# On the Morning of Christ's Nativity 

## A Christmas Cantata for soprano, treble semichorus, chorus, and orchestra

This is the month and this the happy Morn Wherein the Son of Heav'ns eternal King, Of wedded Maid and Virgin Mother born, Our great Redemption from above did bring; For so the holy Sages once did sing, That he our deadly forfeit should release, And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious Form, that Light insufferable, And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty, Wherewith he wont at Heav'ns high Councel-Table To sit the midst of Trinal Unity, He laid aside; and here with us to be, Forsook the courts of everlasting Day, And chose with us a darksom House of mortal Clay.

Say Heav'nly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein Afford a Present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn or solemn strein To welcome him to this his new abode, Now while the Heav'n by the Suns team untrod Hath took no print of the approaching light, And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how from far upon the Eastern rode The star-led Wizards haste with odours sweet, O run, prevent them with thy humble ode, And lay it lowly at his blessed feet; Have thou the honour first, thy Lord to greet, And join thy voice unto the Angel Quire, From out his secret Altar toucht with hallowd fire.

It was the Winter wilde,
While the heaven-born childe
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature in awe to him
Had doft her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathise;

No War, or Battels sound
Was heard the world around,
The idle Spear and Shield were high up hung,
The hooked chariot stood
Unstaind with hostile blood,
The Trumpet spake not to the armed throng, And Kings sate still with awful eye, As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began;
The Winds with wonder whist
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joyes to the milde Ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While Birds of Calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.
The Stars with deep amaze
Stand fixt in stedfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warned them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Untill their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.
And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And his his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new enlightend world no more should need;
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning Axletree could bear.
The Shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sate simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they than, That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busie keep.
When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet
As never was by mortal finger strook,
Divinely warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took;
The Air such pleasure loth to lose
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

Nature that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the Airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heav'n and Earth in happier union.
At last surrounds their sight
A Globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shame-faced night arrayd,
The helmed Cherubim
And sworded Seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn quire,
With unexpressive notes to Heav'ns new-born Heir.
Such Music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His Constellations set,
And the well-balanc't world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltring waves their oozy channel keep.
Ring out ye Crystal sphears,
Once bless our human ears,
(If ye have power to touch our senses so)
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the Base of Heav'ns deep Organ blow,
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to th'Angelic symphony.
Yea Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbd in a Rain-bow; and like glories wearing
Mercy will sit between,
Thron'd in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissu'd clouds down stearing,
And Heav'n as at some Festivall
Will open wide the gates of her high Palace Hall.
But wisest Fate sayes no,
This must not yet be so,
The Babe lies yet in smiling Infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss;
So both himself and us to glorifie;
Yet first to those ychained in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep,

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for from this happy day
Th'old Dragon underground
In straiter limits bound
Not half so far casts his usurped sway,
And wroth to see his Kingdom fail,
Swindges the scaly Horror of his folded tail.
So when the Sun in bed
Curtaind with cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an Orient wave,
The flocking shaddows pale
Troop to th'infernal Jail,
Each fetter'd Ghost slips to his several grave,
And the yellow-skirted Fays
Fly after the Night-steeds, leaving their Moon-lov'd maze.

## But see the Virgin blest

Hath laid her Babe to rest.
Time is our tedious Song should here have ending;
Heav'ns youngest teemed Star
Hath fixt her polisht Car,
Her sleeping Lord with Handmaid Lamp attending;
And all about the Courtly Stable,
Bright-harnest Angels sit in order serviceable.

## JOHN MILTON

| Piccolo (Flute3) | Soprano solo <br> Flute 1 |
| :--- | :--- |
| Flute 2 | SATB Chorus (off-stage) |
| Oboe 1 |  |
| Oboe 2 |  |
| Oboe 3 (C. Anglais) |  |
| Clarinet 1 (Eb Clt.) |  |
| Clarinet 2 | Harp |
| Clarinet 3 (B. Clt.) | Piano |
| Bassoon 1 |  |
| Bassoon 2 |  |
| Double bassoon | Percussion |
| Himpani |  |

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3. The Stars, with deep Amaze



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Sop. solo

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4. Pastoral Symphony





















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## 10. Postlude




