



## Coming home for Christmas

Every year I come back to Christmas like a traveller returning home after a year away in a foreign land.

I know this place.

And I am pleased to be here. The pictures on the walls are familiar – like the people and the events in the Christmas story. I am enriched, comforted by the old things. But I see new things, and see the old things in new ways. I have changed, I am changing. We all are. Ideas surface, gleam and take flight.

Christmas, the Christmas that is not about the bubbly frenzy of all the preparations for the

big day, still retains its shimmering mystery: ordinary people caught up in the divine drama that is the hinge of history. They are invited to take part, as we are; seeking, as we can; choosing, as we do; pressured, as we are; afraid, exhilarated, and, in the end, grateful, awed, content.

Here the poems, the illustrations, the reflections, and indeed the quotations from the Biblical accounts which inspire them all, combine, we hope, to bring to life some of the myriad facets of the birth of the one who came to change our world, and us, and still does today.

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### Kings

We were not three.  
And not kings.  
At least not when we arrived.  
And really more curious than wise,  
Craning for truth in starlit skies.  
But at least looking,  
At least checking  
What we thought we knew:  
A king born for the Jews.

No, we were not wise.  
More stupid than wise,  
Asking another king  
To point us to a rival's cradle.  
But at least asking,  
And finding truth in the old scroll,  
Truth a murderer would not recognise,  
But wary to ply us with winsome lies  
And play a deferential role.

No, we were not so wise.  
More blind than wise,  
Searching for a king  
For someone else.  
But at least searching,  
And finding, in someone else's king,  
Our end, the end of lifeless ways,  
The rule for all our days.

Later they fancied us kings.  
In that, there was only this truth:  
He who would wear a crown  
Must first bow low,  
Must first bow down.

The background of the page is a grayscale photograph showing the silhouettes of three riders on horseback. They are positioned in a line, moving away from the viewer into a misty or foggy landscape. The rider in the foreground is on the right, holding a rope. The other two riders are further back and to the left. The overall mood is mysterious and atmospheric.

*... and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.*

MATTHEW 2:9–10

Every day millions of people look to the stars for guidance, hope and purpose, scanning their horoscope in a daily paper or having it beamed to their phone. The Bible bans astrology but that doesn't mean that God does not speak through his creation or that he will not turn even a misplaced enthusiasm into a stepping stone to the truth ... the seeker finds, the seeker will be found.