

## Where were Wise Men From? Bible Does Not State Clearly

Certain wise men of the East, following a star and bearing gifts... St. Matthew records their appearance at Bethlehem, simply, factually, without embroidery — But he tells us nothing else about them... except that they were Magi.

And there one of the great mysteries of history begins.

There are no other contemporary records of their appearance, St. Luke, despite the mass of detail in his report of Christ's birth, does not mention them.

St. Matthew does not even tell us how many of them there were or what it was they brought with them. Clearly, they had come to do homage to Christ. But where had they come from? East must mean, at least, east of the Jordan; though, at that time, "east" was taken to include even Arabia.

The fact that they were Magi is not much help, however, because the term by then was ambiguous. Throughout the Roman empire it had come to designate a band of fraudulent fortune-telling astrologers. Farther east, however, it meant certain wise disciples of Zoroaster (a Persian prophet and founder of one of the east's many religions) who, though they were indeed astrologers, were highly thought of as scholars and as disciples of a noble religion.

Scholars take it that St. Matthew referred to the latter meaning because he obviously spoke of them with respect and did not intend his readers to take them to be frauds or even simple fortune-tellers. He implies, though he does not say, that they were men of substance and integrity.

They also take it, therefore, that "east" meant somewhere in the direction of Persia.

There, however, they feel obliged to drop their speculations on St. Matthew's text.

**Sceptic's View**  
And there the sceptics step in. Surely, they say, it is strange that St. Matthew was alone in recording the appearance of the wise men. Surely it is natural that long after the event stories of the strange and almost miraculous occurrences should have grown up around the birth of Christ and it would not have been unusual for someone in St. Matthew's position to have mistaken a harmless myth for fact.

The scholars, however, do not agree with the sceptics. The Rev. Edward Hayes Plumtre, Professor of Divinity at King's College, London, in the last half of the 19th century, went into the subject thoroughly and became the acknowledged expert on the mysterious wise men.

He concluded that St. Matthew couldn't have been taken in by a myth because the myths of the period were all clearly distinguishable as such. They were highly embroidered, fanciful tales full of miraculous and logical absurdities. Beside them, St. Matthew's straightforward, unvarnished account stands out sharply.

Furthermore he says, there are reasons for the non-appearance of the report in any other history. Most of the records of the last tumultuous years of Herod's reign were destroyed. And St. Luke, the other historian in whose work one would expect to find the reference, probably saw Matthew's chronicle before he wrote his own. There is evidence that he endeavoured to report what Matthew had written.

But what about later tradition which holds that the wise men were three in number, that they were oriental kings, that their names were Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, and that they brought frankincense and myrrh?

Prof. Plumtre and all the scholars who have followed were sceptical. An exhaustive search through the annals of Western Christianity did not help very much. The number three may have come by extension from the doctrine of the Trinity. The names first appear in the works of the Venerable Bede, many centuries later. In Bede's day, however, at least four other sets of names were current.

As for the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of the Christmas carol, Prof. Plumtre thought they were symbolic, they symbolized Christ's royalty, the bitterness he was to experience, and finally, his death.

A similar search through the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and some evidence from the Roman Catholic Church did, however, throw more light on the question.

Eastern tradition is much more explicit. The wise men were three and they were oriental. They were high priests of Zoroaster and they were three of twelve who had been warned in a writing that bore the name of Seth to expect the birth of a great spiritual king. The twelve had been set to stand watch near a great stone in the desert, and to watch day and night until a star appeared which would guide them. (The tradition does not say, but since the priests would have been astrologers, it is reasonable to suppose that the star would have "appeared" in an astrological sense.)

## Star Appears

Ultimately the star did appear. The chosen three were given an army of 7,000 men. With them they set out on a two-year march in the wake of the star. On the banks of the Euphrates they left behind 6,000 men and proceeded with the other 1,000 to Jerusalem.

There the three went on alone, seeking advice from Herod and ultimately arriving at Bethlehem.

After consulting with Herod, they went back to await further word. And it is believed they bulked where they had left the bulk of their army on the banks of the Euphrates.

When the disciples of Christ, were sent out into the world to preach the new gospel, St. Thomas headed east.

In Chaldea, (a part of modern Iraq and traditionally the birthplace of Abraham), he encountered the Magi whom he baptized. Allegedly, they were the first Gentiles to become Christians, and, after the baptism, they went forth to preach the gospel.

This story was passed on by word of mouth and no factual evidence substantiating it appears until the fourth century when the church leaders in Constantinople became interested in the matter.

They caused a search to be made and bodies of the three were found and brought to Constantinople. The churchmen of the time seem to have been satisfied that the identification was sound because the bodies were reburied in a Constantinople church.

In the same century, Eustorgius, a clerical diplomat of considerable repute, visited Constantinople and, when he was appointed bishop of Milan, received permission to have the bodies taken there.

The matter seems to have come to the attention of Pope Julius, who made his own enquiries, and was apparently also satisfied. In any case, he inaugurated the feast of the Three Wise Men in 336 A.D.

The bodies remained in Milan, until 1162 when Frederick Barbarossa, Emperor of Germany and later Holy Roman Emperor, threatened the city. They were then taken to Cologne Cathedral for safety. There they remain to this day.

**Tradition incomplete**  
The difficulty about this story is simply that the contemporary evidence which satisfied Pope Julius and Eustorgius died with its possessor in Constantinople. Western tradition is incomplete because neither Julius nor Eustorgius seems to have made any careful note of the evidence: Eastern Orthodox tradition is mainly verbal.

The scholars, therefore, refuse to commit themselves. Prof. Plumtre, for instance, was clearly sceptical.

On the other hand Eustorgius, who undertook many complicated missions, was noted for his sagacity. He is unlikely to have been taken in, and he arrived in Constantinople not so very long after the bodies had been found.

It is true, of course, that he would have received a stiff shift from his colleagues. St. Matthew must be assumed to have written what he took to be the truth. Religious men from the East whom he described as Magi were almost certainly priests of Zoroaster and, if so, they would have taken their mission seriously.

They might well have waited 30 years in Chaldea for further word. There is no indication in the story of how long the 12 priests had watched by the rock in the desert, but the implication is that it was a very long time. Another 30 days would not have seemed too much. And for St. Thomas, he certainly did meet with success. There is no evidence to suggest that he had help from men of considerable authority. What more likely than that help did come from the Magi of St. Matthew. Perhaps, of course, it was not the original Magi he met, but their later disciples. No one can say.

Somehow, though, the story has the ring of truth!

Only 12 shopping days left before Christmas. And remember, the best selections await you in your local stores where you shop with friendly merchants.

**Notice To Creditors**  
IN THE ESTATE OF Hector Campbell Guthrie, Security Guard, deceased.

All persons having claims against the estate of Hector Campbell Guthrie, late of the City of Toronto in the County of York, Security Guard, who died on or about the 11th day of October, A.D., 1958, are hereby notified to send particulars of same, to the undersigned on or before the 17th day of December, 1958, after which date the estate will be distributed with regard only to the claims of which the undersigned shall then have notice, and the undersigned will not be liable to any person of whose claim he shall not then have notice.

DATED at Georgetown this 16th day of October, 1958.

Donald T. Guthrie, Executor of the Estate of Hector Campbell Guthrie, by his solicitors, Hanson, Ord & Heise, Georgetown, Ont.

12-10

## HALTON JERSEY BREEDERS SALE OF STARS BUYERS

In the Jersey Sale of Stars held in connection with the recent Royal Winter Fair, the second highest priced female in the sale that averaged \$1,157.00 was from the herd of Maurice C. Beatty, Milton, Ontario. She was a three year old, sold for \$1,000.00 to Mr. Lea Marsh, Old Lyme, Connecticut. Sadie was second in the two year old class at the Royal, and was one of the most beautiful cows in a show that had many such animals.

Her sire is Brampton Sir Bijou Radar, Mr. Beatty's former herd sire that has sired many prize winners in his herd, and wop the junior get of sire at the recent Royal Winter Fair.

The dam of Sadie is Lindale Design Sadie, an Excellent cow, with several ROP Records, third prize three year old and over, at the Canadian National Exhibition this year.

Mr. Beatty sold an outstanding cow, but he added another to his herd, in the name of Enniskillen Royal. Thanks consigned by R. Stenger & Son of Enniskillen, Ontario. Thanks is an outstanding young dairy cow with a record of over 9,000 lbs. of milk as a two year old. Mr. Beatty paid \$700 for this cow. She is a daughter of the former herd sire at Enniskillen, Shalamar Royal Prince 2nd.

J. W. Wolfe of Lorraine Farms, Acton, who is establishing one of the good Jersey herds in Halton, purchased Dalcraig Valiant Sally, a five year old cow consigned by

D. W. Adamson & Son of Scotsburn, N.S. Mr. Wolfe paid \$650 for Sally. She has two good records, and has done considerable winning in the show ring in Nova Scotia.

For \$850 Featherstone Bros. of Oakville, sold Avonlea Records Trixie, a yearling heifer; to B. H. Bull & Son, Brampton. This heifer is a grand-daughter of their grand champion and Excellent cow, Avonlea Records Suzanna, who has records up to 857 lbs. of fat, and is now completing her ninth record.

Ken Ella and Sons, Hornby, purchased for \$500 from Eugene Moffitt of Harvey Station, N.B. Velgene Royal Irma, a yearling heifer, a daughter of Campburn Royal Royal, and from Campburn Royal Royal, a daughter of Brampton Carom Beacon, a superior sire that won the senior get of sire at the Royal Winter Fair, and the junior get of sire two years ago.

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