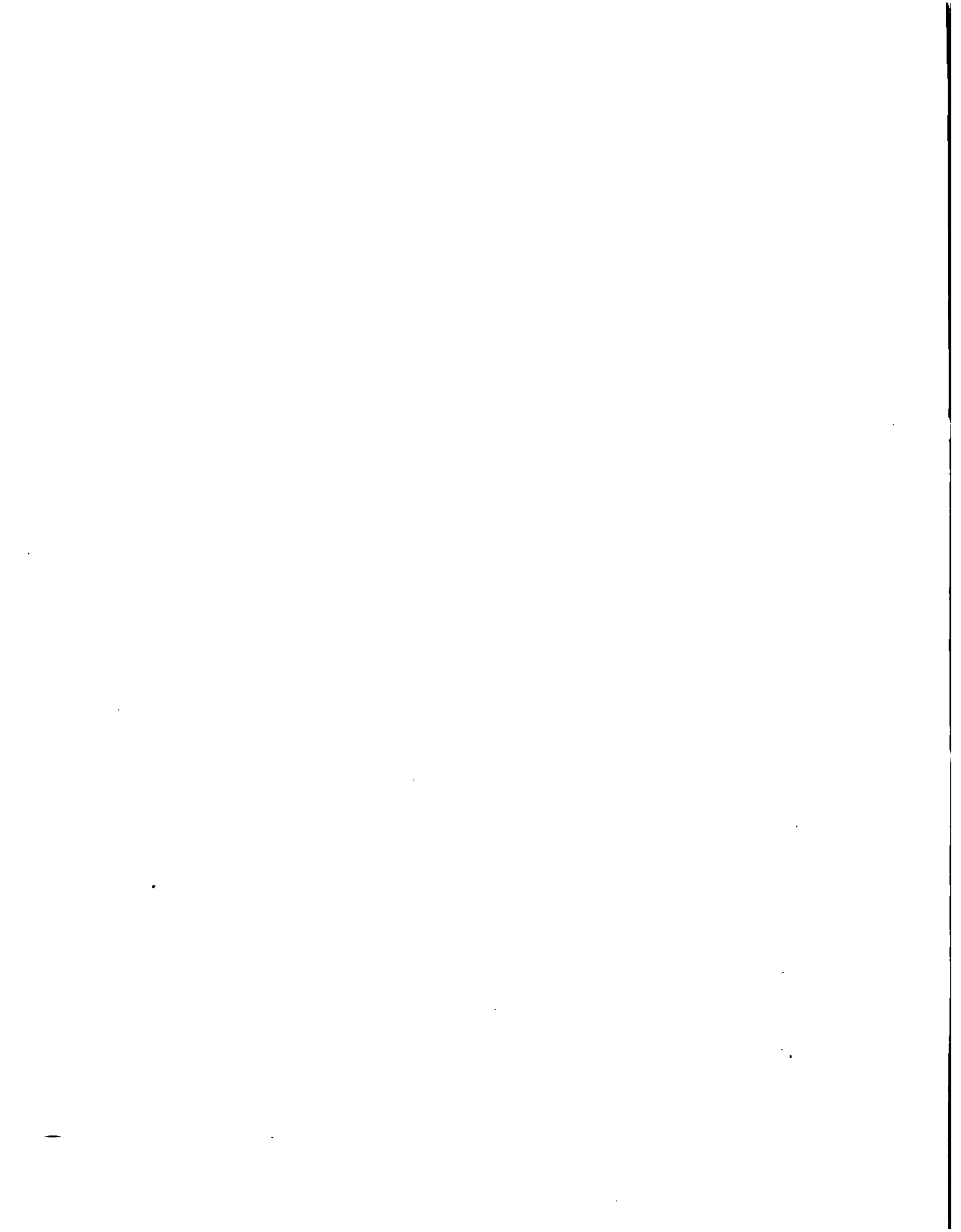
THE shepherds at each other gazed with awe
And spoke in hushed tones of what they saw,
And of the wondrous words the angel said;
At last one of them, looking overhead,
Spoke solemnly, "Did not the angel say
The Christ is born, and born this very day,
And in our Bethlehem; is it not so?
For it is David's city. Then let us go
And worship him." And quitting flocks and all
They went to seek the Christ, their Lord, their All.

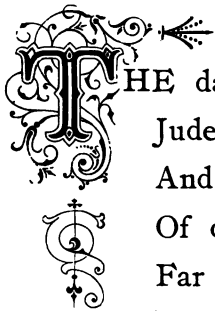


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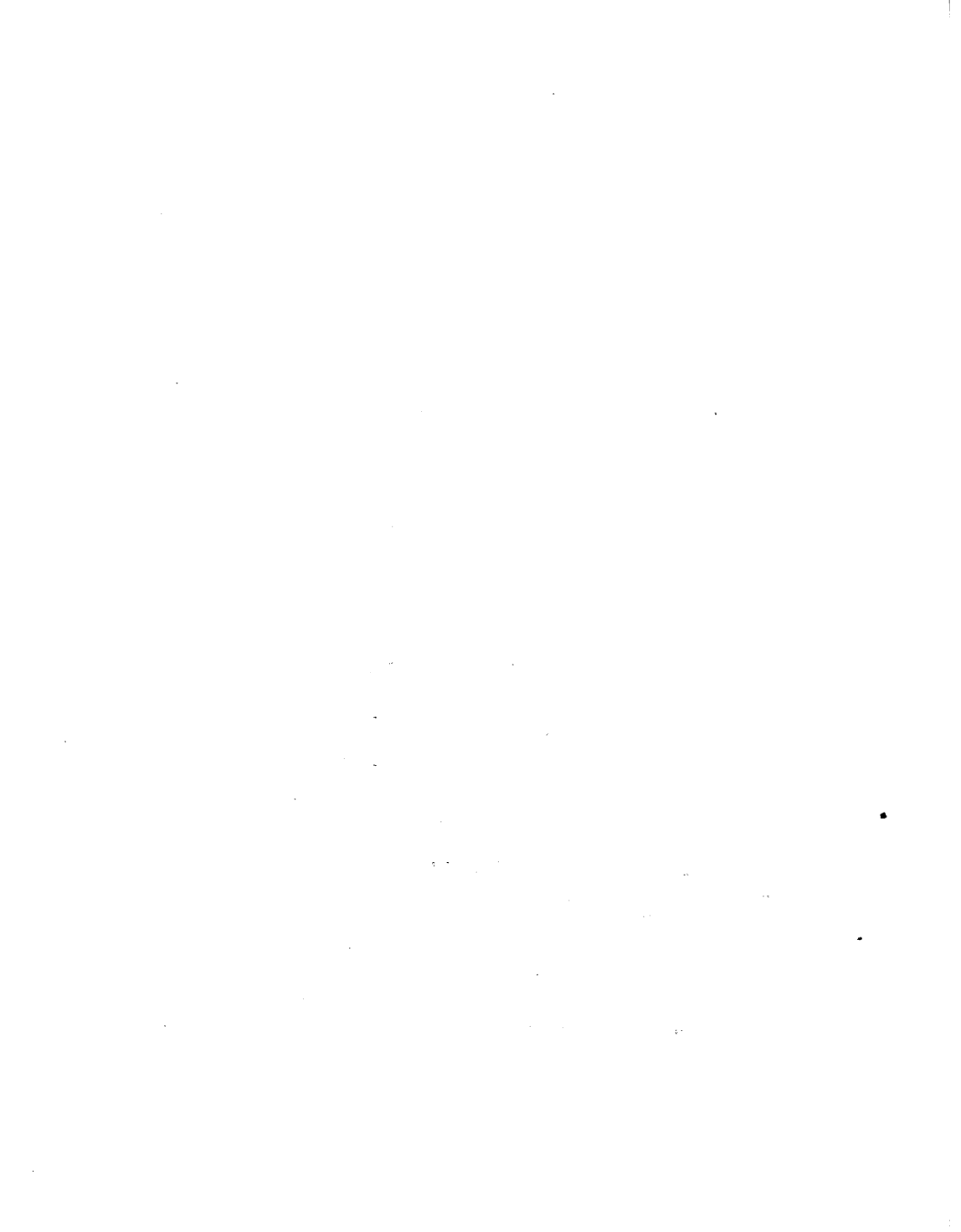
BIRTH OF THE SAVIOUR.

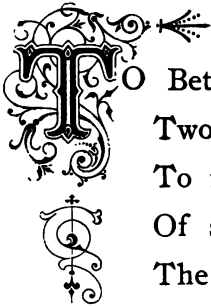




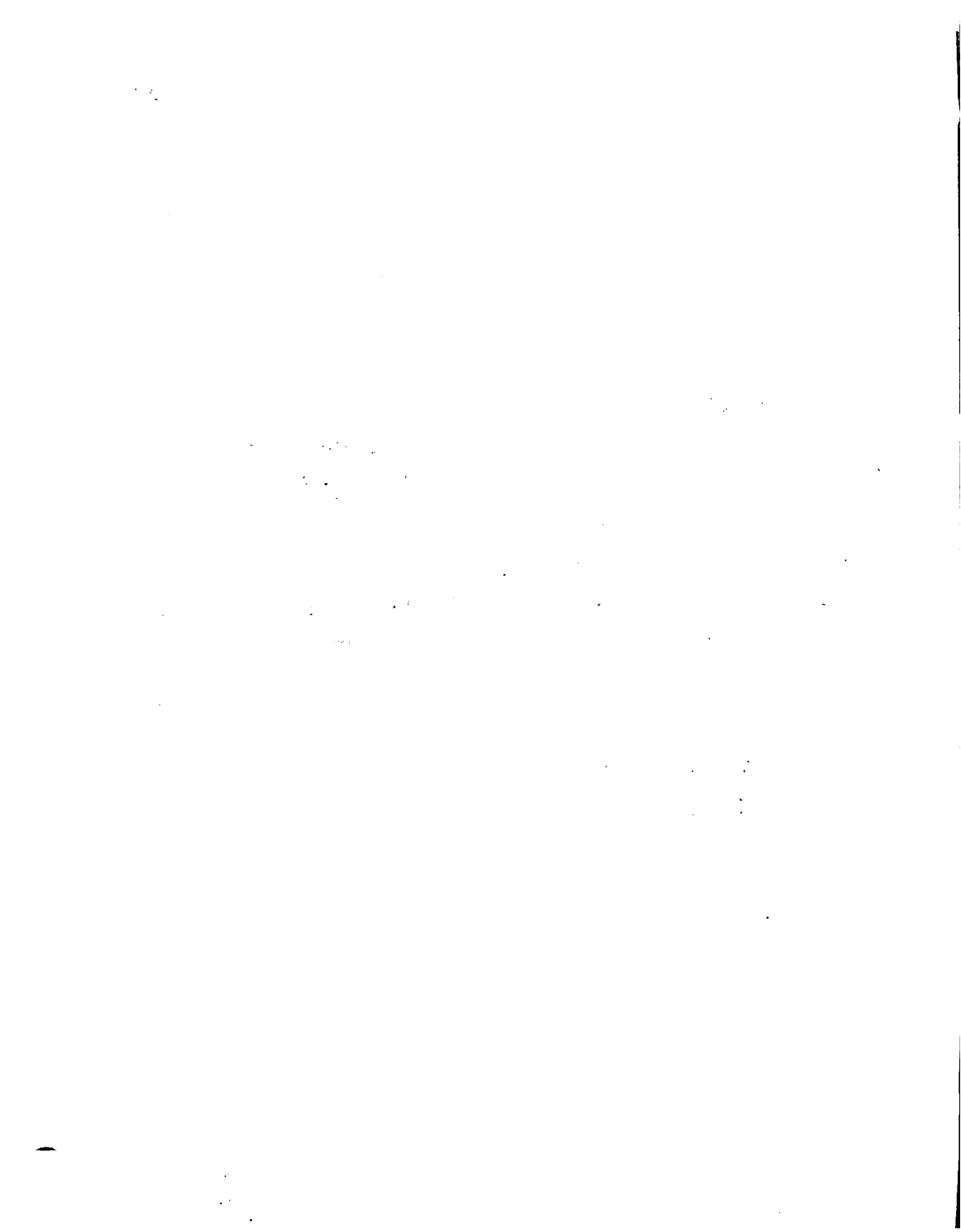


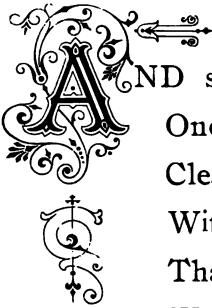
THE day was done, and slowly in the west
Judea's sun was sinking low to rest,
And o'er the top of Gedor cast a glow
Of deep'ning crimson. The twilight fadings grow
Far in the east, and with their waning light
Throw darkning shadows, heralds of the night,
O'er Bethlehem. Fair Bethlehem, set in
Mid scenes of beauty; city of the King,
Of David, Juda's pride; the sun's last ray
Kisses thy walls with love, then fades away.





O Bethlehem this winter's eve there come
Two travellers, who haste e'er day is done
To reach the inn: and one of them, a man,
Of stately mein, with eager eyes does scan
The roadway through the town—a princely form
Tall and erect, his liquid eyes, so warm,
With tender friendship shone; and by his side
Upon a patient animal, does ride
A woman veiled, but see, her veil falls low,
Her face is clear, lit by the sunset's glow.

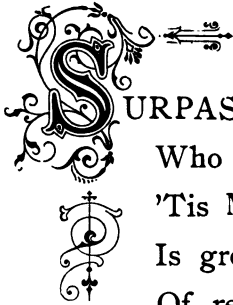




AND such a face—no mortal ever knew

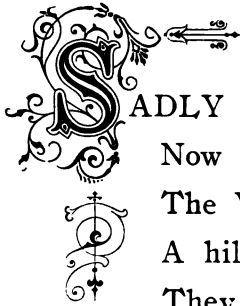
One like before. Her eyes were deep and blue,
Clear as a cloudless sky; the stars at night
With lesser lustre shine, with dimmer light
Than those soft eyes. Her face, of perfect mold,
Was wondrous fair and sweet; and like fine gold
Spun out, her long hair fell all unconfined
Adown her back, and in the gentle wind
Rippled softly. There ne'er was angel face
Nor form, so lovely nor so blest with grace.



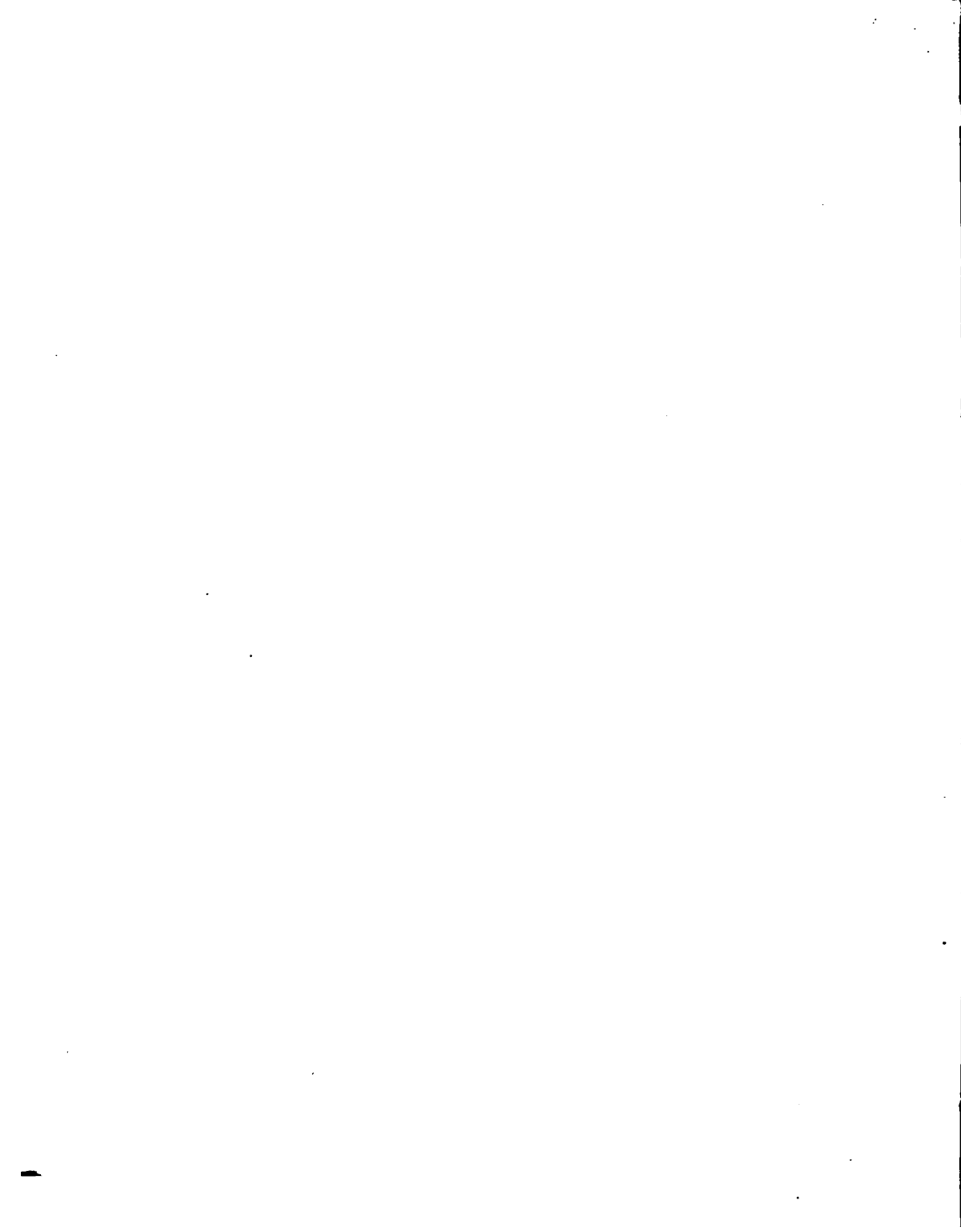


SURPASSING fair, by right, for it is she
Who is the mother of the Christ, to be :
'Tis Mary, and her soul's exceeding grace
Is greater than all else. They reach the place
Of rest, they stop, and Joseph, for 'tis he,
Enters, but soon returns, and plain to see
With disappointment weighed, 'tis true not there
Is room for them ; it seems as though nowhere
They may find rest. At last he leads the way
Out of the town, out in the twilight gray.

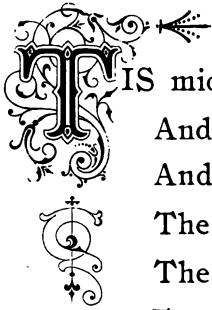




SADLY they wander on, the dying day
Now fading fast has almost died away,
The Virgin fainter grows, but soon they see
A hillside cavern—here their rest shall be.
They haste, they reach the place, they enter in,
The cave is cold, 'tis full of shadows dim.
It is a stable, for against the wall
Are straw-filled mangers, meant for cattle stall.
Here is their rest, they raise their hearts above
With grateful prayers for His protecting love.



* * * *



THIS midnight hour, when sudden comes a light
And fills the cave, 'tis wondrous clear and bright ;
And hark, the walls resound with melody
The angels sing, they sing with ecstasy,
The very air with gladness shakes, and well,
For Christ is born, as midnight hour fell,
His birth a miracle; and o'er him, low,
The Virgin Mother kneels, and as the glow
Her eyes are clear, they beam with tender grace
The infant smiles and looks up in her face.

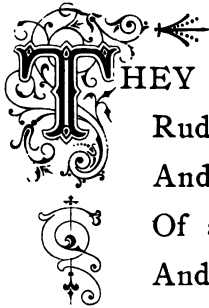




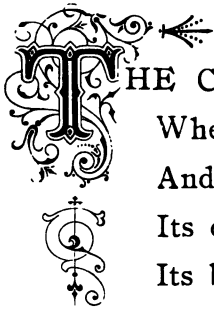
THE night wears on, the angels' song is o'er,
The light is gone, and quietude once more
Fills all the place: the pale moon's silv'ry glow
Falls on the ground. Now through the opening low,
With hesitating step and slow advance,
Some men approach, and with one glance
At the new born child, they prostrate there
And worship long—'tis the shepherds, and the prayer
Their glad hearts echo, is of joy profound,
Of joy and gladness, for the Christ is found.

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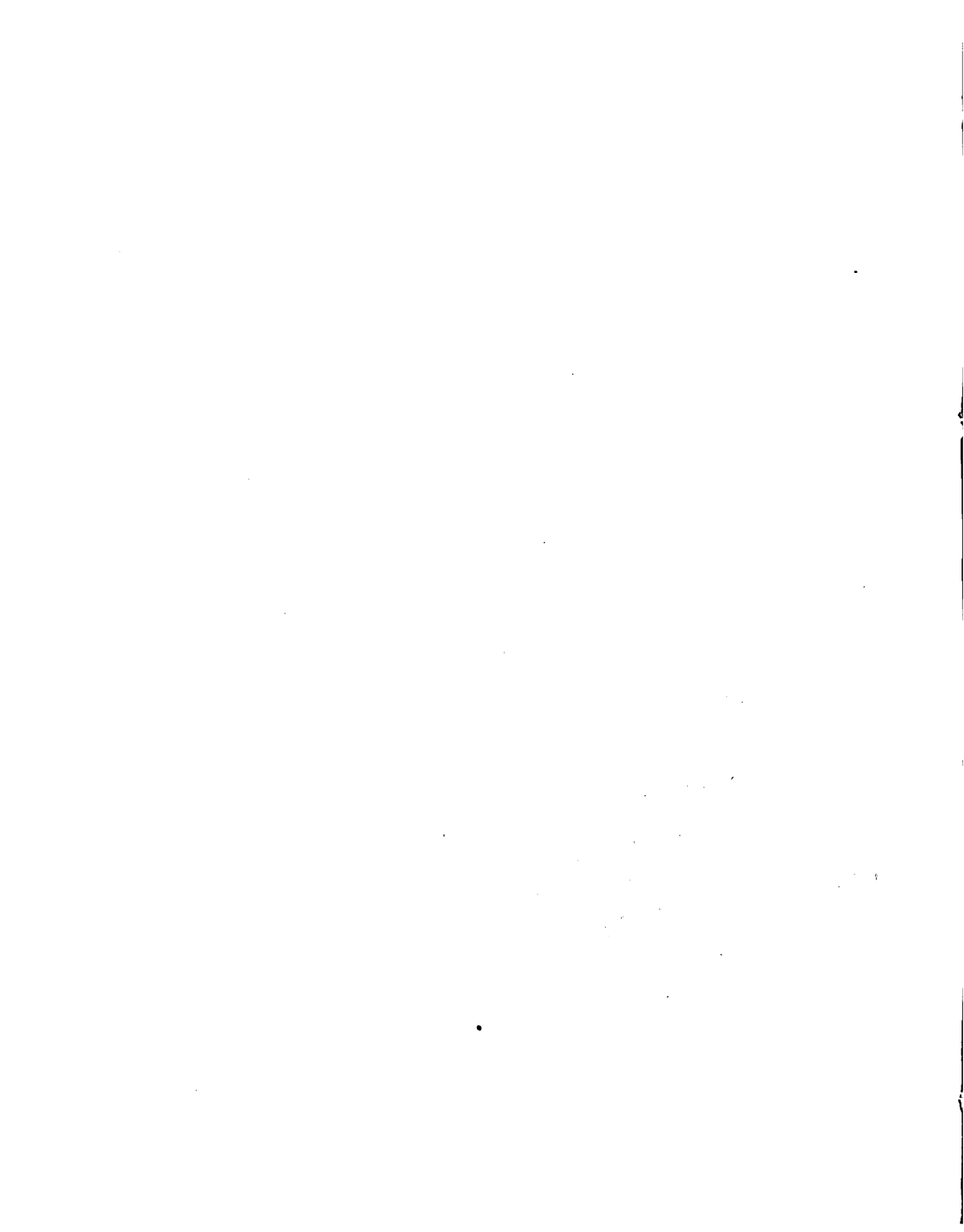
Handwritten notes on the left side of the page, including the word "general" and other illegible scribbles.



THEY offer gifts with humbleness sincere,
Rude offerings, but held by them most dear;
And then they rise — to Mary tell the tale
Of all that passed far off in their lone vale,
And when they told of all they heard and saw,
They go their way, o'ercome with awe;
O'ercome with awe and gladness, for they sing
In rapture of the Christ, the new born King,
And echoes scatter sweetly from the song
And lingering, die, as though they'd fain prolong.



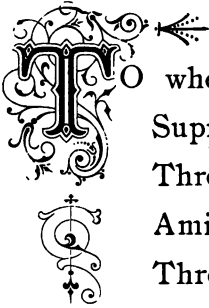
THE Christ is born. O happy midnight hour
When thou did'st break, then fled the demon's power,
And in the night proud Comus' temple fell,
Its oracle destroyed, no more to tell
Its breathings false; then in thy hour bloomed fair,
Engaddis' vines, and filled was all the air
With wondrous mystery. The Christ is born,
The Saviour of mankind; then broke the morn,
The joyous dawn of life anew, of love,
The first ray of the light of life above.



III.
THE COMING OF THE MAGI.

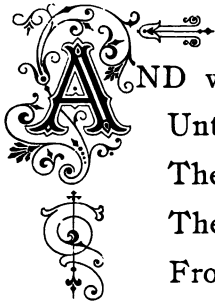




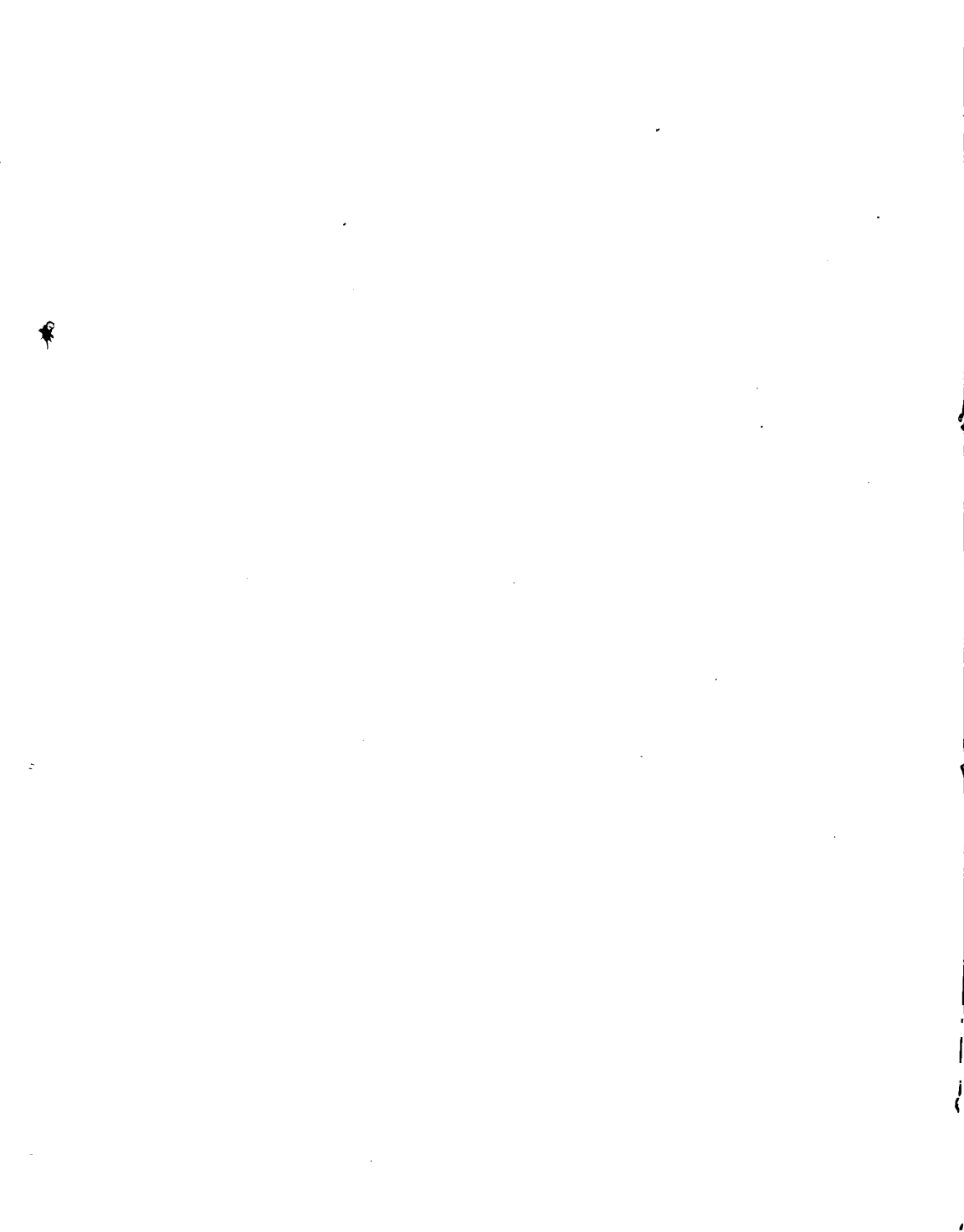


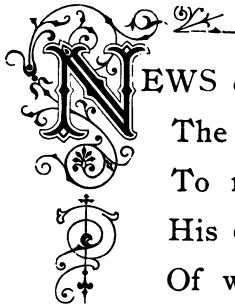
where Jerusalem in splendor stands
Supremely fair, there came from far-off lands
Three travellers in pomp and splendor rare,
Amid a train of slaves and trappings fair,
Three men, majestic and of noble mein:
They came to seek the Christ, for they had seen
Far in the east his star—a wondrous light
That led them on and on through day and night,
'Cross many desert wastes, through changing clime,
Until it led them to fair Palestine.



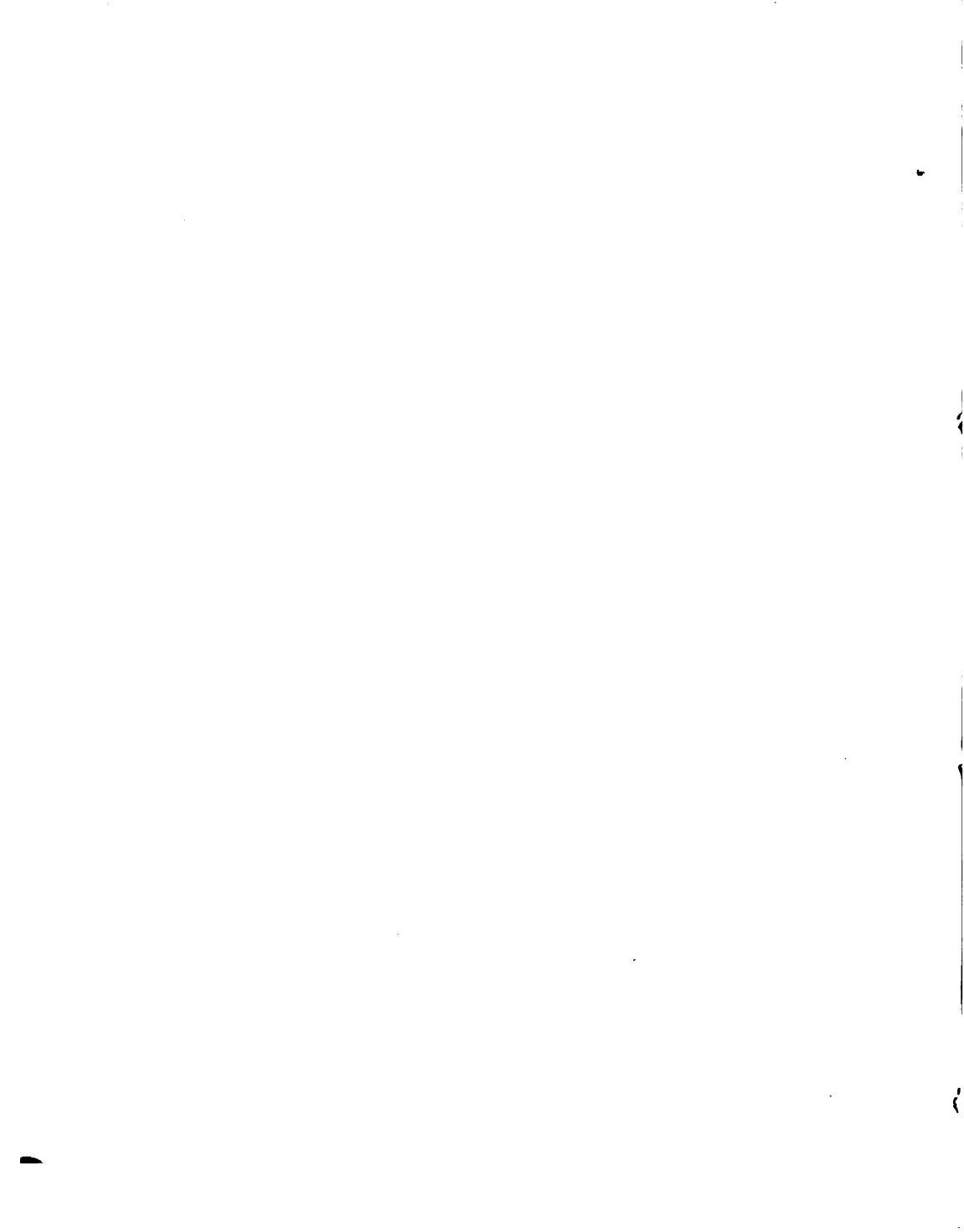



AND when at last they had come nearly nigh
Unto Jerusalem, far in the sky
The star did vanish, but they entered in
The city's gate, and for the new-born King,
From everyone, did question eagerly;
But no one knew of him they came to see.
The Magi wondered, but repaired to rest
And on the morrow to renew their quest.
Repose they found, and as in peace they slept
Dreams of the Christ-child through their slumbers crept.

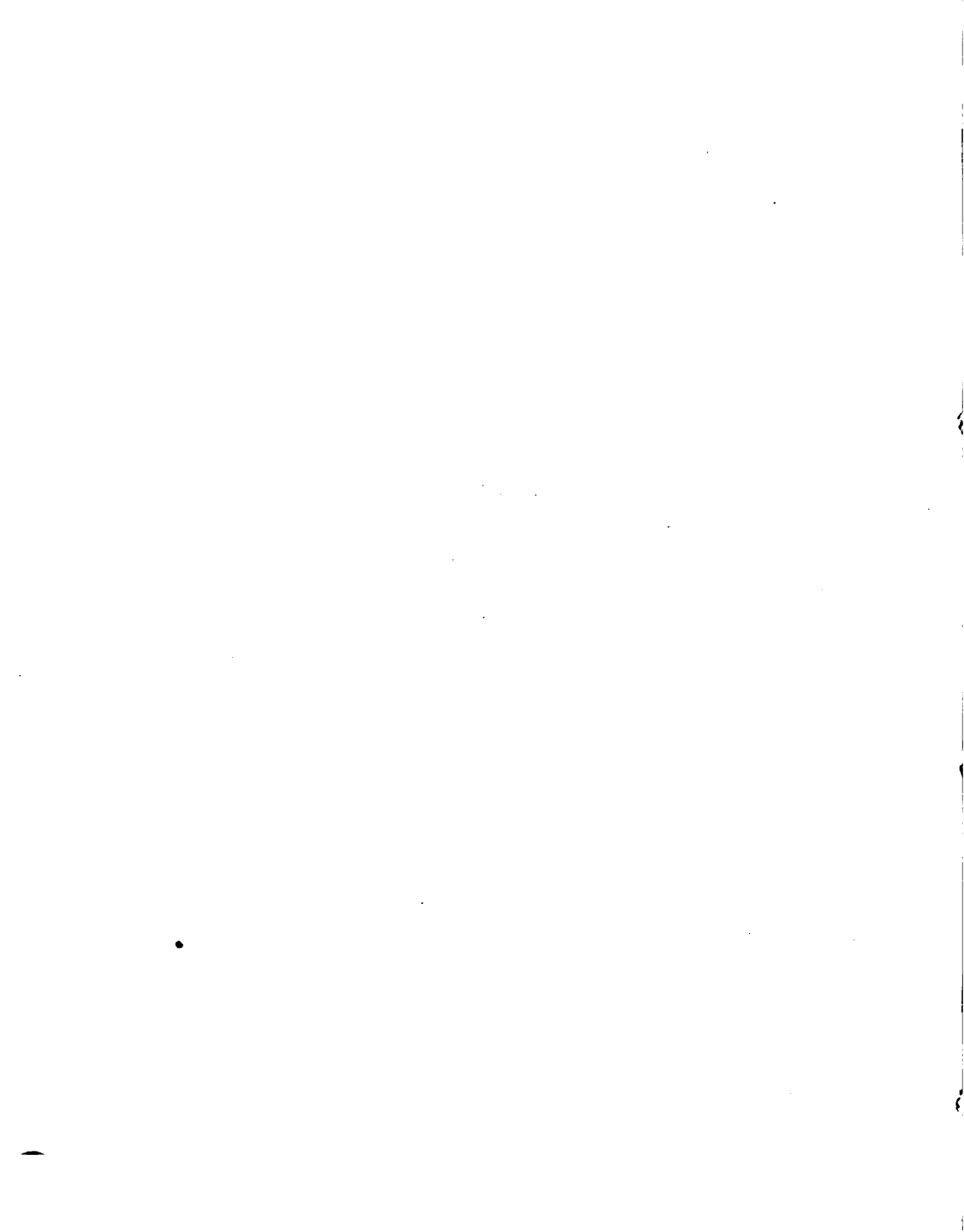





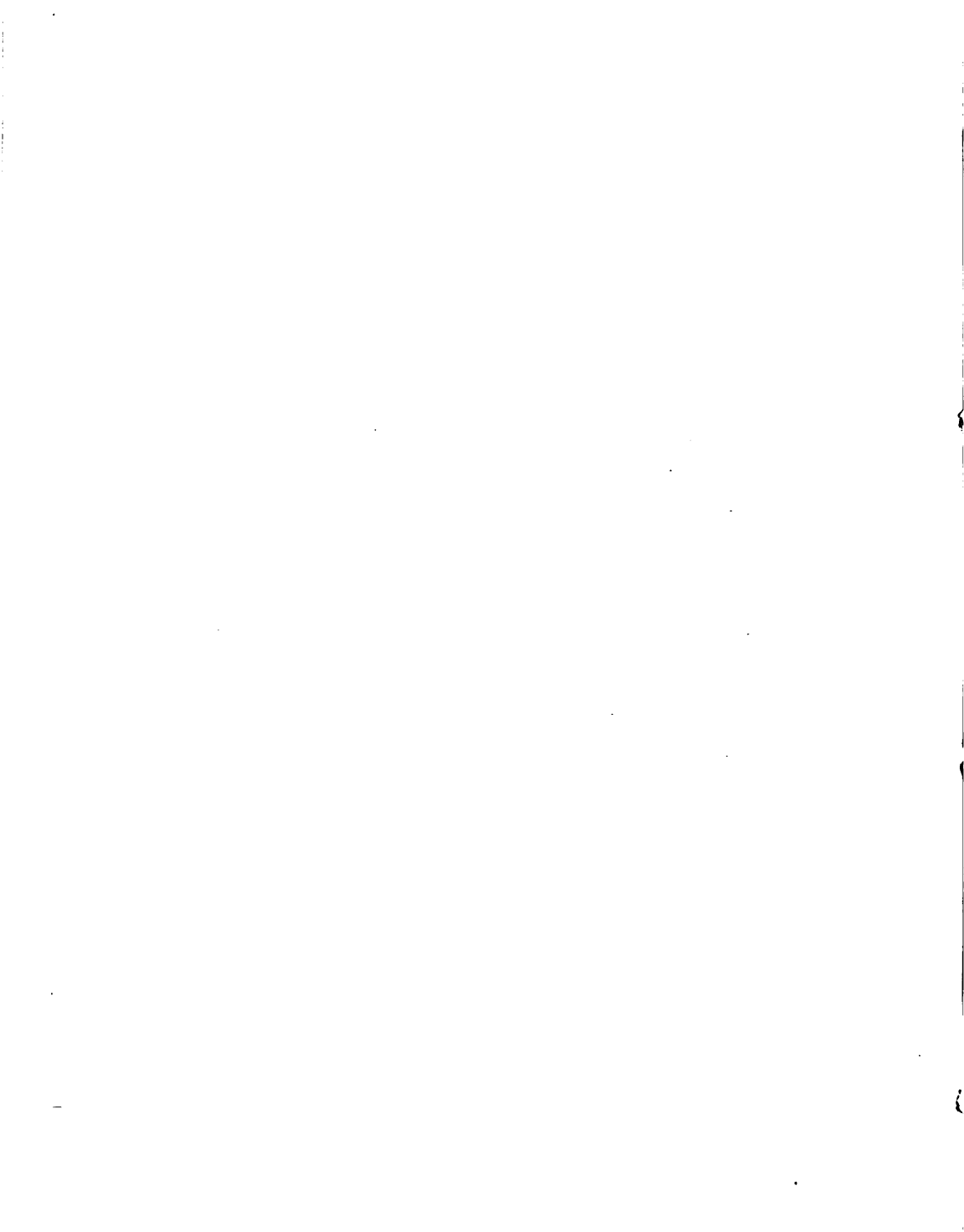
NEWS of the strangers and for whom they sought,
The new born King of Juda, soon were brought
To mighty Herod, who in rage did seek
His councillors, and bade them to him speak
Of when the Jews' messiah would be born.
They searched the records, and they named the town
As that of Bethlehem, in Juda's land,
And that his coming soon would be at hand
For now the last of Daniel's weeks were o'er.
This was his time to come—they said no more.



 BUT Herod in great anger, swore that he
And he alone, Judea's King would be;
And with deceitful cunning did invite
The strangers three before him that he might
Inquire closely all that they did know
About the Christ; then kindly bade them go,
But asked them that they might return his way
To tell him all, that he might homage pay
Unto the child; and they, suspecting not
His ill design, agreed, and then set out.



 BUT scarcely had they gone their way afar
When in the heavens soon appeared their star;
With joyful hearts they followed in the way
The light led on, till last ere close of day
The star stood still, its bright rays pointing down
Upon a rocky hillside near the town:
And coming near, they see a cavern low
They enter in, 'tis lit up with a glow —
And there they find the child, their search is o'er,
And prostrate low, the infant they adore.

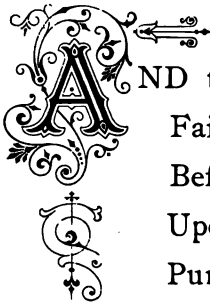




THEY worshipped long, sincerely and profound,
Then slow with reverence rose up from the ground
And went without, but quickly did return,
Each bearing in his arms a golden urn,
And to the child they offer precious gold,
This as an earthly King, and then behold
They offer myrrh and incense, as a sign
Of adoration to a God divine.
As King of men, they offer glittering store.
But as a God, with fervent hearts, adore.

