

The Wise Men and the Star.

BY REV. J. N. STALLINGS, D. D.

The general idea is that the wonderful star that the wise men saw, and which they followed stood over the manger and guided them to the birth-place of the infant Savior. This idea expressed by all writers whose productions I have seen, with a single exception—Prof. Geo. L. Robinson, of McCormick Theological Seminary—is manifestly incorrect. As Prof. Robinson says: "Approximately two years had elapsed between its first and second appearance," or, in other words: between its first appearance and their arrival at Bethlehem. Assuming that the star made its first appearance at the Savior's birth, the account given by Matthew of the visit of the wise men, and that given by Luke of the birth and the immediate subsequent events make it certain that the visit must have been months after the birth, and probably approximately two years after.

Luke in the second chapter gives an account of the birth; the announcement to the shepherds by the angel; their visit to the manger; the wonder of all to whom the shepherds told the glorious news; then says: "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord." Then the account of Old Simeon's and Anna's recognition of the infant Savior is given, and in verse 39, he adds: "And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth."

Now it is perfectly clear that the visit of the wise men and the immediate subsequent events recorded by Matthew could not have taken place up to the time Luke leaves the family at Nazareth, which was over forty days; as forty days is the period after birth prescribed by the law for the purification of the mother. All those things preclude the possibility of that visit during that time. The journey into Egypt which followed immediately after their visit could not have taken place during that time. It follows that the wise men came subsequently to the return of the family to Nazareth. It further follows that the family afterwards removed from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where it is irresistibly inferred that they went to live. Hear what Matthew says: "When they heard the King, they departed; and, lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and fell down and worshiped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child, to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod—that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men."

Now, is it not perfectly certain that these events were not contemporaneous with those recorded by Luke?

What then is the conclusion?

That after the family had gone to Nazareth, as recorded by Luke, and had probably lived there some time, Joseph and Mary concluded to go to Bethlehem, the royal city of David, to make it their home, as the proper place to rear "the King of the Jews," whom they knew to be "the Son of God." While there the wise men came, directed by the wondrous star they had seen some two years before. This view harmonizes the two gospels. Besides, some such interpretation is rendered necessary by the language used, and by the events described: For instance, the star stood over the house, not over the manger; immediately after the wise men returned another way to their own country, Joseph took the young child and his mother and departed into Egypt. Such a journey would have been impossible for Mary and the babe from the manger. Then, again, Herod slew all the male children from two years old and under, "according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." Again, it is clear that they had made Bethlehem their new home, before the wise men came (their stay at the birth being only temporary) from the fact that when they returned from Egypt they expected to go to Bethlehem. This conclusion is clear from the account given by Matthew. He says of it: "And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither! Notwithstanding being warned of God in a dream he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

Here we have the reason assigned for the family going to their old home in Nazareth in Galilee to live, instead of returning to their more recent home in Bethlehem of Judea, the royal city of David.

A Miracle in Nature.

Rev. J. R. Miller, D. D., illustrates a great principle as follows:

"The palm tree, the Arab says, stands with its feet in salt water and its head in the sun. Oft times they cannot drink the water found in the oasis where it grows, it is so brackish. Then they take the trees and drink the sweet palm wine which flows out. The tree, by the magic of its inner life, so changes the elements found in the unkindly soil around it, that they are made to minister unto its growth, strength and fruitfulness. It takes the evil of its environment and transmutes it into spiritual life. It is possible for us to live, as it were, with our feet in the mire of sin's bitterness, with noxious influences all about us, our life smitten meanwhile by fierce temptations, and yet yield for the blessing of others the fruits of love and holiness. If we have Christ in us there is a magic power in our life which rejects the evil and assimilates the good, which takes the evil and transforms it into the good. The world has no power to harm us if our life be hid with Christ in God."

Character is what a man is in the dark.—Elijah Brown.

The Diapason of Brotherhood: A Plea for International Arbitration.

BY ROBERT S. MACARTHUR, D. D.

We have associated almost always with the word "patriotism" the thought of loyalty in war; ought we not to associate with it as well the thought of loyalty to the flag in peace? Ought we not to give new significance to the oft-quoted line of Milton?

"Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war?"

Is he the only hero who has won victories on the field of battle, or who has destroyed ships in naval conflict? I think that many men in modern times may appropriate the words of Scripture, spoken to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee." We have too much relegated God to ancient times and to remote countries; we have not been willing to see evidences of his hand, and hear the tones of his voice, in the great movements that are going on all about us at this moment. The time has come for us to set before our young men in academies and colleges and in all the walks of life these new ideals of heroism and patriotism. Is he not a hero who saves life? Is he not a hero who adds to the prosperity of the people in scientific discovery and in all forms of progress, as well as he who wins his laurels on the bloody field?

