

FÉNELON

ON THE EPIPHANY

LORD, I come to Thee and I shall remain with Thee. I am nothing; I find all in Thee. How poor am I and how rich art Thou; but what need have I of riches since Thou dost enrich me? I praise Thee in my poverty. I am content to be nothing before Thee. Give me Thy Spirit to-day that I may contemplate Thy holy Son, Jesus, worshipped by the Wise Men. I adore Him with them.

The Magi, who were so wise, followed the star without reasoning about it. They put aside their prudence to follow a light greater than their own. They left their comforts and concerns. They ignored people's comments.

'What is the matter with them? They do not even know where they are going! What has happened to the sound judgement of these men who governed others? How credulous they are and how foolish! What rash and fanatical zeal!' So must the people have spoken who saw them depart.

But the Magi paid no attention to the opinions of others nor to their own common sense. They did not mind being called fools, nor even being unable to justify their action in their own eyes. They undertook a long and difficult journey without knowing what they would find. They saw an extraordinary star, true; but how many others, versed in astronomy, saw the same star without realizing there was anything supernatural about it! Only these men were enlightened and quickened in their hearts. The interior light of pure faith led them even more surely than the star.

Therefore it is not surprising that they willingly worshipped a babe in a manger. These great men became lowly. A little child! Is this what you have come to worship from the far countries of the Orient,

O Wise Men? And I imagine their reply, 'The wisdom of God confounds our foolish wisdom. What seems worthless to man is often truly worthy in the eyes of God and it is right that we bow down and worship it.' O Wise Men, you have become as little children and found the true God in the child Jesus!

How can I attain the holy innocence and divine folly of the Wise Men? Put far from me the unholy and wicked wisdom of Herod and the people of the city of Jerusalem! They are satisfied with their own reason and good sense. They set themselves up to judge the counsels of God. They avoid what they cannot understand. I have had enough of worldly wisdom. I mistrust it and I shall no longer heed it. I intend to imitate the innocence of Jesus. Let the foolish world say what it will, let it be shocked even. I love the shame and folly of the Saviour. I am loyal to Christ and for Christ. Nothing shall stop me: neither regard for human respect, nor fear of being laughed at, nor the disapproval of the worldly wise, not even good men who are still all too humanly captivated by their own prudence. When I see the star I shall say, as Saint Paul said to the faithful who were still too attached to earthly blessings and their own judgement, 'You are wise in Christ; and we are fools for Christ's sake.'

A good intention, but how shall I accomplish it? Thou, Lord, hast inspired me with it, help me to perform it. Thou hast given me the desire, do Thou give me also the courage to carry it out. Henceforth I want no other light than that from on high, no other reason [cf. sensibleness] but that of sacrificing all my rationalizing.

O God, Eternal Truth, Supreme Intelligence, come and be the only intelligence that lights my way in the shadows of the Faith.

—François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon (1651–1715), Archbishop of Cambrai, in his *Meditations and Devotions*, sel. trans. Elizabeth C. Fenn (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1954), 36–38. First published by Morehouse-Gorham, New York, in 1952.

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