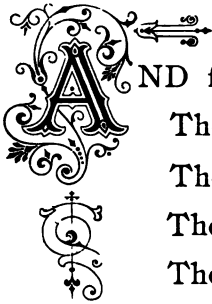






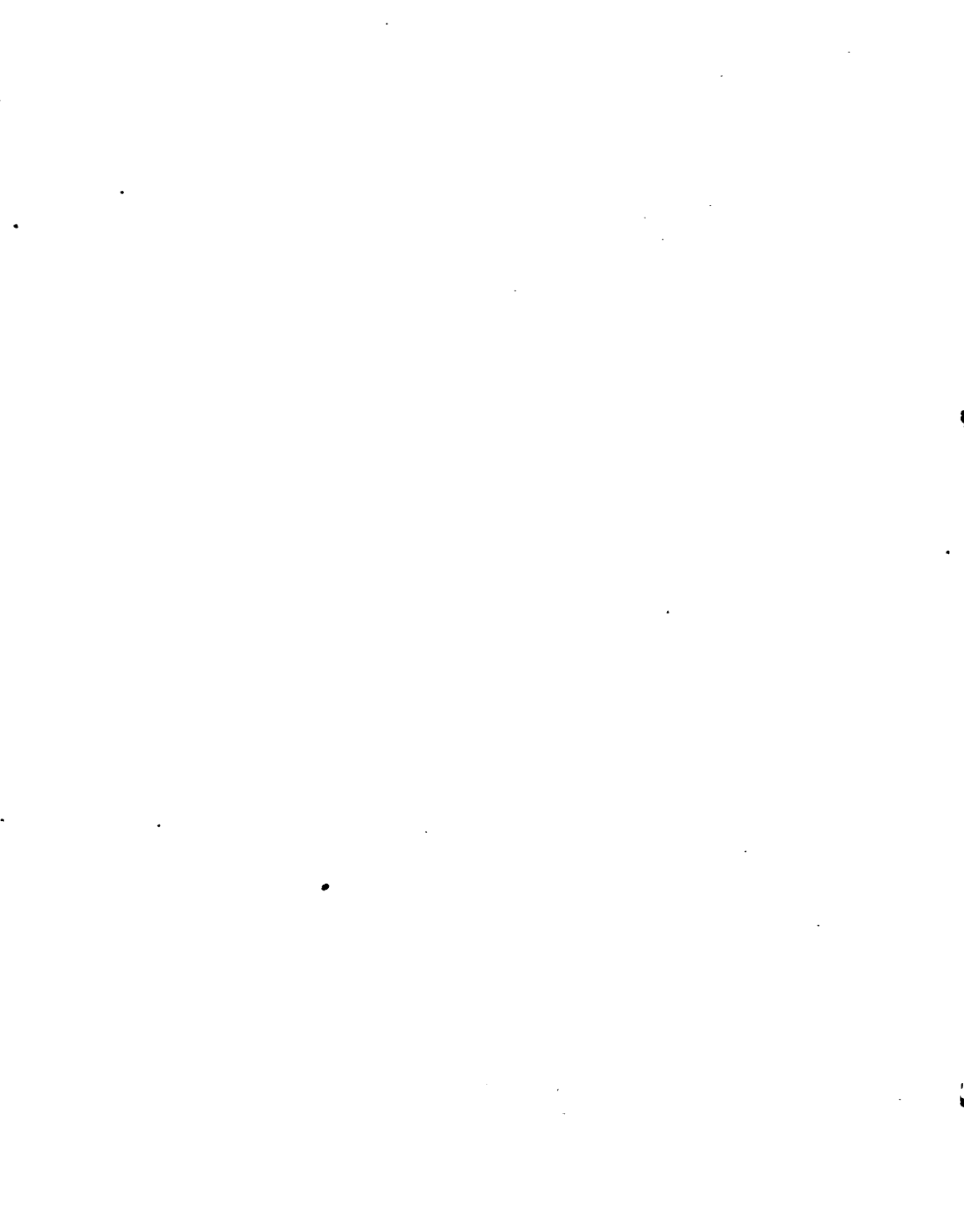
AND then they turn to Mary, whom they found
Fair as the morn, and bowing to the ground
Before her, pray that God's grace might ever rest
Upon her, then leave the cave, and in the west
Pursue their way to Jericho, to tell
King Herod of the child. But when night fell
And as they slept, they heard an angel speak
Of Herod's evil will. They did not seek
The King, but as the angel did command
They turned their way to Persia's lovely strand.

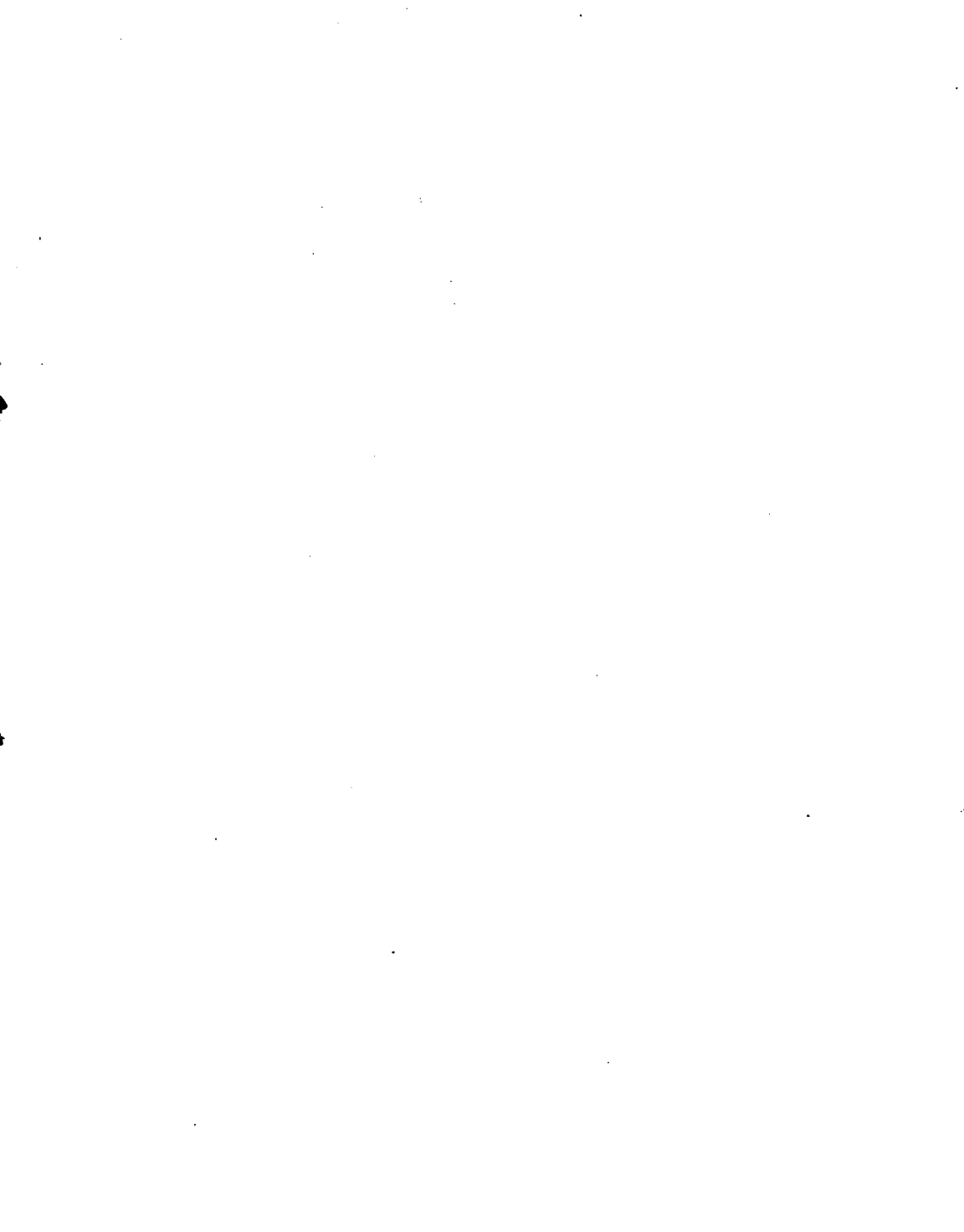


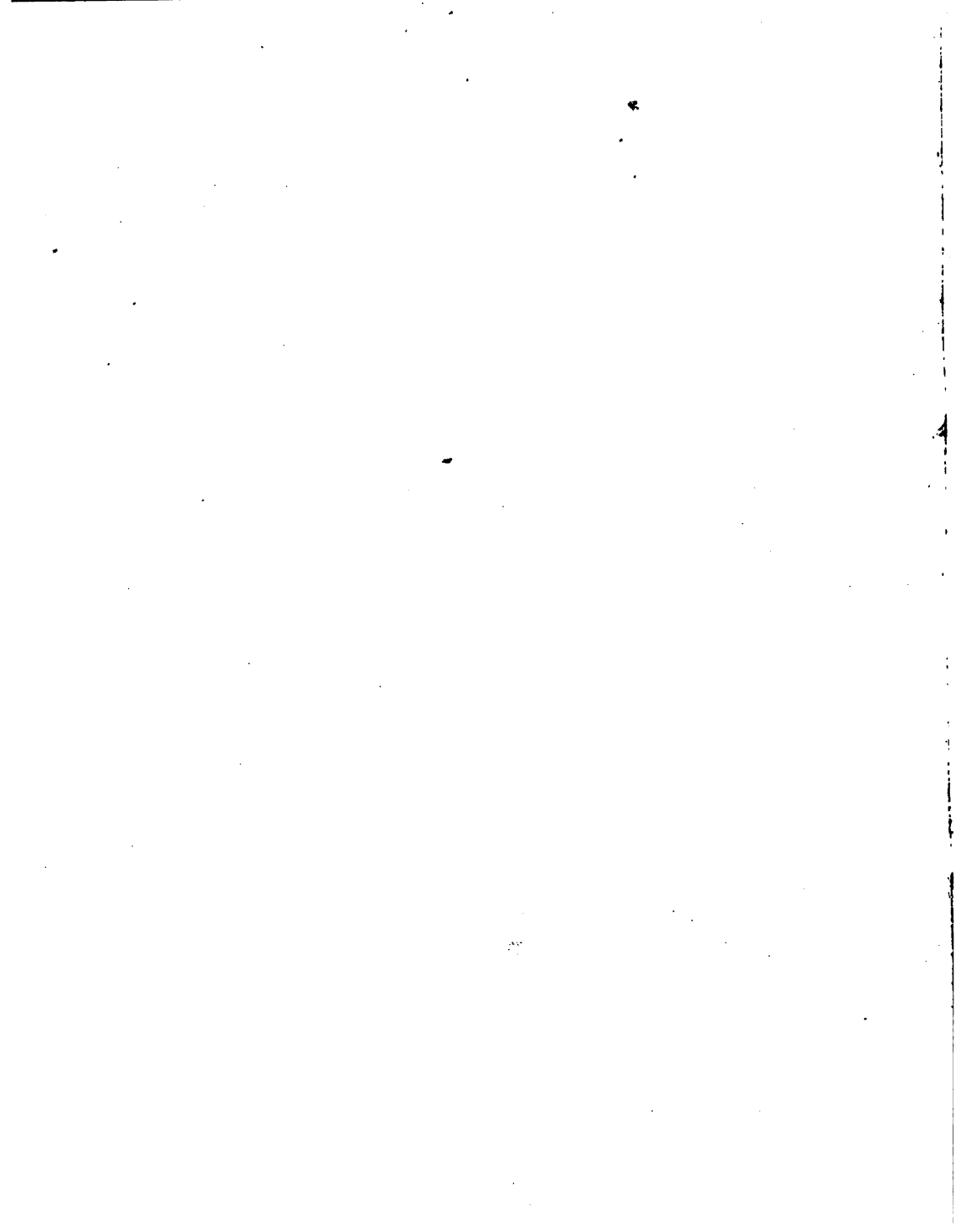


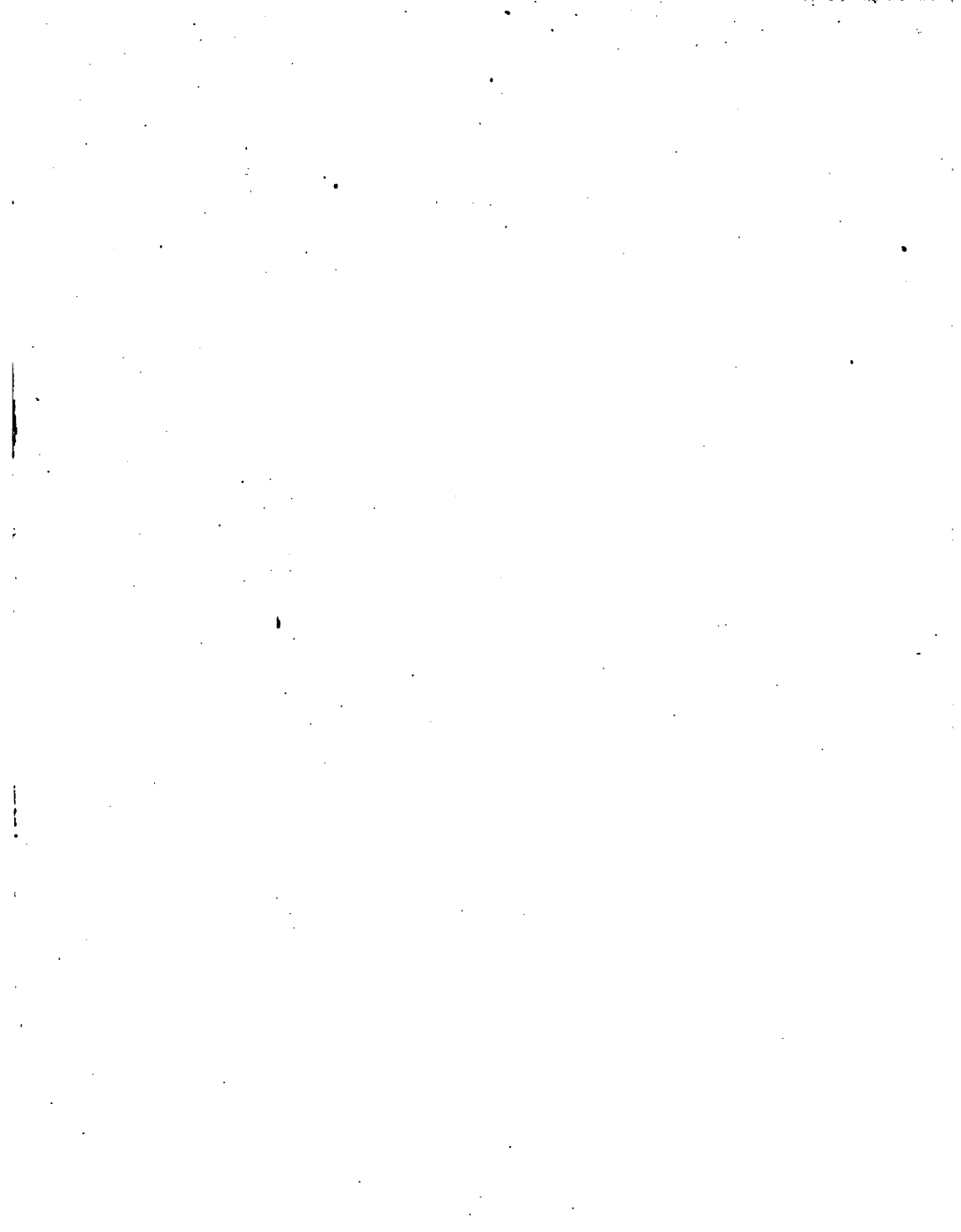
AND far away in Bethlehem's lone cave

The Christ-child lay, the Christ who came to save;
There in his lowly cot where humbly prayed
The shepherds rude, and where the wise men laid
Their precious gifts and worshipped so profound,
There in that cell who's walls did once resound
With wondrous melody—the infant slept;
And as the morning gray beams softly crept
Far in the eastern sky, then broke the dawn,
The gladdest of all days—the Christmas morn.













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