

bread of to-morrow, since it was necessary to do so for the sake of the Sabbath day, on which at that time everything was prepared on Friday, as is still the case amongst Karaitic Jews (Exod. xvi. 23). To this the words τὸν ἐπιούσιον originally corresponded, and only later, when the Sabbath

day was fixed on Sunday, τὸν ἐπιούσιον was interpreted by 'sufficient' or 'necessary,' after the analogy of περιούσιος, 'superfluous'; so that the translation of the petition would be 'our necessary bread give us to-day.'"

A. NEUBAUER.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. MATTHEW.

MATT. ii. 1, 2.

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

"*Wise Men.*" The Greek word is Magi (μάγοι). That name appears in Jer. xxxix. 3, 13, in the name Rab-mag "The chief of the Magi." Herodotus speaks of them as a priestly caste of the Medes, known as interpreters of dreams (I. 101, 120). Among the Greeks the word was commonly applied with a tone of scorn to the impostors who claimed supernatural knowledge, and *magic* was in fact the art of the Magi, and so the word was commonly used throughout the Roman world when the New Testament was written. Simon Magus is Simon the sorcerer. There was, however, side by side with this, a recognition of the higher ideas of which the word was capable, and we can hardly think that the writer of the Gospel would have used it in its lower sense. With him, as with Plato, the Magi were thought of as observers of the heavens, students of the secrets of Nature. Where they came from we cannot tell. The name was too widely spread at this time to lead us to look with certainty to its original home in Persia, and that country was to the north rather than the east of Palestine. The watching of the heavens implied in the narrative belonged to Chaldæa rather than Persia. The popular legends that they were three

in number, and that they were kings, are simply apocryphal additions.—PLUMPTRE.

"*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*" Literally, "the born King of the Jews." Herod was not a born king. It was long since there had been a born king in Israel. The Magi expected, no doubt, to find him in the capital city and in the royal palace.—MORISON.

The question involves a deeper meaning than the Magi designed. A born King of the Jews is now the hope of the Gentiles also.—SCHAFF.

Everywhere throughout the East men were looking for the advent of a great king who was to arise from among the Jews. The expectation partly rested on such Messianic prophecies of Isaiah as chaps. ix., xi., partly in the latter predictions of Dan. vii.—PLUMPTRE.

"*King of the Jews.*" A title unknown to the earlier history of Israel, and applied to no one except the Messiah. It reappears in the inscription over the Cross (Matt. xxvii. 37).—CARR.

"*We have seen his star.*" The connection of the birth of the Messiah with the appearance of a star is illustrated by the name Barcochab, "Son of a Star," assumed by a false Messiah who appeared in the year 120 A.D.—CARR.

The star seen by the Magi was probably a temporary star, such as blazed forth in A.D. 1572, and, after passing through a variety of phases, disappeared about two years afterwards. Such a star would be the more likely to attract attention, and to be thought of as betokening the occurrence of great events in Judæa, that, a few years before the birth of our Lord, there had been no fewer than three conjunctions of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in the sign of Pisces, a quarter of the heavens with which the fortunes of the Jewish people were regarded as closely allied.—SCRYMGEOUR.

CRITICAL NOTE.

"To worship Him." The word used (*προσκυνεῖν*) literally means "to kiss towards." It is the word commonly used to express the Oriental form of salute by prostration or kneeling. The American Committee of Revision proposed: "At the word 'worship' in Matt. ii. 2, etc., add the marginal note, 'The Greek word denotes an act of reverence, whether paid to man (see Matt. xviii. 26) or to God (see Matt. iv. 10).'" Dr. E. B. Nicholson (*Our New New Testament*, pp. 28-30) regrets that this proposal was not accepted by the Westminster Revisers. He points out that when the Authorised Version was made, "to worship" meant nothing more than "to do reverence to," whence "Your worship," and other phrases. The translation was thus more correct then than it is now.

METHODS OF TREATMENT.

I.

FIRST ACQUAINTANCE OF THE GENTILES WITH CHRIST.

By the late Rev. Professor R. Rothe, D.D.

The Magi may well have heard of the prophecies of Christ; but how was it that they understood them? It was because they felt their need of a Saviour. Yet the need which they felt would have been of no avail if the star had not really appeared. They could not make it appear. It was not their felt need which made them acquainted with Christ, but the free and undeserved mercy of God (John xv. 16). Their own journeying and haste would not have done it. But when God had once made the beginning, then their efforts were made availing: they came.

The star had an attraction for them. It was the drawing of the Father which they faithfully followed. He to whom Christ is really attractive always comes to Him.

The Magi went a long way to Him; we often will not go a short one. They might easily have found reasons for declining the journey. But it was of importance to them that a Saviour was born. Their expedition had certainly something

adventurous about it. But every one who will belong to Christ must be prepared beforehand to be considered an enthusiast and fanatic.

They opened their treasures. We must not go to Christ empty. Empty, and yet not empty; like an empty vessel indeed, yet we must present the vessel to Him.

And having offered their gifts, they went quietly home to their work.

II.

SEEKING AND FINDING.

By the Rev. J. C. Jones.

I. The Wise Men seeking Christ.

1. The wise men were *seekers*. Some find Christ without seeking. Jesus spake two parables on one occasion, the first of a man who without search, and unexpectedly, came upon treasure hid in a field; the other of a merchantman who was seeking goodly pearls, and found one of great price. Some in every age find Christ without seeking Him; they walk through the world thoughtlessly, and all of a sudden the value of a Saviour flashes into their hearts. These are what we call sudden conversions. But it is a remarkable fact that sudden conversions seldom take place among the intelligent classes of the community. It is expected of the wise men that they should seek before they find.

2. They were *earnest* seekers. They came far, and offered liberally. Astrology had not satisfied them; they had seen the shadows of things in the heavens, but not the heavenly things themselves. They had seen the shadow of the bird gliding softly across the field, and they knew that the real bird was somewhere in the sky. They stayed not till they came where Jesus was.

3. They sought Christ *reverently*. With reverence they followed His star, and when they came where He was, they fell down reverently and worshipped Him. "We are come to worship Him," they said. No study does more than astronomy, if faithfully pursued, to excite our admiration and our praise. The devil of the Book of Job is above all else an irreverent devil. Once a man loses the sense of reverence he is essentially a Rationalist.

II. The Wise Men finding Christ.

1. God assisted them in their search, and so they found. And we must not forget that a Divine star is shedding its soft pure light in the science of to-day. God is leading the van of intellect. Sometimes, it is true, He takes the wise man in the craftiness of his heart. "We have seen His star in the east," the eastern wise men said. Can our wise men not see His star in the west? Are they not all His? Look at them through the telescope of the Word.

2. They found a *Person*. For they sought a person, having found that a system did not satisfy.

3. The person they sought and found was a *King*. He must be a king. Recently we witnessed a European country going round the world looking for a ruler. The world itself is always doing the same, ever since the Fall. There are kings many and lords many, but they do not satisfy. In the days of King Herod they came and sought a king.

4. They sought a king, and found a *Child*. The world has always been growing away from the Child. The devil tempted, and said, Ye shall be as gods; and ever since the gods of the world have been power and intellect. But with the birth of the Child, childlikeness had its own again. Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

LEIBNITZ, one of our western Magi, has developed an acute system of philosophy, which he calls the Doctrine of a Pre-established Harmony. This is nothing else than a philosophical way of stating what Scripture is full of, namely, that all things work together from the beginning of the world according to the will and predestination of Almighty God. And this remarkable combination of occurrences now before us is just an outstanding example of this pre-established harmony. The things here harmonised are the fulness of time and the birth of our Lord; the widespread expectation of the Messiah; the nightly studies of the wise men of Chaldea, and the remarkable conjunction of the ruling planets; and then, either their guidance of the wise men, or to complete the harmonious circle of Divinely-ordered events, some miraculously exhibited stellar or atmospheric light, to lead the feet of those Meso-

potamian proselytes to the cradle of God's Incarnate Son.—
ALEXANDER WHYTE.

HAD the Magi known nothing of Hebrew prophecy, it is hardly likely that the star which they saw would have led them to Christ. As one has said, the star "had the commentary of a revelation from God." That phrase is worth studying. Depend upon it that much of the religious value of nature springs from the commentary of a revelation from God. Few of the great lessons of creation would have been learned but for the Bible. Archbishop Ussher, when he grew old, would sit with his book under the strongest light of the windows; when the sun fitted to another opening, he would remove and put himself again under the brilliant light. So to our weak eyes the page of nature is dark unless we place it under the light of the Word.—
T. R. STEVENSON.

A LIVING author, describing his journey to the falls of Niagara, says:—"I met with a gentleman who told me that he had walked from Boston, a distance of seven hundred miles, to see Niagara. When within seven miles he heard what might be the roar of the torrent, and asked a man who was at work on the road if this were so. The man replied that he did not know; it might be, but he had never been there himself.—T. R. STEVENSON.

THE Magi saw enough of the star to decide them to start for Jerusalem. But no sooner were they so started than the star was hid from their eyes. Wander on, O gracious soul seeking God's salvation. Set your face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. You are not the first of many pilgrims now gone home who have made this their song in the house of their pilgrimage—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord,
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?"

Is there no divine lesson for some one here, this dark day, in these words, "Lo! the star which they had seen in the east went again before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was"?—ALEXANDER WHYTE.

"His star." There was a little girl whose father one day told her about the stars, and that God had made them all. As the evening came on, she stood watching at the window. She was watching for the first star. And when she saw it, she cried out with joy, as if she had found a treasure, "Oh, papa, papa, God has just made a star!" Yes, God had made it, though He had made it long before then.—G. T. COSTER.