

COLLEGE CHAPEL TALK

HIS STAR STILL SHINES

by the Rev. Walter Orthwein

Readings: Numbers 24:10; Matthew 2:5,6 & 9,10

What happened to the wise men who came to the Lord after His birth? The Scriptures do not tell us. They must have been profoundly affected by what they saw in Bethlehem, but what impact the experience had on their lives is left to our imagination. What became of them we do not know.

We do know what happened to the star, however. It had *risen* out of Jacob, as prophesied—meaning that the Lord would be born among the Jews. The “star out of Jacob” means the Lord’s Human Essence, the Writings explain (*Arcana Coelestia* 1675:5).

The heart of all wisdom is the acknowledgment of the Divine Human, that is, to acknowledge that the Lord as a Man is also God. This is our “Star.” It may seem a small thing, but it leads into all spiritual light.

There is a little story about a fisherman who took his young son out to fish with him, and for some reason they were out on the water at night. The father wanted to take a nap, so he told the boy to keep the boat pointed directly at the North Star. “Keep the star right over the bow of the boat and we’ll be all right.”

A few hours later the man woke up and saw that they were way off course. “What happened?” he asked his son. “I told you to keep heading straight for the star.” The boy replied, “Oh, but we passed that star a long time ago.”

The truth about the Lord which we have been given in the Word is a “star” we will never pass! The New Church teaching that the Lord is God may seem simple enough, and not especially illuminating, but never lose sight of it, and it will keep you on course.

That truth shines like a star in heaven. And societies composed of angels who know and love that truth appear like stars from a distance. Those who possess this wisdom even appear with stars around their heads in the other world, like the woman clothed with the sun in Revelation, who wore a crown of twelve stars.

Because the wise men were willing to accept the Lord as God, they saw a star. Others saw that same truth in other forms, some closer than the distant star the wise men saw. The shepherds

around Bethlehem saw it shining around an angelic society proclaiming the Lord's birth. The disciples saw it embodied in the Lord Himself when He was transfigured before them, and shone like the sun. Thomas saw it, spiritually or in his mind, when He proclaimed the Lord to be "My Lord and My God" after the Lord's resurrection.

But the star which rose out of Jacob and shone brightly for a few years, later fell. "Falling stars" represent the knowledges of truth being destroyed (see Daniel 8:10; Revelation 6:13, 8: 10, 9:1). Falsities such as "faith alone" or "predestination" are like falling stars—they take truth from the Word and drag it down to confirm merely natural ideas.

Now, in His second coming, the Lord appears once again, as a Star, shining over the New Jerusalem. "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16).

But once again, that star—the truth revealed from heaven—can be dragged down and turned into a falling star, which is what happens when it is seen merely as "the offspring of the brain," or as Swedenborg's brainchild (see *Conjugal Love* 533).

But in the New Church, where this truth is seen as Divine, it is a fixed and constant star, an ever-rising, morning star, heralding the dawn of a new day.