

Shine Jesus Shine, Shine Your Loving Light on Me

There has always been a war between light and darkness. Portia saw it in *The Merchant of Venice*: “How far that little candle throws its beams; so shines a good deed in a naughty world.” But one of the ironies often pointed out in great literature is that many prefer darkness to light simply because they have inured themselves to habits others might disapprove of in the clear light of day. They also possibly find darkness the best medium in which they can scratch their itches without back-talk from their conscience. Of course most of us know that the dark streets are the most dangerous. They are the natural hunting grounds for nocturnal predators.

In writing about Bethlehem last week as the city of bread and fruitfulness, the words of that beautiful Christmas carol came to mind: “But in thy dark streets shineth the Everlasting Light,” referring to the birth of the Christ child – “the light of the world.” “In him was life, and that life was the light of men.” (Jo 1:4)

It was, of course, a star blazing with uncommon brightness that prompted the magi – the “wise” astronomers of the east to drop everything and set out in the dead of winter through rugged, uncharted, and even hostile terrain to worship this special visitor from “the realms of Glory.” I sense that it was the Holy Spirit that visited the hearts of these searchers after truth, convincing them a savior was about to be born.

T. S. Eliot, possibly the most learned of all the poets of the modern period, (if the many footnotes in his writings are any indication,) wrote a poem called “*The Magi*,” which piercingly analyzes the motivation of these special players in the drama of the nativity. The words of the first line come to mind, “A cold coming we had of it.”

Possibly wise men were included by the author, God, to irk the many doubters yet unborn who want the whole world to join with them in hating Christmas. Those lost souls are still out there, mud wrestling in the dark, and scoffing, “bah, humbug” to “the most wonderful time of the year.”

Ordinary folks like country star Roy Acuff felt differently and put their love for Jesus into bluegrass celebration: “I saw the light,/ I saw the light;/ No more darkness,/ No more night./ Now I’m so happy/ No trouble in sight;/ Halleluia! I saw the light.” I think I’d prefer a jam session with Bill Gaiter's hill billies, or join Elvis in singing the music he loved beyond all the rest – gospel, then strive for the approval of a host of Sheldons blinded by their own brilliance. Perhaps their self proclaimed *eidetic* memories should, more wisely, be termed *idiotic*. “If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness?” (Mt 6:25)

But T. S. Eliot was anything but a fool, and I respect him for unashamedly affirming Christianity. His essay, “*George Herbert as a Religious Poet*,” and his celebration of Herbert’s chapel in “Little Gidding” are brilliant and speak for themselves.

Also unforgettable are his lines from his *Choruses from the Rock*: “Oh light invisible, we worship Thee,/ Too bright for human seeing.”

The dark-side charge that Christ-inspired literary works are little more than blind emotionalism are complete fantasy. Such intellectual giants as Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Shakespeare, Blake, Hopkins, and Paul all boldly proclaim with intellectual rigor the ultimate truth and glory of the good news, that Jesus is indeed “The Light of the world.”

A simple look into those “windows of the soul,” the eyes, might help one discern who to trust: The eyes of a miser, like Scrooge, *glitter* at the thought of gold. A murderer’s eyes “*burn*” with rage and hatred, the thoughtless person has his blank, dull eyed stare, the lechers’ eyes reflect a kind of, hungry *gleam*, but the eyes of little kids and newly born-again Christians *shine*, reflecting the newly acquired fruit of the spirit – love, joy, peacefulness, goodness, kindness, gentleness, and friendliness.

That shine is unmistakable; it draws people, just as the light in the eyes of Jesus drew the little children way back then. And His blinding transfiguration, “lighting the

very light,” removed all doubt: “And He was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was as white as the light.” That radiance removed all doubt from Peter, James, and John on that high mountain apart. (Mt 17: 1, 2.) All became soldiers in the battle against darkness.

That very light waits to adorn the eyes of anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord. Some day every eye will have that light and Love will unite the world.

Gene Pinkney for the Daily News 23-12-14-