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The Christian Watchman

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OL 1. SAINT JOHN, NEW-BRUNSWICK, WEDNESDAY. SEPTEMBER 11, 1861. NO. 37

Original Contributions

For the Christian Watchman.

Studies for the Sunday School.

NUMBER VI.

THE WISE MEN OF THE EAST.

MAT. 2 : 1—12.

he birth of Jesus and the wonderful circumnces which immediately preceded and succed that event, took place while Herod the eat was King of Judea. The holy family af- the purification of the Virgin, and the preitation of the child in the temple of Jerusalem, d returned to Bethlehem. Some months after ircumstance transpired, which though in its sults somewhat mournful, yet in itself was a honor to the holy child an additional evince of his exalted rank and supernatural ori-.

n Parthia or Persia countries to the East of dea, there was a class of men of great learn- and influence. Though unacquainted with hovah as revealed to Moses, their ideas of him thered from the studious contemplation of works, especially the heavenly bodies were mparatively correct. They also had learned in e way that a great monarch was about to ear, who though of Jewish birth was yet to rcise dominion and confer blessings upon nations. They were in constant expectation his appearance, and prepared to welcome him en he should come. While in this state of d they noticed a strange phenomenon. A teor, or comet, or conjunction of planets, or ew star, we cannot now tell which, appeared he heavens. These Magians, or wise men, mediately connected this circumstance with monarch which they were expecting, and cluded that he had been born. They resol- to visit him, to pay him homage. As the venly body moved towards the West they fol- ed until they came to Jerusalem, when the ceased to guide them. They concluded this city was the birthplace of him whom sought, and evidently supposed that the ple knew of his birth and would be able to ct them to him. Accordingly they inquired, here is the newly born king of the Jews, for have seen in the East a star which indicated birth, and we have come to render to him homage.

hese inquiries were made so repeatedly, and nded so strangely, that at length they came he ears of Herod. Though now in years, jealous tyrant was disturbed by this intima- that the future King of the Jews had been n. He thought only of formidable rival this throne, and immediately sought to guard inst the threatened danger. Meanwhile the uiries of the wise men had set all Jerusalem commotion, those who had been hoping for advent of the long promised Messiah were ubtless filled with joyful astonishment— ile the friends and minions of Herod shared his fear and anxiety.

Herod soon planned a scheme which he thought uld place his imaginary rival in his power. he could discover the place and date of the ant's birth he could soon place his hands upon n.

Accordingly he assembled the high priest, the t high priests, the heads of the twenty four rses of priests, the scribes, and the lawyers, inquired of them where the Messiah should born. They informed him that Bethlehem of dea was the place This they had learned from scriptures. A prophet had pointed out the hplace of the Messiah in the following unmis- able language: (Mic. 5 : 1.) "And thou Beth- em, district of Judea, by no means the least, thou among the cities inhabited by the heads he tribes of Judea, for out of thee will e forth a leader, who will feed my people el.

Herod, having thus discovered the birthplace the Messiah, now wished to discover the time his birth, so that he might without difficulty troy him. He sent for the illustrious agers whose presence and inquiries caused such excitement in Jerusalem, as he did not wish the people to know of his iety or his diabolical plans, the interview was ctly private. Herod had heard of the ap- rance of the star, and rightly judged that it appeared on the birth-night of the new n King. If he could find out when the star appeared he would then know the age of the ant, and then could readily discover him, con- uently his inquiries of the Magians were direct- to this point, and they doubtless gave him desired information.

But that every doubt about the identity of the ld might be removed, the tyrant determined ake these good and honorable men the in- uments of placing the child in his hands. ey now knew not where to go in search of , since they were no longer under the direc- n of the star. Herod with apparent gracious- e informed them of the place of the nativity ged their departure, requested them to search the child, and when they had found him to urs to him with the intelligence, "in order," d he "that I also may visit him and pay him mage.

The Wise men pleased with the information ich they had received, and also with the ap- rent affability and piety of the king, departed Bethlehem determined to return with whatever information they might acquire. When they had left Jerusalem the star which had guided them so far again appeared. It conducted them to Bethlehem, and then stood directly over the house in which he whom they sought abode. At this indication that their long and toilsome search was successful they rejoiced exceedingly. They entered the sacred abode and saw the child with Mary his mother. When they saw the child they paid him homage as their King. They also opened their treasure caskets and offered to him valuable presents, gold, frankincense and myrrh, gifts such as were usually made to kings.

