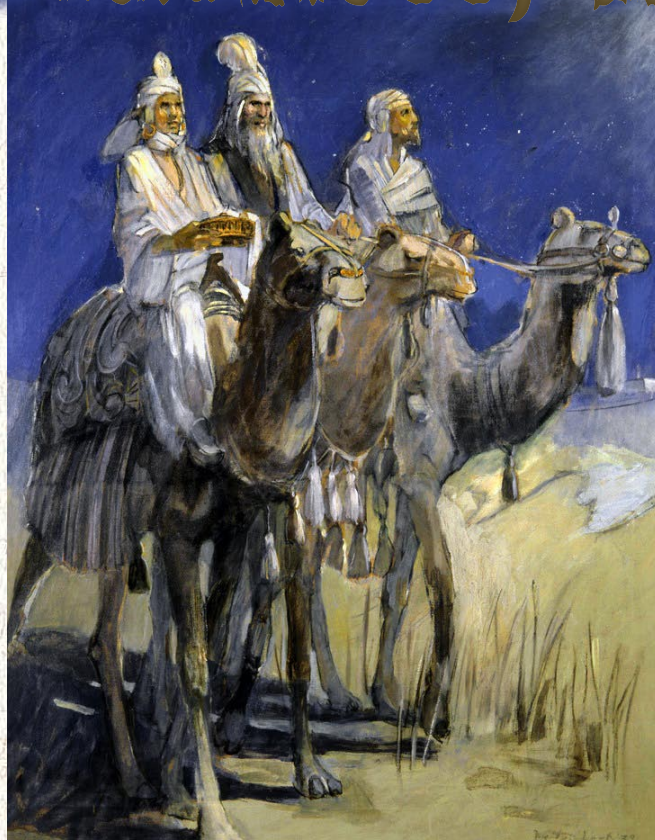


As With Gladness, Men of Old



THE MAGI CHAPTER of the Christmas story, eloquent and profound, is a compressed allegory for the change that takes place in the life of the unredeemed when he comes to Christ.

*As with gladness, men of old
Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light
Leading onward, beaming bright,
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to Thee.*

“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.” After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over *the place* where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

Matthew 2:2, 9-10

Just as the light of that star compelled the magi, the Holy Spirit quickens in the heart of the unbeliever, compelling the elect to seek out the source and purpose of this wonder. The Spirit is an informing light, a beacon, a goad who directs us toward the One who desires our soul for Himself.

For them, these eastern mystics, it was king. How much they understood about the object of their quest, we do not know. But the stars had told them He was the King of the Jews. For us today, the light of the Spirit beams toward the King of our soul, the giver of life eternal in Him. And they are one and the same. The tiny babe sought by the magi is the Redeemer, the giver of light and life.

*As with joyful steps they sped
To that lowly manger bed;
There to bend the knee before
Him Whom Heav'n and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek Thy mercy seat.*

Once the Spirit has performed His inaugural task in a life, of leading the unbeliever to Christ, the Spirit then ignites the urge to bow down before Him in adoration and worship. The magi knelt before a king; we kneel before our Savior and Lord.

*As they offered gifts most rare
At that manger rude and bare,
So may we with holy joy,
Pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heav'nly King.*

After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:11

Time spent before the throne ignites in the believer's heart another impulse of the magi: to give. The heart devoted to Christ is not satisfied giving only words—even earnest, sincere words. What begins as a spark is soon fanned into flame, and a life of devotion is marked by an understanding of true servanthood. We give more than words, more than things—we give all that we are to the One who saved us by giving all that *He* was.

*Holy Jesus, ev'ry day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds Thy glory hide.*

William C. Dix

As the believer's eternal life in Christ plays out on earth, as he sojourns in a foreign land upon the upward glide-slope toward heaven, the passion, the devotion, the giving, the worship—all work together to make him into a new creature. Thus the last step from earth to bliss, that one more step from darkness into the glories of his true home, bring the believer at last into the presence of his Lord and Savior.

And faith that began in the muck of a lowly stable is brought to fruition in a place where glory need not be imagined, where no clouds obscure our view of the Holy One.