

Phos Hilaron

A 4th century Greek hymn attributed (in this version) to St. Athenogenes bishop and martyr (d. 305). Now included in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, it has been part of the Eastern tradition from the time of St. Basil, who described it as a centuries-old hymn used by the early Christians, and St. Justin Martyr (c. 150) who apparently referenced the hymn in one of his dialogues. It has been a part of Byzantine vespers for as long as such has existed, though it pre-dates "Byzantium" itself.

I have included the original Greek texts with possibly a few minor mistakes (the text I have is slightly flawed and I had to make up the breathing symbols as I knew or guessed them; furthermore I suspect it is a mistake that there are no circumflex accents whatever, though I could be mistaken in this matter). The second text is an imperfect transliteration from the Greek and is not entirely phonetic. The third text is my own translation, admittedly flawed again. But I don't like the Book of Common Prayer translation, which is given at the end in italics.

Φώς ἱλαρόν, ἀγίας δόξης, ἀθανάτου Πατρός, οὐρανόυ ἀγίου, μάκαρος, Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, ἔλθοντες ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλίου δύσιν, ἰδόντες φῶς ἑσπερινόν, ὑμνούμεν Πατέρα, Υἱόν, καὶ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα Θεόν. Ἄξιός σε ἐν πάσι καιροῖς, ὑμνεῖσθαι φωναίς αἰσαίς, Υἱέ Θεοῦ, ζωὴν ὁ διδοῦς, Διό ὁ κόσμος σέ δοξάζει.

Phos hilaron hagas doxeis, athanatu Patros, ouraniou hagiou, makaros, Iesou Christe, elthontes epi tein heliou dusin, hidontes phos hesterion, hymnomen Patera, Huion, kai hagian Pneuma Theon. Axios se en pasi kairois, hymneisthai phonais haisais, Huie Theou, zoein ho didous, Dio ho kosmos se doxazei.

O enrapturing light of holy glory, holy heaven, of the image of the deathless Father, Jesus Christ, you are coming at the setting of sun. Seeing the evening light we sing hymns to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are worthy in all fittingness to be praised with joyous voices, Son of God, giver of life. To you, o God, creation gives praise.

*O Gracious Light
pure brightness of the everlasting Father in heaven.
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!
Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the vesper light,
we sing praises, O God:
Father Son and Holy Spirit.
You are worthy at all times
to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of life,
and to be glorified through all the worlds.*