



The Epiphany, or the Manifestation of Christ
to the Gentiles.

[January 6.]

The Collect.

O GOD, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; Mercifully grant that we, who know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ This Collect is to be said daily throughout the Octave

Have you, like the Ancient Mariner, followed a Star? Have you trusted in the constant and unwavering Star whose course has never changed, and never will change? Being a Gentile, from a land far from Christ, has a great Light appeared unto you, and have you followed that Light? Perhaps you came from the far away east where the light is last to be extinguished at evening, then the long night, but, in the morning of salvation, comes the Light first of all. You sat in darkness from the Fall at Eden until the rising of the Light. Centuries, and then Millennia, passed upon you as you sat in darkness – just as the Wise Men (Magi) of Persia. Because you were in abject darkness, it was not difficult to recognize the Light when it dawned – and did you follow, and have you followed?

To my regret, this Epiphany day marks the end of the official observance of Christmastide. How I love it! The one glorious memory that I shall carry to my grave will be the memory of the beautiful Light, and lights, of Christmas – so warm; so beautiful, so full of hope and promise! And, of course, most especially that great Light represented by the single Star atop the Tree of Christmas (and of Life), that points ALWAYS to Christ. Fanny Crosby, though blind, saw that Light and wrote of it in her wonderful hymnology. John Newton, that rascal of the Sea, saw it in that Grace which was Amazing to his heart. John Wycliffe saw it and became a smaller star of light to brighten the path to the Great Reformation. The Wise Men saw the Star and followed. It is important that all of these saw and followed that Star; but it is even more personally important to you that YOU have followed that same beautiful and warm Star – single in all of heaven!

The Collect for Epiphany is selected, by Abp Cranmer, from the Gregorian Sacramentary. The original ending is slightly stronger than that appended by the good Archbishop Cranmer. Unlike the ending translated by Cranmer (*We, who know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through the*

same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord) originally ended as: "*We, who know thee now by faith, may be brought to the contemplation of thy Majesty by sight.*" The main distinction is drawn here between faith and sight. Faith precedes sight in matters of the Spirit. (*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*) 2 Cor 5:7 As pilgrims who seeketh after a city not made with hands, our walk must always be one of faith. At the beginning of every long journey, our destination is never clearly in view. But once we arrive, our eyes shall behold face-to-face!

The Collects of the Epiphany Season each point to a different spiritual benefit. Below, we shall see those distinct benefits mentioned in each of the Epiphany Collects as quoted from the Rev. L. Stephens-Hodge in his commentary on the Collects:

1. **Epiphany I:** *Power* to know and to do God's will.
2. **Epiphany II:** *Peace*, both spiritual and temporal.
3. **Epiphany III:** *Protection* against dangers from without.
4. **Epiphany IV:** *Protection* against dangers from within.
5. **Epiphany V:** *Protection* for the Church of God.
6. **Epiphany VI:** *Purity* in conformity with the revealed character of Christ

We will need discernment regarding which Star we are to follow, for there are falsely lights of which the world abounds. As we have studied before, the Wise Men lost their focus, temporarily, as they drew near to Palestine. Instead of continuing to follow the Star that had faithfully led them across so great an expanse of desert wilderness, they spied the gay lights of Jerusalem – a sort of Vanity Fair of Pilgrim's Progress in their journey. The Wise Men, though momentarily disoriented, nevertheless, remained wise and did not linger long among the false, man-made lights of Jerusalem. The mind of man is constantly trying to devise their own lights of fallibility to supplant the Light of Christ. They imagine all sorts of unbiblical additions to our worship and faith. Many are deceived, but some, though deceived at first, will again consult their Chart (Bible) and Compass (Light of Christ) and depart such folly and return to following the True Light.

Just as the Wise Men would never find Christ among the dim and waning lights of the city, neither shall we find him among the devices and cunning glimmers of man-made light (false worship and false doctrine).

How are the false lights of the world represented? They present themselves always as a better light. They will insist that God's Light is a good old way, but the light the world offers, they claim, is yet better for our age and a **NEW LIGHT!** Need I remind you that the Light of Christ is both Ancient and New? It has never changed nor been extinguished. So how can some contrived 'new light' be better? Are we fools to follow the blind and inconstant lights of the world? Perhaps many have been 'misguided' as those who followed the star of Remphan. *Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them* (Acts 7:43) Every false god is a false star to be avoided. Jude best describes the false lights of the world: "*.....clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.* (Jude 1:12-13) Do you see that there is NO direction for steady course here? Those, who may even have once known the true light, intellectually but not spiritually, are carried about by every wind of doctrine, and tossed about upon the seas of life by a constant seeking after false gospels. Finally, they are "*wandering STARS.*" Every true star

has a fixed position, thrown into its place by the very Finger of God. The stars that fall in showers at night are not eternal. They are consumed in fire by the atmospheres into which they fall.

But what of the True and Guiding Star that we are to follow? It is the Lord Jesus Christ! What reward have we if we follow that Star? *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts* (2 Peter 1:19) Christ is our Bright and Morning Star – the same that last bade us sleep well at evening, and watched over us as the brightest Light in the heavens throughout the dark night. It is that Light "*that shineth in a dark place.*" It is a Light of Hope and Promise for us in our journey through the Valley of the Shadow of Death (the world). But when the brilliant Light of morning breaks, the great "*Sun of Rigtheosuness shall arise with healing in His Wings.*" (Malachi 4:2) Suddenly, our Morning Star has become our Sun, or Day Star! It was ever so, for the Sun is also a Star! It is brilliant and so bright that we cannot behold it with human eyes – not because it is the largest star in the heavens, but because it is the Star that is nearest to our hearts to warm them and to impart life.

I am not accustomed to quoted from Hill Billy singers, but I believe the lyrics (by Hank Williams) that I shall show offer great truth of the Light to which the Collect refers. Unfortunately, though he must have glimpsed the Light, there is no record that Mr. Williams followed that Light all of the way to Bethlehem:

I Saw THE LIGHT

*I wandered so aimless, life filled with sin
I wouldn't let my dear Saviour in
Then Jesus came like a stranger in the night
Praise The Lord, I saw the light*

*I saw the light, I saw the light
No more darkness, no more night
Now I'm so happy, no sorrow in sight
Praise the Lord, I saw the light*

*Just like the blind man, I wandered along
Worries and fears, I claimed for my own
Then like the blind man, that God gave back his sight
Praise the Lord, I saw the light*

*I saw the light, I saw the light
No more darkness, no more night
Now I'm so happy, no sorrow in sight
Praise the Lord, I saw the light*

*I was a fool to wander and stray
For straight is the gate and narrow the way
Now I have traded, the wrong for the right
Praise the Lord, I saw the light*

*I saw the light, I saw the light
No more darkness, no more night*

*Now I'm so happy, no sorrow in sight
Praise the Lord, I saw the light*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, AMEN!