

the precise spot of the nativity is marked by a star composed of silver and precious stones, around which the following inscription forms a circle:—
'HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST,'—that is, 'Here was Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary.' Golden lamps continually burn over this sacred spot. Above it is a marble table, with the usual decorations of an altar in the Catholic church. Here the pilgrims prostrate themselves, offering up their prayers, and kissing the star and the pavement around it.

"A few yards from the star of the nativity is the representative of the manger (the original being shown at Rome), in which the infant Jesus was laid in lack of a proper crib or cradle. One descends by two steps into a room, called the Presence, ten feet square, which has the altar of the manger on one side, and directly opposite to it another altar, marking the place where the magi worshipped. Here, too, the original features of the place, whatever they may have been, are disguised by polished marble and other decorations. The manger is a block of white marble, hollowed out in proper form. It occupies a recess in the grotto, and is less than two feet in height, by perhaps four in length. The altar of the wise men is fenced by a kind of screen, above which is seen a painting that represents them as doing homage, and offering precious gifts to the holy child Jesus."

How foolish, and even barbarous, it is to disturb the peace of the world with questions relating to these holy places. Russia has complained that the Turkish government has given the principal key to the Bethlehem church to the Papists, instead of giving it to the Greeks. You could scarcely think of two boys quarrelling in the street about a question in *itself* of less importance. If Russia, however, says that she is in any way to rule Turkish subjects, she is setting herself above the Turkish power, and thus putting

forth a claim so serious as to endanger a war that might involve the whole of Europe; and it is not true religion, it is not even sound reason, but the basest superstition and bigotry, to open such a dispute about the birth-place or burial-place of Jesus, or any other spot called sacred on the earth, as if any place whatever could mechanically sanctify the soul. Remember, dear young friends, those words of Paul, when you think of the mere body, or burial-place of Jesus,—“Henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more: therefore, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” Remember, also, those words of Christ himself to the woman of Samaria, who was attaching more importance to holy places than to holy thoughts, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Pray to God that he may preserve the peace of Europe—that he may preserve kings from the impiety of lifting the sword as “defenders of the faith”—that he may preserve this age from the disgrace and guilt of seeing Protestants and Papists compelled to unite with infidel Turks against an invader who boasts himself as the “defender of the ancient faith.” Pray that God may “make war to cease unto the ends of the earth, may break the bow in pieces, cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the fire.”

The Grace of God Illustrated.

A clergyman once represented the conduct of awakened sinners towards God's offers of gratuitous salvation thus: