

Sirius, the Star of Bethlehem

Theory of Profs. 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 "star," 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

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 astrophysical—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 "anatole" 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. Anatole means (1) the rising of the heavenly bodies from the horizon; (2) the dawn or day-spring; (3) the east or Orient. Whichever meaning you adopt the beholder must have been west of the star. The star must have pointed to or been at Jerusalem when first observed by the Wise Men. Therefore the Wise Men must have been west of Jerusalem.

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 know 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 Judaea. 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. Judaea belonged to the sign Pisces. This is the sign which, like all other astrologers or astronomers, believed in that division.

junction 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 Alfred, 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! Kepler confirmed Kepler's calculation as to the conjunction of the planets. Wieseler, who followed, makes the conjunction in A. U. C. 759, 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 Judaea. 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." This fullness of time is an astronomical expression meaning the completion of a cycle, or the revolution of a sphere in its orbit. That cycle, or revolution, occupied thousands of years in its completion. As we have 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 conjunction 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 Magoi, the Persian of which is probably Maz. Maz is cognate to Maj in Major, Mag in Magnus and Meg in Mezas (Maglinson). "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.

The Irish word Druid means wisdom or Magian. It is worthy of record that the Irish Scriptures render "these came wise men from the east" by "there came Druids from the east." The Irish words are: "Drailoch o naird shoir 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

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. And wondrous sight! The star—the Magians' Star—his star—Sirius!—enters Pisces, and is now in Jacob!

This wondrous event occurred in B. C. 2. The helical 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 helical 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 is 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, whilst heaven's arches rang with the angels' loud acclaim, Sirius flashed through space, "Arise! Shine! For thy light is come!"

Ravenswood, Chicago, Feast of the Nativity, 1903.

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The World's Rejoicings.

This is the season of the year when the world shakes hands. The Spirit of Christmas permeates everything, ennobling the meanest among us, throwing its powerful rays into the dark corners of the heart and dragging down for a few days from their high estate greed and commercialism and all uncharitableness. It touches and all uncharitableness. It touches all the earth, and what it touches it transforms. What a pity it is that the spirit of Christmas does not last the whole year through.

There is a hush of music on the air. The white-winged fables flutter everywhere. And here and there, Made by a sudden mingling as they fall, There comes a softer lullaby than all. Swept in upon the universal prayer.

Scrooge is still alive, but nobody pays any attention to him nowadays except to laugh in a good-natured way at what he says and wish him happier thoughts. The few of his kind that are left are apt to refer to the mystical time between the 20th of December and the 2d of January as "demoralization." They don't know what they are missing.

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Making Glass.

The art of making glass was introduced into Japan about one hundred and fifty years ago by a Hollander, who settled at Osaka. For several generations the knowledge of the process was confined to a single family, and it was not until about 1879 that the general employment of coal, instead of charcoal, and the construction of brick chimneys enabled the manufacturers to introduce improvements which placed the industry on a substantial basis. Osaka has continued to be the center of the industry, and now manufactures for export, besides supplying the home demand.

An Electric Printing Apparatus.

Berlin will soon have an electric distance printing apparatus as an adjunct to the telephone. Through the contract with the postoffice department, of which the telegraph and telephone system is a part, the Ferndruck company is able to establish a special service for subscribers in Berlin and its suburbs, who can exchange communications in printed type by way of the main telegraph office. The apparatus is similar to a typewriting machine. After connection is made, communication can be had by simply manipulating the machine like a typewriter; even if the addressee be absent, the printing is done as if some one were at the instrument.

Well Remembered.

Valley City, N. Dak., Dec. 14.—Two years ago Mrs. Matilda M. Boucher of this place suffered a great deal with a dizziness in her head. She was cured of this by a remedy called Dodd's Kidney Pills, and has not been troubled since.

In January, 1903, she had an attack of Sciatica, of which she says:

"I was almost helpless with the Sciatica, but remembering what Dodd's Kidney Pills and Diamond Dinner Pills had done for me before, I commenced a treatment of these medicines and in three weeks I was completely restored to health. I have great faith in these medicines, for they have been of so much benefit to me."

Dodd's Kidney Pills are very popular in Barnes County, having made a great many splendid cures of Sciatica, Rheumatism and Kidney Troubles. Many families use no other medicine.

There are so many ways of becoming unpopular that it is a wonder the average man has any friends at all.

"World's Fair."

A St. Louis World's Fair Information Bureau has been established at 1601 Farnam St., Omaha, Neb., in charge of Harry E. Moores, where all information will be cheerfully furnished free of charge.

Plecework—the pie man's.

WINCHESTER
"NEW RIVAL"
Loaded Black Powder Shells shoot stronger and reload better than any other black powder shells on the market, because they are loaded more carefully and made more scientifically. Try them. They are THE HUNTER'S FAVORITE.

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Don't you know that DeLancey Starch, besides being absolutely superior to any other, is put up in 16 ounces in packages and sells at same price as 12-ounce packages of other kinds? You can't see an ideal object than once a week without scratching his veneering. Rifelets has torn down more than it has ever built.
GOOD HOUSEKEEPERS Use the best. That's why they buy Red Cross Ball Blue. At leading grocers, 5 cents.
You cannot carry a crooked rule along the straight road.
He became the Man of Sorrows for the sorrows of men.
Storekeepers report that the extra quantity, together with the superior quality of DeLancey Starch, makes it next to impossible to sell any other brand.
The serpentine dancer doesn't care to "see snakes."
"Don't feel flattered that I laugh at your jokes," said an Atchison man to a joker. "I laugh because I am good natured."
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The letter carrier is not expected to die at his post.
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BEGGS' CHERRY COUGH SYRUP cures coughs and colds.

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 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, 1902.

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 con-

A Christmas Thought
Oh, Christmas is coming again, you say,
And you long for the things it is bringing.
But the costliest gift may not lighten the day,
Nor help on the merry bells ringing.
Some getting is losing, you understand,
Some hoarding is far from saving;
What you hold in your hand may slip from your hand,
There is something better than having,
And that is giving, without measure,
And only by giving we live.

Your last year's presents are scattered and gone;
You have almost forgotten who gave them.
But the loving thoughts you bestow on them
As long as you choose to have them.
Love, love is your riches, though ever so poor;
No money can buy that treasure.
You're always, from robber and thief secure,
Your life, without measure,
It is only love that can give,
It is only by loving we live.

For who is it smiles through the Christmas morn,
The light of the whole creation,
A dear little child, in a stable born,
Whose love is the world's salvation?
He was poor on earth, but He gives us all
That can make our life worth the living;
And happy the Christmas Day we call,
That is spent for His sake, in giving.
He shows us the way to live,
Like Him, let us love and give!

—Lucy Larcom.