

SEASONS OF THE SPIRIT

FEBRUARY 5TH 2003

LIGHT

Choir

Hail, gladdening light

Wood

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light’: and there was light.”

Genesis 1: 1-3

Light and darkness have always been part of existence on the earth as we circle the sun within the solar system. And light is the source of life itself. To the ancient world it was like a god, disclosing and hiding himself at will from people – something over which they had no power. Small wonder that the power of the sun has fascinated writers down the ages.

**Choir
Morley.**

Here comes the sun

Harrison *arr*

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school-boys, and sour 'prentices,
Go tell court-huntsmen that the King will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices;
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

They beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long:
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late tell me,
Whether bothe the Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou left'st them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, 'All here in one bed lay.'

She's all States, and all Princes I;
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honour's mimic; all wealth alchemy.
Thou, Sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus;
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy centre is, these walls thy sphere.

The Sun was vital to the ancient world because it gave light and life, and this idea was taken over by the Judaeo Christian tradition and transformed, first by the Hebrew prophets, and then by the Gospel writers, taking their cue from Jesus himself.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah 9

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.

John 1: 1-9

“Again Jesus spoke to them saying, “I am the light of the world: he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Choir

Lux aeterna

Durufié

So light became a powerful image for the way in which God had revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Everything associated with God was conceived in terms of light, and the powers of have become associated with darkness. Here a passage from TS Eliot's *The Rock* celebrates the Light Invisible that is Almighty God.

O Light Invisible, we praise Thee!
Too bright for mortal vision.
O Greater Light, we praise Thee for the less;
The eastern light our spires touch at morning,
The light that slants upon our western doors at evening,
The twilight over stagnant pools at batflight,
Moon light and star light, owl and moth light,
Glow-worm glowlight on a grassblade.
O Light Invisible, we worship Thee!

We thank Thee for the lights that we have kindled,
The light of altar and of sanctuary;
Small lights of those who meditate at midnight
And lights directed through the coloured panes of
 windows
And light reflected from the polished stone,
The gilded carven wood, the coloured fresco.
Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward
And see the light that fractures through unquiet water.
We see the light but see not whence it comes.
O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!

We thank Thee who hast moved us to building, to
 finding, to forming at the ends of our fingers and
 beams of our eyes.
And when we have built an altar to the Invisible Light,
 We may set thereon the little lights for which our
 bodily vision is made.
And we thank Thee that darkness reminds us of light.
O Light Invisible, we give Thee thanks for Thy great
 Glory!

Choir

Te lucis ante terminum

Tallis

