

they are. The children soon catch this tone, and think gentility is better than goodness; and make a sacrifice of goodness to gentility, whenever they think their social standing will be served by it. This is of course

not true of all so-called respectable families whose children go astray, but it is so often true that I always expect to find it so when such cases come before me; and alas! I am not often disappointed."

SCRIPTURE LESSONS FOR SCHOOL AND HOME.

NOTES ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

NO. 3. WISE MEN AND MURDER OF INNOCENTS.

To Read—St. Matthew ii.

I. **THE WISE MEN.** (Read 1—12.) Christ born in Bethlehem—meaning House of Bread—few miles south of Jerusalem—time of Herod the Great. Visit of Wise Men probably some months after birth. (a) *Their journey*—from the East—some think from Egypt—some from Persia. Magi, order of Priests, accustomed to observe and worship the stars. Must have come many hundred miles—great part desert—showing great earnestness. (b) *Their guide.* A strange star or meteor—prophesied by Balaam (Num. xxiv. 17), probably moved before them, like the pillar of cloud to the Israelites. (c) *Visit to Herod.* Herod hears of new king—naturally troubled—consults scribes learned in Scriptures as to birth-place of long looked-for Messiah—could be no doubt—Micah (v. 2) names Bethlehem. King speeds them on journey, pretending a wish to worship Christ himself. The Star re-appears—fills their hearts with joy—guides them to the very house (parents no longer in a stable) where Christ is. (d) *Their object*—1. To seek Christ the King. 2. To worship Him. 3. To give Him gifts—gold, tribute to a king, fulfilling Psalm lxxii. 15; frankincense—to Christ as God; fulfilling Isaiah lx. 6; myrrh for His burial, as very man

(St. John i. 14). Evidently under God's special protection, Who warns them not to return to Herod.

LESSONS. 1. To copy earnestness and faith of Wise Men. 2. To let no difficulties hinder our seeking God. 3. To give our best worship, love, offerings, etc. 4. To obey all God's teachings, e.g., conscience, His Word, etc.

II. **MURDER OF THE INNOCENTS.** (Read 13—23.) God directs Joseph to flee from Herod's rage—Egypt sixty miles distant—at night shows extreme peril—prophecy of Hosea fulfilled. (Hos. xi 1.) St. Matthew shows that Israel's leaving Egypt was prophetic of Christ—their exodus connected with death of Pharaoh—so at death of Herod the Great, Christ returned to Holy Land. Meanwhile shocking massacre in Bethlehem and district—all male children under two murdered. These children unconscious martyrs. Prophecy of Jeremiah (xxxi. 15) now completely fulfilled—as Rachel was bidden not to weep for loss of her children, so Christ being saved would be source of blessing to the whole race.

Once more Joseph receives instructions by dream—returns to Nazareth—fulfilling various prophecies, Nazareth being a despised city (St. John i. 46), that Messiah should be despised and rejected of men. (Isa. liii. 3.)

LESSONS. 1. Even infants may suffer for Christ.

2. Christ's infancy of suffering prefigures sufferings of His life—He was to be a Man of Sorrows.