They now had seen the king whom they had so long sought, they had paid to him deserved homage and had presented to him of their substance, and were about to return to Herod to direct him to the child. But they learned that this was not in accordance with the will of God. In a dream he instructed them not to return. Consequently they did not visit Jerusalem, but returned to their own land by another route.

A. B. C.

For the Christian Watchman.

"THE WORD."

No. VI

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWO DESPENSATIONS.

The world has been favored with two dispensations of religion, the first through a mere man, the second through the Incarnate Word. Both of these dispensations were requisite for the salvation of ruined man, the former was necessary to the latter, yet the two are essentially different in their characteristics.

The dispensation through Moses was of law. It came to the sinner, proclaimed his duty, offered reward for obedience, and threatened penalty for disobedience, but this despensation communicated no positive blessings. It effected no change in the relation which existed between the sinner and a holy God it wrought no change in the depraved dispositions of the sinful, it averted none of the penalties with which transgressors were threatened, it offered no aid to the helpless sinner as he contemplated a system of duty which his depravity rendered impracticable. Those who had once transgressed found in the law no promise of forgiveness, no moral power in the conflict with sin, no encouragement to reform. On the other hand the dispensation through Christ was one of grace. Through him divine and infinite love was exercised towards the sinful. This dispensation placed the guilty in a new relation towards God, exerted a powerful influence for good over the hearts of the depraved, afford d power to aid in the strife with the world, the flesh and the devil, nay, infused a new and everlasting life into those who had been dead in trespasses and sins.

The 'Word' was the channel through which divine love flowed into the hearts of those who had been his greatest enemies—causing love, joy, hope, a quenchless thirst after conformity with the Divine will, and creating a new principle in the soul which ensured for it a happy immortality.

Again, the dispensation through Moses being of law, was simply a system of divine commands. There were prohibitions and injunctions, relating to man and to God. There were various washings, sacrifices, and oblations, new moons, and sabbaths. This dispensation thus addressed itself almost exclusively to the conscience; revelations which might enlighten the mind or touch the heart were made only incidentally, and to give sanction to the moral and ceremonial requirements. What revelations were thus made were at best merely verbal, and so liable to be misunderstood. The numerous rites and ceremonies though in reality significant, were to the majority of the people mere performances, while to the wisest and the holiest, additional light was required to indicate the full meaning of these observances. Consequently the law actually imparted but little knowledge of Divine and eternal things. Only a portion of the divine character was unfolded, and but a dim and misty light cast upon the spirit world. But the dispensation through Christ was not only one "of grace," but also "of truth." Precepts were indeed given and the immutible laws of Jehovah revealed under the first dispensation, were explained and enforced, but the aim of this latter dispensation was to communicate all truth. It explained the divine nature, character and purposes, discovered to man his own depravity, revealed the mysteries of the eternal world, pointed out the practicability of holiness, presented motives of sufficient power to impel to obedience of divine commands, and directed the sinner to a way of salvation.—All the knowledge of heavenly or divine things which the human mind could comprehend, or which would benefit man was fully revealed.—These revelations were given in the most intelligible and impressive mode, not in mystic signs nor even exclusively in words which so often lead astray, but in the life and the death, the resurrection, ascension, intercession and second coming, of him through whom this dispensation was made.

These dispensations as they differed in character so also they differed in aim. The law exerted its energies to effect an external righteousness. It enjoined holiness of heart, yet its commands and observances related chiefly to externals. But the second dispensation concentrated all its energies to renew the disposition to change the heart, to sanctify spirit as well as body. While it revealed important precepts for the government of the life, it revealed truths adapted to enlighten the mind, to soothe the conscience, to touch the heart, and to excite right thoughts and affections. Very different also were the effects produced by these two dispensations. The law was not loved. By terror alone could it direct attention to itself or the law giver. It softened no hearts, soothed no remorseful consciences, inspired no delight in holiness, afforded little aid to the performance of duty. It simply imparted a knowledge of sin, created sorrow and fear, or excited a longing for pardon, or peace, and the ability to live obediently. The gospel on the other hand irresistibly seizes on the attention, excites thought and reflection creates genuine repentance, presents a practicable way of forgiveness, and excites in the believer love to god and man, a desire to be holy, and the ability to conform in heart and life to the revealed will; one system produced a fearful looking for of judgment, and a slavish submission; the other created peace and joy in the soul, and the ability to obey God from the heart. The Israelites were under this law, and for many ages had been in a miraculous manner repelled from idolatry and impelled to the service of Jehovah. Yet the law combined with numerous and stupendous interpositions of God failed to make Israel a holy people. Their early history was characterized by an irresistable longing for idolatry, and though in later ages they seemed to have overcome this propensity, yet when Christ came the Jewish religion was deformed by formalism and hypocrisy, or infidelity, and the moral law was almost inoperative over the nation. But though many ages have elapsed since the second dispensation was made and though miracles were only wrought in evidence of its divine nature, and ceased a few years after the death of Christ, yet this religion has never ceased to operate with wonderful power.—It has modified the course of the world's history, and shaped modern laws, customs, and pursuits. It still calls sinners out of the world, reconciles them to God, purifies their hearts and fits them for heaven, Nay, it is constantly extending its influence, and while it summons from those who were once enemies to God, as sincere and implicit obedience and forms as beautiful and heroic a character as in the primitive ages of the church, it is extending from realm to realm, and its present progress gives to its friends the promise of a complete victory over error and sin.

The dispensation of law was undoubtedly necessary. Probably no other dispensation could have imparted a knowledge of sin, or a desire for pardon. Probably also no higher dispensation could have been revealed through man. Moreover it was perfect so far as its sphere of influence extended. and accomplished the end for which it was given, a preparation for a dispensation of grace and truth. This latter dispensation is perfect in every respect, is the power of God unto salvation, is suited to bless the entire human race, to sanctify the vilest sinner, and to continue its operations until the end of time. Such a dispensation could only have been made through one who was divine.

ALEPH.

For the Christian Watchman.

RECOLLECTIONS OF ROME.

NO. IX

ASSOCIATIONS—THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD.

To the throne of banished monarchs, Freedom
all her children brings,
See in place of one departed all the people reigning Kings.

See! adown the gloom of centuries, glows the
light of Freedom's home,
And the glory of her presence fills the commonwealth of Rome.

Hope of patriot souls—the earnest, and the valiant, and the free,
Proudly lift aloft thy standard and exult aloud
in thee.

Their own hands have reared the fabric, simple
sturdy, and severe,
As the mighty hearts that formed thee, is the
State established here.

Strong in young immortal virtue with a grand
expansive force
Spreading out o'er other nations in an unresisted
course.

Through the long, long march of centuries, the
muncipal forms shall run,
Keeping still the deathless vigor which in elder
days begun.

Born Italian, nourished Roman, thence outspread
o'er many a clime,
They shall go to future cities in the latest tide of
time.

Lo, around the uplifted standard throng the
heroes marshalled there,
Men of giant souls, and godlike, lofty port, and
kingly air.

Many a warrior passes onward, going homeward
from the wars,
Bending under battle trophies, marked with honorable scars.

Many a stern plebian soldier, many a knight of
lofty birth,
They who bore the Roman standard to the confines of the earth.

Them shall no empurpled tyrant force to bend
the suppliant knee,
Here no cringing race of suppliants yield the
birthright of the free.

Oh Invincible in battle, where your trumpets
pealed on high,
Banded kings and leagured armies lost in wild
confusion fly.

Slowly through the ranks advancing comes the
Avenger on the scene,
Filled with a proud melancholy, moving with majestic mien.

Oh most Roman of all Romans, with an unaverted eye,
Thou canst calmly punish treason though thine
own loved sons must die.

Less a father, all a patriot, born to set thy people
free,
Thy grand patriotic passion pales all other loves
in thee.

Then Horatius single-handed keeps an army from
the town,
While behind him roars the river, and the bridge
is crashing down.

Then the stern Etrurian monarch Scævola views
with haughty gaze,
His right hand outstretched before him withering
in the ardent blaze.

Leading on his Volscian legions to the panic-stricken State,
Coriolanus comes from exile thundering at the
Eastern gate.

But the pallid people trembling in the citadel
above,
See the heart of vengeance conquered by the
force of filial love.

Fame and Power, and Pride and Glory, unregarded stand around,
Where sublime in self-denial Cincinnatus tills
the ground.

By the frenzied father's hand the unpolluted
virgin dies,
And along the raging Forum homeward the wan
tyrant flies.

Roll the fierce waves of invasion from their savage Northern home,
Over many a slaughtered army up unto the walls
of Rome.

When the Senate all assemble so majestic in
despair,
That the awed barbarian warriors think the gods
themselves are there.

All in vain the slaughtered Senate, and in vain
the wrath of Gaul,
While Camillus lives without, and Manlius in
the Capitol.

Come the sons of mighty conquerors who o'er
farthest lands had gone,
Heirs of Alexander's glory, heirs of deathless
Marathon.

Closing in the shock of battle, lo, the baffled
Greek recoils,
Leaving the lost field of conflict overstrewn with
foreign spoils.

Then the standards fall deserted, sword and
shield are cast away,
Fails the Grecian line of battle at the Romans
dread array.

'Tis the Forum—all around me roars the tide of
Roman life,
While Patrician and Plebcian wage their never-ending strife.

Then the high-born strive to govern, and the
low-born strive to rise,
Carry on the world long struggle, raise the world
old party cries.

Proudly the Equesterian order for its privileges fights,
And the Tribunes of the people clamor for the
people's rights.

Calls the State upon the bravest when the foe is
hovering nigh,
Crying 'Rise and be Dictator,' crying 'Save us
or we die.'

Far on high the cries of Party and the shouts of
Faction rise,
And the roar of warring thousands echoes thro'
the vaulted skies.

Unto them no bygone ages show a new and living way,
Leading up from sore oppression unto Freedom's
brighter day.

But through civil broils and bloodshed and
through faction's flames they went,
Searching out the sure foundation for a righteous government.

Thus in violence and fury, people's passion, rulers' rage,
I behold the fight of Freedom carried on from
age to age.

I behold the visible tokens of a free and living
race,
In the war of party, in the tumult of the populace.

For amid the wild disorder here a grander watchword rings,
Than from out the treacherous order round the
thrones of foreign kings.

Better far the hopes of manhood where the
storms of Freedom rave,
Than within the still stagnation round the sleek
and pampered Slave.

Oh renowned in song and story, founders of the
Roman name,
Your great lives ye gave your country, and you
souls to deathless fame.

Not for me the cold denial, not for me the sceptic's sneer—
While the lords of ancient glory pass along in
vision here.

Not for me the lowly spiritual reverence to withhold—
As I stand within the presence of the mighty
ones of old.

Whether fancy formed, or whether living sons
of mortal birth,
Still for us ye live undying with the noblest
names of Earth.

Still along the path of ages are your deepening
shadows cast,
Still your voice comes ringing downward thro'
the long aisles of the Past.

E'en if in the minstrel's fancy only ye obtained
a home,
Hail ye glorious creations—offspring of the mind
of Rome.

Thoughts of you were ever mingled with the
Roman soldier's life,
And he saw your forms before him animating to
the strife.

Unto him in wondrous meaning all your ancient
mottoes came,
As he gave his life to Freedom, as he gave his
soul to Fame.

Grandly where the rolling water washes Afric's
burning shore,
Stands the Carthaginian city, glancing all the
waters o'er.

Sways her mighty sceptre o'er the Ocean, wears
the Sea King's crown,
From the fair Phœnician mother to the daughter
handed down.

Here the race of Tyrian Rovers placed in this
Imperial seat,
With the continent around her, and the Ocean
at her feet.

Here the fleets of all the nations honor in her
watery gate,
And above the hum of millions, Carthage rules
in royal state.

O'er the billows bound her navies, borne along
by every breeze,
And the nations bow in reverence to the Mistress
of the Seas.

Slowly into stern collision comes the haughty
Roman might,
As two swollen clouds encounter in the hurricane at night.

When the thunder-laden Heavens overhang the
land and sea,
And the roar of maddened conflict bursts beneath the canopy.

So the furious force of Carthage matches Rome's
unbending pride,
While the world's inferior nations throng in
arms to either side.

Speed the storm-tossed navies, forward passing
on to lead the van,
Rush along the charging squadrons of the fiery
African.

Never came such hosts to battle, never fight so
fierce was seen,
Never rose so dire a contest o'er the limitless
terrene.

Oh, I see the arms of combat reaching to the
future age,
And the realms of the hereafter wait upon the
battle's rage.

There the oath-bound son of Barca guides his
legions on to fame,
In the ancient age unequalled till the god-like
Julius came.

