

Star has maintained its character of a bearer of light up to the present time. It is still a very valuable periodical and well worthy to be sustained by the Saints.

Although it is published in Liverpool, it is of worth to the people here, because the progress of the work of God in Europe and other parts of the world abroad is chronicled upon its pages, and argumentative articles are also published therein which furnish good food for thought and potent arguments in favor of the right.

A suitable present to many friends from the old world, during the present festive season, would be a receipt for a year's subscription to the *Millennial Star*. We recommend this excellent periodical to all who take an interest in the dealings of the Lord with the nations of the earth.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

"It came to pass in those days, that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole land should be enrolled for taxation. And this enrolment took place before Cyrenius was governor over Syria. And everybody went to be enrolled, each in his own city. And Joseph went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, called Bethlehem [because he was from the house and lineage of David], in order to be enrolled together with his wife Maria, who was with child. And it happened while they were there, that the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

In these words which the writer has translated from the original Greek, Luke, who had diligently enquired about the "things that are most surely believed among us," describes the birth of our Savior, giving the time, place and circumstances of this event, one of the most important in the history of the human race.

The precise date, it will be observed, is not given by the inspired author. Probably it was never made known to him. It is only in later years that the attempts at discovering the date of the birth of Jesus have been successful, to some extent, through minute researches.

It has been tolerably well established that the year of His birth was four years before the commencement of our era, or in the year 3756 after the creation, according to the Jewish chronology, so that the present year, consequently, should be designated as 1894, A. D. But the day has been more difficult ascertain.

Clemens, a German author of somewhat independent tendency, in his "History of Rabbi Jesus," says:

"To celebrate Christmas on the 25th of December was first instituted in the fifth century after Christ, and evidently for no other purpose than in order to combine the Christian festival with the festival of the heathen Romans, the so-called "Saturnalia," which were celebrated at that time of the year as the new birth of the sun."

The same author finds, according to genuine calculation, founded on the Jewish chronology, that the date must necessarily be fixed between the 15th of March and the 15th of April, but he does not profess to be able to designate the date any nearer than that.

Anybody acquainted with the customs of the Holy Land will understand that the 25th of December could not have been the birthday of our Lord. For the biographer states that there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their herds by night. The nativity must, therefore, have taken place during a time of the year when this was necessary or possible. But in the month of December, when the rain pours down in torrents, almost incessantly, the shepherds keep their flocks in the field only a few hours during the daytime, sometimes not more than four or five hours. Both the shepherds and the animals are too glad, after several hours exposure to the rain, to find some shelter before the night. This circumstance alone is sufficient proof that the birth of Jesus occurred at some more congenial time of the year, than December.

Greswell, who has given this subject much attention, fixes the date as the 10th day of the Jewish month Nisan; which, he says, in the year 4 before our era, or the year 750 of Rome, would be on Saturday, April the 5th. At this time the pasturage is abundant and the air is pleasant. The angels who heralded the coming of the King of kings with celestial melodies would find watching shepherds in the field prepared to receive the tidings of joy.

Greswell, however, seems to have overlooked that the great event took place in the night. The Sabbath expired at sunset and the night following was really Sunday the 6th of April.

That day, and no other, it seems to us, should be fixed upon as the birthday of our Lord. That day, is the Lord's day. For on a Sunday he seems to have been born in the flesh and on a Sunday he arose from the grave.

The place of the nativity of Jesus, Bethlehem, was a long time one of comparative insignificance, "little among the thousands of Judah." But it was the place of the nativity of David as well as some of the most celebrated generals that led Israel on to victory.

Rehobeam had fortified the place, but it fell with the rest of Judea into the hands of the Babylonians. After the return from the captivity, about 123 souls started a new colony at Bethlehem, which has since then with the rest of the cities of Palestine, had a varied experience.

The city is built on two hills, about four hours' drive south of Jerusalem. It is surrounded by fertile fields and gardens. On the north side a splendid view is obtained over a valley called *Wadi-el-Charoob*, which with its vine, fig trees, almond trees and olive trees present to the eye a very pleasing landscape.

There are at present about 8,000 inhabitants most of whom belong to the Catholic Church.

In the east part of the city, there is quite an extensive subterranean cave over which a church of very ancient date, has been erected. According to a tradition which can be traced back to the second century, this cave is the stable, where the Savior was born. The church has often been destroyed and again restored, and the venerable building presents at present a rather bizarre appearance with fragments of beautiful sculptures, mended with rough additions of lime and mortar. The very entrance is a parody on architecture, the space under the once gracefully arched portal being filled out with rubbish, till only a very low and narrow opening remains. It is asserted that it has been necessary to so disfigure the ancient building in order to prevent the Turks from riding into it on horseback.

But, whatever the cause of the disfiguring of the old building may be, it stands there a fit representation of the change which Christianity has suffered from the hands of men during the centuries that have elapsed since the birth of Christ.

The entrance to the cave is on the east side of the church, one flight of stairs leading from each side of the high altar. The cave itself has been covered with marble, and, in a rather small half-round cavity is to be seen a silver star inlaid in the floor, round which fifteen silver lamps spread a magical glare day and night. The star is surrounded with the following inscription: