

# Sirius, the Star of Bethlehem

## Theory of Prof. Forbes and Servis Refuted—Kepler's Hypothesis Untenable—Star in the East Must Have Been a Magian Star—Were the Magi, or Wise Men, Keltic Druids?

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The Star of Bethlehem is a theme of wondrous power. It has fascinated sages of the East and philosophers of the West. It has been discussed these nineteen hundred years by men of varying minds with a freshness that never fails. It excites a glow of fervid love in the breast of the saint. It kindles the dying embers of hope in the soul of the sinner. It is the ray of Heaven's own light to the afflicted. It beckons the prodigal back to the Father's home. It gives strength to the living. It brings peace to the dying.

But though a mystery of awe to angels, it is a Symbol of Love Divine to men. As such it cannot fail to profoundly interest every intelligent inquirer after truth. That we may the better understand the subject and more thoroughly appreciate the ways of God with man, I propose to treat the subject under the following heads:

1. The star was a real, true, bona fide star—not a mere temporary miraculous creation for the specific purpose.

It is allowed by all authorities that the Magi, or Wise Men, were learned. They would, therefore, make use of words and terms with discrimination. But not only were they learned; they were astronomers. Hence, when they used an astronomical term, they would use the appropriate word or phrase descriptive of the object referred to. They use the word "aster," which means an ordinary and permanent star, not an extraordinary and temporary one.

Now, in the Bible star is used only in a twofold signification—literally or figuratively. In its figurative sense it

6. It was a fixed star—not erratic in its movements. The term "star" was used by the Wise Men. But they were skilled astronomers and knew the difference between a star, a planet, a comet or a meteor, for all of which there were distinct names. Hence planet, comet, meteor are ruled out by the word aster (star). And hence we conclude that the Star in the East was a fixed star.

7. It was a star in the sign Pisces of the zodiac—the Sign of Judea. This is an important factor. Among the ancients there was a part of the heavens called the zodiac. It was a belt encircling the heavens on each side of the ecliptic, or apparent path of the sun among the stars, within which the larger planets always remain. It extended to eight degrees on either side of the ecliptic. It was divided into twelve parts called the Signs of the Zodiac. The different countries of the earth were divided among the twelve signs. Judea belonged to the sign pisces, the twelfth. The Magi, like all other astrologers or astronomers, believed in that division.

So far we have traced some of the necessary conditions of the star. Let us now try and discover the star that fulfills these conditions. In doing so we shall briefly discuss the different theories put forth and held by different people, some of them men of great eminence in their own particular sphere. We shall also show the untenableness of the different hypotheses.

I.—The star was not an angel. No less a father of the church than Theophylact held this view. He believed it was an angelic apparition. No doubt

seen, the Star of Bethlehem had a periodic time, which must necessarily have corresponded with "the fullness of time." But the periodic times of Mars, Jupiter, Saturn are all known and are of short duration. Even if we apply the periodic time to the conjunctions of the planets the objection still holds good. The times of the conjunctions are known and are comparatively short. So that attractive as is the theory of Kepler, we must dismiss it, and look elsewhere.

There is one star which fulfills all the conditions. (a) It was in an especial sense the Magi's star. (b) It has a periodic time. (c) Its revolution is of indefinite length. (d) It was in the sign Pisces at the birth of our Lord. (e) I believe we can find a peculiarity by which it could be called "His Star." That star was Sirius, the brightest in the firmament of heaven.

Before we can arrive at our final conclusion it is necessary to learn something about the Wise Men, or Magi. Who were the Magi? Where did they come from?

The etymology of the word Magi is involved in much doubt. It is generally supposed to be primarily a Persian word, but the Persian is only a form of the original. Our word Magus, of which Magi is the plural, is but the Latin rendering of the Greek Magos, the Persian of which is probably Maz. Maz is cognate to Maj in Major, Mag in Magnus and Meg in Megas (Rawlinson). "It is an intensive and means much or all." In Ahura-Maz-da, Persian name for God, it means the all wise or all powerful.

It is clear, however, that the Persians borrowed the word, as they as-

soir go Hierusalem," which shows the Irish belief that the Druids were Magians.

It is a matter of history that part of the Gaelic or Irish in the westward movement of the race returned by the valley of the Danube and settled in Asia Minor. They prefixed their own name to Asia, and called their abode Gael-Asia, or Galatia, as it came to be spelled.

Whether the Druids or Magi to whom the Star of Bethlehem appeared were residents of Ireland, Scythia, or Galatia is immaterial, for they were all the same Gaelic race. Having, as I hope, made it clear that it was to the Gaelic priests or Druids that the star of Bethlehem appeared, let us go back to primitive times, when Magism was incorporated with Zoroastrianism.

Besides Ahura-Mazda there were the Ameshas-Spentas, or "the Immortal Holy Ones." There was a third class lower than the Ameshas-Spentas. Among this class were Mithra and Tistrya. Mithra was the spirit of light, or the sun. Tistrya was the spirit of the brightest star in the firmament, or Sirius. Ultimately Mithra became associated with Ahura-Mazda and placed almost on an equality with him. So we may exclude Mithra from our calculations. Tistrya, next to the Divinity, became the object of the Magi's reverence. Sirius was his star, and thus became to the Magi "the star."