From his march recoils the Ocean, rolls away
the river tide—
And the everlasting mountains from before him
turn aside.

Over Trebia's turbid torrent, over Thrasymene's
shore,
O'er the fatal field of Cannae rolls the wrathful
storm of War.

Till the wreck of Roman armies crowd within
their sheltering home,
And the Carthaginian leader views the very
gates of Rome.

Linger long, majestic vision! Never in the years
of time,
Rose an universal people to a station so sublime.

Sternly the undaunted city marshals all her forces there,
Sternly rise the steadfast people still more glorious from despair.

All honor darkening round them fail to crush
them where they rise,
But the craven grows a warrior and the warrior
gladly dies.

I behold the unskilful Roman rearing navies on
the shore,
Conquering Ocean's haughty mistress in an uncongenial war.

Base submission to a foeman, haughty Regulus
disdains;
And he calmly dies a captive in unutterable
pains.

When the vanquished chieftain slowly leads his
broken legions home,
Acclamations greet the leader who could not despair of Rome.

Thus amid the darkest fortune they can hold a
faith sublime,
That the State should stand eternal till the latest
age of Time.

Falls the curse of Carthage downward from the
overwhelming fire,
And she wreaks her fullest vengeance dying on
the funeral pyre.

Slowly tolls a sound of menace in her solemn
funeral knell,
Age of stern Republic grandeur, Age of Freedom's hope farewell.

When the fear of rival peoples has forever passed away,
Then to its own raging passions falls the State
an easier prey.

For the menace of a rival starts a nation's latent
life,
All her forces wake to action and await the impending strife.

E'en the base arise ennobled at the call of glorious Fame,
And the vices die, consuming in the patriot's
generous flame.

Now where myriad voiced peoples welcome the
proud triumph home,
Comes the long march of corruption through the
opening gates of Rome.

Bring the spoils of war along. Forevermore untouched by fear,
Shall the vanquisher of Carthage urge her conquering career.

See—the throng comes pouring forward from depopulated States,
Children of unnumbered nations crowding in the
city gates.

But in careless condescension Rome can ever
find a place,
For the enervated members of each subjugated
race.

Here they bring their foreign manners—rare delights before unknown,
Treasures from the farther Indies—treasures from
the Southern zone.

Luxury advances lightly, with the softest music
sound,
And the shouting throng enthrone her with a
goddess garland crowned.

Avarice advances slowly with her load of golden
store,
And the shouting throng in reverence bow her
glittering form before.

Cruelty leads on the captives to the gladiatorial
fight,
And the columned circus rises with its many
pillared height.

Freedom looks upon her city, sees her altars
overturned,
Sees extinct the ancient fire that once in matchless radiance burned,

Freedom looks upon her children, sees their
alienated hearts,
Waves her sunbright wings in sadness, and despairingly departs.

The world will not willingly let die the names of the illustrious men, nor will it readily forget the sublime and important events of republican Rome. After a lapse of so many ages we still think of them with astonishment and admiration. Then was Rome "The city that by temperance fortitude and love of glory."

Towered above the clouds.

Few of the monuments of this illustrious period have come down to us, but there are localities which recall incidents strickingly illustrative of Roman character, or are associated with events which were turning points in the world's history.

On the bridge whose ruins are still visible when the Tiber is low, Horatius Cocles kept at bay the Etrurian army, saved his country and immortalized his name. Adjoining the castle of St Angelo and skirting the Tiber were the Quintian meadows, the farm of Cincinnatus, whence while at the plough he was taken to be dictator of Rome. Here before us is Mons Sacer the hill.

"How holy, where a generous people twice,
Twice going forth in terrible anger sate
Armed, and their wrongs redressed, at once gave way.
Helmet, and shield, and sword, and spear thrown down
And every hand uplifted, every heart
Poured out in thanks to heaven."

Below in the Forum, we can almost see the outraged father, invoking death to defend a daughter's honor, and

here holding up the knife
That ran with blood, the blood of his own child,
Virginius calls down vengeance.

These localities are viewed with intense interest, as being associated with events, by which the liberties of Rome were extended and perpetuated or which revealed the sublime virtues, the fortitude and resolution of the Roman of the republic.

But this very hill over which I stand is connected with an event which affected the very existence of Rome, and consequently the future destinies of the entire world. For when nothing remained to the Roman but the city and garris-