We ought to set before our young men the vast possibilities of international arbitration. The days of American heroism are not in the past; the heroic days of the republic are yet to come. Great statesmanship was never needed as at this hour. We want statesmen who can take their places beside the noble John Bright, loyal to his country's flag and yet faithful to the great principles of unbroken peace and amity with all the nations of the earth. We want statesmen who can take their place, if God will give them the opportunity, beside the immortal Gladstone. We want statesmen like Daniel Webster as loyal expounders of the Constitution; we need men who shall speak with the silver tongue and with the brave words of Henry Clay. A new era is dawning for the republic. Questions graver than have ever arisen since the formation of the Constitution are to be discussed before twelve months shall pass. God, I trust, will give us the men, with clearness of head, with warmth of heart, with loyalty of purpose, and with peace and good-will toward all the nations of the earth.

Every decade, certainly every century, has its special message to the world. As there is a diapason in every great oratorio, so there is a diapason in every noble life, there is a diapason in every century. We have been listening to that pervasive, dominant, concordant note at the end of the nineteenth century; and are now catching the mellifluous music of the twentieth century which is now sounding through its opened door. That diapason is the brotherhood of man. Never before in the history of the race has that idea been so emphasized as today. How glorious will be the music when all nations shall sing the song. It comes to us laden with the breath of a noble brotherhood. I love to think that altruism is not a mere name; and that those of us who were not born under the American flag, but under the British flag, today share in the great fraternity of Americanism. A union of Britain and America, not for war, not as a menace to any people, but as an assurance of peace and as a benediction to all nations, will be the crowning glory of the opening years of the twentieth century.

A little time ago I was in India. I visited, as all who go to India strive to visit, the Taj Mahal. I went there in the moonlight, as all who visit Agra strive to do. In the soft, sweet

light of the Indian moon I saw first that dream of love, that vision of beauty, that prophecy of immortality. I went next morning, and saw it in the blazing, dazzling light of the Indian sun. I saw it last in the soft light of the Indian gloaming. You know the story, the story of Shah Jehan and his beautiful bride. Seven times she went down to that mysterious land of motherhood, and came back each time with a babe; the eighth time the babe came back alone. He had promised her, sitting in the glorious garden at Agra, that he would build for her the most beautiful palace the world had ever known. Now, when his beloved wife was brought back to the garden, he said: "My Mumtaz Mahal, you shall have your palace; although it shall be your tomb." He now lies beside her. He put this inscription on her tomb, certainly a remarkable inscription for a Mohammedan, "To the memory of an undying love." I pronounced it as I stood beneath the dome, and I listened. "Love, love, love!" The echo went to heaven, it came to earth, it softly rolled around the walls. Softer and sweeter it went to heaven again, and then returned to earth, until my eyes were moist and my heart was tender. To the memory of an undying love, that is the motto that must control the twentieth century, the motto that must guide arbitration, that must shape civilization. I would that we, as living temples inspired with love to God and love to men of every race and every color, might dedicate ourselves to the cause of humanity, of arbitration, of truth, of justice, of peace throughout the world with the inspiration of an undying love.

New York City.

Advice to Preachers.

I am very much in favor of an increase in pastor's salaries. Some of them are very poorly paid. And I rather think that many of them are to blame for their own small salaries. If the pastor will take the church paper, and get as many of his members to take it as he can, and encourage his members who take it to hand the paper to other members after they have read it, and he will keep well up with all the objects of the church, Association, and Conventions, both State and Southern Baptist Conventions, and try to get his members to pay their quota of all the amounts to be raised for these different objects, and while doing this, try to keep himself well informed on the Bible as well as the news of the day, in the way of reading at least one of the best magazines, and one good commercial paper, also do all possible to visit the sick of his congregation, and handle all matters that comes before him in as honorable and as broad-minded way as possible. If he has merchant members, trade some with each of them, if farmers or mechanic members, trade with them in their line, but try never to get in debt to his own members, and surely never owe them large amounts as he might not be able to pay them promptly, and thus would lose his influence with them. If we could all live the religion daily that we preach in the pulpit and pews what a great help it would be to us in all the walks of life. Have each member to pledge the amount he can pay, and after he promises, have no false modesty in asking him or her for it. Of course this is in case the salary is not paid promptly. Mix honest business methods in your religion and your salaries will increase to a reasonable amount.

These are crude thoughts from one who has no experience in pulpit preaching.

Very truly,

D. L. GORE.

Punctuality is the soul of business as brevity is of wit.