Balaam, the Rab-Mag, Chief Magian, or Arch Druid of his time, was a prophet like Iarabonol of the Gaeles. In his prophecy, which still lives, he uttered, under the inspiration of Jeho-



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means a king or other civil ruler, an ecclesiastical teacher, and perhaps an angel. It is not used in its metaphorical sense here. Therefore it means a real star.

2. It was a star in motion—it changed its position in the heavens. Motion is characteristic of all the heavenly bodies; and the words of the sacred narrative are, "The star went before them till it came." When first they saw the star it occupied a particular spot in the sky. Now, however, it has a different position, not relatively because of the change in the field of observation, but absolutely by change of location in the heavens. No doubt the motion was a movement in its orbit. This will appear more plainly from our next proposition.

3. It was a star that had an astero-tice—it stood at a particular point in the sky above them. The statement is very distinct: "It came and stood over where the young child was."

4. It was a star that moved in an orbit—it had a periodic time. This is a most remarkable statement. We are told that Herod privately learned of the Magi "what time the star appeared." The margin of the Revised Version gives us a better, because a more correct translation of the phrase; it is, "The time of the star that appeared." But the literal rendering is "the time of the appearing star."

5. It was a star that had a relative position in the sky—it was in the east. Assuming that the correct rendering of "anastole" is "in the east," then it has reference to that particular part of the heavens to the east of the observer. The observers, therefore, must have been west of Jerusalem. This is a point to be borne in mind, as we shall have to refer to it more particularly later on. The conclusion here arrived at is contrary to the generally received opinion. As far as I am aware, it is universally held that the Magi were resident or located in the east at the time the star appeared to them. Yet according to the plain terms of the statement, they must have been located in the west. Anastole means (1) the rising of the heavenly bodies from the horizon; (2) the dawn or day-spring; (3) the east or Orient. Whichever meaning we adopt the beholder must have been west of the star. The star must have been located in the east of Jerusalem, as stated by the Wise Men, who were in the east. The Magi must have been in the west. As we have

angels were sent on messages from Heaven to men, and the Angel Gabriel was used in the Annunciation. But the angelic vision would disappear with the accomplishment of the object. Not so the star; it remained.

II.—The star was not a meteor. This view has been largely held. It is asserted that some kind of meteoric phenomenon would best meet the necessities of the case. But any meteor drawn to the earth would either be consumed by the atmospheric friction or else would fall to the ground and become extinguished. Its appearance would be almost momentary.

III.—The star was not a comet. One of the greatest fathers of the church, Origen, held this view. But not all the weight of Origen's great scholarship could obtain credence for such a belief. Just recently this theory of a comet has been revived, unconsciously, however, that Origen was the father of it. Prof. David Forbes in England and Prof. Servis in America both claimed to have identified the Star of Bethlehem with Halley's comet. At the time I refuted the theory in an article that appeared in the Chicago Evening Post, April 11, 1903.

IV.—The star was not a conjunction of planets. This is the most feasible as well as fascinating theory. It is that of the great astronomer, Kepler. He calculated that there was a conjunction of Mars and Jupiter on the night of Dec. 25 in the year of Rome 747. Next year Saturn joined Mars and Jupiter, and according to Dean Alford, the eminent commentator, the light of the three planets blended and appeared to the beholder as one light. What a beautiful illustration of Trinity in Unity—the lights of three planets blended into one light! Ideer confirmed Kepler's calculation as to the conjunction of the planets. Wieseler, who followed, makes the conjunction in A. U. C. 750, the year of the Nativity now agreed upon by the learned. It is remarkable too that the conjunction of the planets took place in the sign pisces, the Sign of Judea. This theory is also free from the objections above referred to.

But beautiful as is the theory, Biblical conditions compel us to reject it. Christ's birth took place, according to St. Paul, in "the fullness of time." The fullness of time is an astronomical expression meaning the completion of a cycle, or the revolution of a planet in its orbit. That cycle, or revolution, completed, demands of the Magi that they should have seen the star in its completion. As we have

stimulated the priesthood, from the Medians, and the Medians received it from the Accadians, who inhabited the country afterwards called Babylonia. The Accadians were the "Highlanders" who descended from the mountainous region of Elam" (Sayce).

The statement of the evangelist, "There came wise men from the east to Jerusalem," may seem to militate against this view, but in reality it strengthens it. The phrase is apo anatole, "from the east." Apo is a preposition of severance. It means "far from," when motion is excluded, as in this instance. (See Liddell & Scott, Greek Dictionary). Its relation is to something external. Had the Magi lived in the east the preposition used would be "ek." Apo "marks in strictness the separation of objects externally; not in or within another, for in respect to such ek is used." (Robinson: Lexicon of the New Testament). Indeed apo not infrequently has the force of negation, and equals a not. Apo anatole, therefore, excludes every part of the east as the residence of the Magi.

The Irish claim to be descended from Magog, the grandson of Noah. They originally came from Scythia. Their language belongs to the Scythic tongue or stock of languages, which connects them with the ancient Accadians. This is the same stock and race to which we traced the Magi. The original country of the Magi and Gael is the same.

It is well known that the Irish were some centuries ago known as Scots. Scot comes from Scut, and this is the Irish for Scythia. The Greek vocalization of Scut was Skuthes, and later Skotos. (See Keating's History of Ireland and the Century Dictionary.) From Scut comes "Scut," a term of derision, referring to the short garment or kilt of the Scot (Irish).

In the seventh century before Christ the Greeks came in contact with a race "whom they called Scythians. An exacter form of the name was Scotoli. Herodotus and Hippocrates clearly distinguish the Scotoli, or true Scythians, from all their neighbors. (Encyclopedia Britannica.) It will be seen at a glance that Scot(oli)s is but a different linguistic way of spelling Scot or Scut.

The Irish word Druid means wisdom or Magian. It is worthy of record that the Irish Scriptures render "there came wise men from the east" by "there came Druids from the east." The Irish words are, "Druid a ead"

vah, "The star shall come out of Jacob." Sirius was "the star" to all the Magians. The stars symbolized kings or rulers. He whom Sirius symbolized, therefore, would be greatest of all kings.

If we could connect Sirius in any way with Jacob at the time of the Nativity there could be no question as to the star of Bethlehem. And we can do it. The twelfth sign of the Zodiac was Pisces. And Pisces was the Sign of Palestine, or Jacob, or land of Judea. That part of the heavens known as Pisces presented a most remarkable spectacle at the time of the Nativity. There the splendor of the heavens appeared to culminate. The sun seemed to shine with a deeper effulgence. Meteors, precursors of some mighty event, flashed athwart the sky. Comets shot from out the darkness of space and illuminated the sign with their fiery flow. Mars and Jupiter and Saturn halted in their orbits to focus their lights into one mighty blaze in Pisces. Add wondrous sight! The star—the Magians' Star—his star—Sirius!—enters Pisces, and is now in Jacob!

This wondrous event occurred in B. C. 5. The heliacal rising of Sirius took place on the same day in four successive years, the fifth, fourth, third and second B. C. There is something most remarkable about this heliacal rising. It is on the same day. But sameness is unity. It thus symbolizes the Unity of the Deity. Then, assuming that B. C. 4 is the correct year of the Nativity, which scholars assert, there was one year before the birth and three after it. In the symbolism of numbers one is Unity and three Trinity. But the one year before birth signified the past revelation of God, or unity of the Deity. The three years after the birth symbolized the new revelation, the Trinity of Persons. Lastly unity and trinity (one year + three years) equal the complete and perfect number four, the years that Sirius may be said to have remained in Pisces. This symbolism occurs with the rising of Sirius, which signified the rising of the Light of the World. It was as if, while heaven's arches rang with the angels' loud acclaim, Sirius flashed through space, "Arise! Shine! For thy light is come!"

Ravenwood, Chicago, Feast of the Nativity, 1903.

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JOHNNY DRUMMER.

Five-Eyed Bees.

The eyes of an animal can only work together when they can be brought to bear upon an object at the same time; as that, as a rule, the eyes of a fish must work more or less independently. This is sometimes also the case when the eyes can co-operate, as anyone who watches a plaice or other flat fish in an aquarium will soon discover.

Many animals possess more than two eyes, which do not act together. A hawk, for example, has ten eyes on the top of its head, which do not work in concert, and a kind of marine worm has two eyes on the head, and a row down each side of the body. Some insects have an extra eye on the top of the head, which does not act with the other two. A bee or wasp has two large, compound eyes, which possibly help each other, and are used for near vision, and also three little simple eyes on the top of the head, which are employed for seeing things a long way off.

Mr. W. W. Denslow, whose Christmas books for children have attained such tremendous popularity, has departed from his usual style this year. Instead of bringing out one large volume of his stiver work, he has brought out 15 small books. The first series consists of old time favorites like "The House That Jack Built," "Old Mother Hubbard," etc. His own creations consist of "The Zoo," "The One-eyed Green," "Humpty-Dumpty," etc. The G. W. Dillingham Co., New York.

Mr. Salk, recently published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., is the latest novel from the pen of Mr. Will Payne. This is a story of Chicago business life with a love element attached. The characters are Mr. Salk, magistrate, and his antagonist, and the scene of action, the Chicago Board of Trade. This work should prove of special interest to the readers of his native city.

An interesting Christmas book for children, just published by The G. W. Dillingham Co., is "Mr. Sharpshooter," by Mr. Harry, with illustrations by Mr. C. P. Weston. The story deals with the adventures of a wolf and his friends.

The children's adventures that are so popular in the "Somebody" series are cleverly and amusingly told in "The Adventures of a Wolf and His Friends," by Mr. Harry, with illustrations by Mr. C. P. Weston. The story deals with the adventures of a wolf and his friends.

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