

The Cambrian Peshier

A Voice of the Desposyni to the Dispersion

The Peshier of the Star, 2024
Christmas/Epiphany

Beloved Friends:

On the Witness of the Star

[T]he ancient kingdom was pulled down, when God appeared in the likeness of man . . .

*How then were they [the mysteries] manifested?
A Star shown in Heaven.*

- Ignatius to the Ephesians Ch. 19

Abstract: This Peshier revisits the testimony of St. Ignatius as the “father of creedal orthodoxy” and argues for the role of Christmas as an important part of the season of Epiphany. It attempts to steer clear of the worn-out controversies over its alleged pagan associations but also avoids the on-going conflict between the Arians (who viewed Christ’s baptism as the “Epiphany”) in opposition to the Athanasians which gave us the creeds. The first Epiphany was to the shepherds who witnessed the “babe in a manger” announced by the heavenly host. The second epiphany was the royal visit of the Magi guided by the Star of Bethlehem, the focus of this Peshier. The third epiphany was the Divine announcement at His baptism and the fourth epiphany was the Messianic sign at the Wedding of Cana: subjects for future Peshiers.

Chapter One: More on the Witness of St. Ignatius

Because I have heard of some who say; unless I find it written in the originals, I will not believe it to be written in the Gospel. And when I said, It is written; they answered with what lay before them in their corrupted copies. But to me Jesus Christ is instead of all the uncorrupted monuments in the world . . .

- Ignatius to the Philadelphians, 2.20-21
Wake/Vossius Edition

Ignatius: the Last of the Davidians

For of such is the kingdom of heaven.

- Jesus of Ignatius as he sat on His lap, Matthew 18:2; 19:13, *et al*

There is a remarkable similarity of the language of the creeds which can be found in the writings of St. Ignatius (circa. 30 - 107AD) - everywhere, it seems. Whether or not he was the infant son of Jesus Christ as has been argued in recent Peshers (Barnabas & Ignatius, 2024), he was certainly a *son* of the Church of the First Christians and was present with that august gathering on the Day of Pentecost. Too young to have yet learned his "mother tongue," he was blessed to speak as his first language, the language of Heaven.

This has caused some consternation among modern scholars: Does this creedal form of his writings indicate they are riddled with interpolations from a later author? Or in the alternative, Does it instead prove that Ignatius was the true father of the creeds? Is Ignatius the father of creedal orthodoxy?

Further complicating this enigma is the assumption by modern scholars that the Patristic fathers were ignorant bumpkins, incapable of the intellectual sophistication which the creeds required and which was manifested by their subsequent apologists. In defiance of that view, the testament of the "Ignatian literary canon" seems to stand alone as one so beautifully crafted that either it is *all* spurious or it is *all* authentic. Interpolations usually demonstrate a superior level of scholarship interjected into a lesser valued composition. They are easy to spot by textual critics. In the case of Ignatius, however, his works are seamless. It might be because we find in him a worthy intellectual leader capable of establishing a creedal standard for the Church.

[N.B. The later Latin editions gave opportunity for such interpolations, but fortunately, we have Greek editions, and a few of the Syriac for a comparative analysis.]

We see evidence of his love for scholarship in the Epistle to Hero, his successor to the episcopal throne of Antioch. He admonishes him in the following,

Give attendance to Reading, that thou may'st not only thy self know the Laws, but may'st explain them to others, as the Combatant of God. (1)

-Whiston's Translation, *Primitive Christianity Revived, Volume 1, Facsimile Edition*, 1711, p. 384

The love of scholarship ran in the family. Ignatius says this of his daughter,

Salute also Mary, a Woman of great Gravity, my Daughter, famous for Learning; as also the Church which is in her House. For whom may my Soul be the Security; for she is the very Pattern of pious Women. (9)

- *Ibid*, p. 391

Considering the dynamics of family discussions, one wonders if it was this Mary - obviously named after her great grandmother, the Blessed Virgin Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ - from whom Ignatius first heard the elucidations which found their way into his Epistles? I suppose we will never know, but it is something special for a woman not only to be loved by her father but also to be admired. And then furthermore, to be admired by an Apostolic Father, we should have reason to pause in awe that such an angelic power stands before us. She may have been the Mother of the Creeds.

Modern scholarship has dismissed the Epistle to Hero as apocryphal or "spurious" in the sense that it was not actually written by the hand of Ignatius. Circulating for centuries which were burdened by many pious frauds, purging the Church's literary record became the quest of iconoclastic zeal. But as will be argued below, William Whiston, a formidable Patristic scholar and colleague of Sir Isaac Newton, defended the Epistle's authenticity and retained it in the Ignatian Canon.

[N.B. Whiston's biblical scholarship is consistent and not so easily disproved. His thoroughness and attention to detail - no doubt influenced by the scientific genius that was Newton - were reliable. But without a university through which to publish (as noted before, he was driven out of Cambridge for Arianism), scholars have conveniently ignored him rather than refute him.]

The Sin of Parsimony?

Usually, iconoclastic movements go too far in forming a reaction to past errors. Religious zeal is the hardest to temper.

In the case of the fifteen Epistles which bear the name of Ignatius, modern scholars accept only seven as authentic. But as will be shown, Whiston accepted three more. The reader will have to decide.

Ignatius' Epistles were composed during his journey from Antioch to Rome for martyrdom. He was under military escort and his writings were "screened" by the Emperor's adjutant. They had to be written in code and some subjects avoided altogether.

Analyzing his salutations and personal exhortations, it is obvious that he had scribal assistance. It appears multiple copies were made (which probably explains the Shorter and Longer Recensions). There were more epistles acknowledged in them than the seven which modern scholarship accepts. William Whiston reconstructed the chronology and the geography to come up with his contrary opinion. He adds these three – the Tarsians, the Antiochians, and Hero - and defends them with references from Polycarp's Epistle (more below).

Others have tried to parse Ignatius' writings in a preference for the "smaller" recensions over the "larger" ones in order to diminish what are perceived to be embellishments. Most of the citations of St. Paul are to be found in the Longer Recensions. An example will be provided in this Peshier on what he said about the "Star of Bethlehem." There is a shorter and longer version. Again, the reader will have to decide.

His deference toward St. Paul and the use of the Pauline Epistles can be explained by two important facts: 1) The Churches which Ignatius addressed were originally formed from the Pauline mission, and 2) The Mother Church of the Pauline mission was Antioch (according to the record in Acts), over which Ignatius later became its shepherd. Followers of "the Way" were first called "Christians" in Antioch. Jerusalem might have been the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but Ignatius made Antioch the Church of the Messianic Throne.

Consequently, the attempt to doctrinally "sanitize" Ignatius seems to be a useless exercise. He wrote too many epistles with too many editions - Greek, Latin, Aramaic, etc. - for them all to have been cluttered with interpolations. The flow is too smooth and elegant.

Furthermore, what was left out of the Shorter Recensions end up appearing in the Apostolic Constitutions and other early Christian writings, anyway. The supposed "interpolations" in the New Testament texts reflect this Ignatian influence, also. Where else could these ideas have come from? They had to have come from a leader of sufficient stature to be accepted as an authoritative witness from the Apostolic age. Ignatius, who grew up in the "Jesus" movement and now for nearly a half century had been the bishop of the largest and most powerful church outside of Jerusalem, he is our best answer. If he "tweaked" the New Testament text, it was his right to do so (e.g. 1 John 5:7; Mark 16:8ff). He is singularly our most authoritative link to the First Church.

What he said is what he said.

So then, What did he Say?

Ignatius was hostile to Judaism, or more properly, the "Jew's religion." For this reason, he is an embarrassment to our time today because of our post-Nazi sensitivities. But in the polemics of his time, within living memory of the Crucifixion, it can be forgiven:

If any one despises the Law, or the Prophets, which Christ fulfilled at his coming, let him be to thee as Antichrist. If any one says that the Lord is but a [mere] Man, he is a Jew, a Murderer of Christ. (2)

- Whiston, op cit., p. 385

He said that Mary was a Virgin who miraculously conceived the Christ child. Jesus was both truly man and truly God. He was God, yet, God was His Father. The doctrine of the Trinity, although not stated outright (it was Tertullian who came up with the term "Trinity"), appears in almost creedal form:

For our God Jesus Christ, was according to the Dispensation of God, conceived in the Womb of Mary, of the Seed of David, by the Holy Ghost: He was born, and baptized . . . Ephesians 18

His references to "the Star" of Bethlehem confirm for us the birth account of Matthew's Gospel, along with confirmation of other facts pertaining Jesus Christ as a real historical person.

The writings of St. Ignatius were beloved by the ecumenical churches before and after the Great Schism. Protestants dislike Ignatius and sometimes question whether he ever existed. They oppose his high church ecclesiology, thinking it is a proto-Papal

doctrine. His view of the bishop is monarchistic with a despotic role in the Church.

[For example, Ignatius gives the church bishop total control over the institution of marriage. Anyone who marries "without the consent of the bishop" lives in fornication (To Polycarp 2.10). I can't imagine any church in modern times trying to get away with that one. Could this mean we are not truly Christian? Considering the modern divorce rate, Christ's strict limits on remarriage would suggest that our churches are full of adulterers (Matthew 5:32, *et al*).]

Protestants tend to be anarchists, even the well-creased Presbyterians. Have you ever tried to count the number of "synods," sects, denominations, fellowships, and "worship" centers there are in the world? You can't. There are too many. How Protestants think they can have a civilization with this chaos is problematic: we might wonder if the current turmoil in world statecraft could be a direct result of the failure of Protestantism?

Of course, to the Cambrian Church, we believe that both Protestants and Catholics are in error. Protestants do not have the right to reject a clearly biblical role for bishops. On the other hand, the Catholics along with all historic churches (Orthodox, etc.) have a spurious episcopacy. They claim it is apostolic. There is no such thing. Agents do not have authority to act on behalf of their principals to replace themselves. And the apostles never exercised episcopal powers, anyway. Like the prophets of old, they ordained the bishops as kings; they did not act as kings themselves.

Hero: Ignatius' Son and Successor

Inasmuch as we are the Children of Abraham, Be strong, therefore, O Hero, and act Heroically, and like a Man.

- *Epistle of Ignatius to Hero*, 8, Whiston Translation, p. 390

Hero: *a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent.* . . . Merriam-Webster Dictionary

According to Hegessipus, who was cited in the last Peshier, the first bishops were the Desposyni who ruled "all" the churches. We have demonstrated that Ignatius was a Desposynic bishop. He was a relative if not an actual son of Jesus Christ, and had royal blood flowing in his veins. The episcopal office was from the beginning a royal office and Ignatius had a birthright to the episcopal throne. The bishops of the historic churches, claiming an apostolic succession, did not.

Furthermore, our last Peshier left open the question of the episcopal succession of the Antioch Church. Polycarp was charged by Ignatius to fill that office upon his martyrdom. Whom did Polycarp choose?

We find that it was Ignatius' own son, Hero:

For I believe in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in his only Begotten Son, that God will shew me Hero upon my Throne. (7)

I exhort Hero my own Son: But let him that glorieth glory in the Lord, May I enjoy thee my dear Son, whose Guardian may he be who is the only Unbegotten God, and the Lord Jesus Christ . . . (6)

- *Ibid.* p. 388
(emphasis added)

While the authenticity of this epistle will be argued below, it is well to keep in mind what was said of Hero in Ignatius' Epistle to Polycarp which belongs to the accepted canon:

I salute him who shall be deemed worthy to go [from you] into Syria. Grace shall be with him for ever, and with Polycarp that sends him.

- Ignatius to Polycarp 8 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 1, p. 96)

Hero was left unnamed to protect his identity from the Romans. He was residing with Polycarp in Smyrna and serving as his personal deacon.

And then, in return, we have what Polycarp said of the Hero Epistle,

The Epistles of Ignatius written by him to us, and all the rest [of his Epistles] which we have by us, we have sent to you, as requested. They are subjoined to this Epistle, and by them may be greatly profited; for they treat of faith and patience, and all things that tend to edification in our Lord.

- Polycarp to the Philippians 13 (*Ibid*, p. 36)

To which Whiston adds this observation that this collection had to include the Epistle to Hero,

At the Conclusion of this Epistle of Polycarp we have, as far as I understand the Words, a direct Mention of these Epistles, as just sent to him from Philippi [Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna], and to be sent to the East, whither they were directed . . . What Writings or Letters sent from Philippi, could both Ignatius and the Philippians so properly desire Polycarp to send away towards

Syria, as these Three Epistles dated from Philippi? and all belonging to Syria or Tarsus under its Jurisdiction? For I take Ignatius' Recommendation of the Antiochians to Polycarp mentioned in the Epistle to Hero to belong to the Philippians [from which Ignatius wrote them pending his departure for Rome].

- Whiston, op cit p. 95

Thus, reconstructing the scenario from the accepted writings and arguing from both geography and chronology, Whiston proves that these Three Epistles were authentic. They were written by Ignatius while in Philippi and sent south to Smyrna with instructions that they be taken to Syria: to the Tarsians, Antiochians, and Hero. Polycarp acknowledges receipt of the letters, sends copies of earlier Ignatian Epistles which he had to the Philippians (upon their request), and then assures Ignatius (too late evidently) that he will personally certify that the Epistles to Syria are delivered.

[These Three Epistles would have been written in Aramaic. While Ignatius' other epistles were written to a Greek-speaking audience, these three were written to Aramaic speakers because some form of encryption was necessary. Ignatius did not want the Romans to know, specifically, who was his chosen successor.]

Hero, an Authentic Part of the Ignatian Canon

Thou knowest after what manner I have brought thee up. . . (6),

- Whiston, op cit. p. 387

On this question, William Whiston's scholarship has proven sufficient to defend Hero's rightful place in Ignatius' writings. Modern scholars regard the Ignatian Canon to be limited to the Seven Epistles and usually of the Shorter Recension as mentioned above. Whiston not only defended the Longer Recensions (as discussed in our last Peshier), but by adding the Three Syrian Epistles - the Epistles to Antioch, to Tarsus, and to "Hero, Ignatius' Deacon, who he earnestly desired might be his Successor" (Whiston, p. 94) - he completes the total corpus which totals Ten Epistles.

While Whiston's defense of the first two might be attacked for bias, which seems to be too suggestive of the Arian/Athanasian controversy that came much later and thus perhaps not authentic because of this anachronism, it is the personal letter to Hero which interests us here.

[The Cambrian Church retains these two epistles (Antioch and Tarsus) in the Ignatian Canon only in their original Aramaic composition. It is true that Whiston produced these Epistles in his defense at a heresy trial at Cambridge, in which he was accused of Arianism. He countered that his accusers were Sabellians and so, it can be argued that these two Epistles were evidence in his legal defense, while the one to Hero was not impacted by the controversy.]

Whiston spends no less than eight pages defending Hero's authenticity, against which scholars have produced only one objection; namely, that they dismiss its authenticity by clumsily lumping it with the other two. That objection Whiston answered ably from his superior knowledge of antiquities by providing an analysis of the sect of Saturninus which he demonstrated was contemporary with Ignatius. Ignatius' admonitions and warnings match the doctrinal particulars of this heresy. Consequently, what was once thought to be anachronisms of a heresy which came later, instead now become proofs to the contrary and establishes the epistle as authentic.

Whiston concludes,

These Three Epistles are so Pious, Serious, and Practical; are written in so peculiar and affectionate a Manner, as to Churches, and to a Person which Ignatius was nearly related to [i.e. of near relation]; of whom he was taking his final Leave, and to whom he was imparting his last Instructions: And they have so many Marks of Genuine Concern, intimate Friendship, and Pastoral Care, that they seem not easy to be imitated by a Counterfeit Author afterward.

- *Ibid.* p. 98-99

In other words, he argues that nothing would be gained from the forgery of these Epistles.

Ignatius' Charge to Hero

It can be added that this Epistle is genuinely moving as any final charge to a loving son might be from one who is about to face certain martyrdom. Consider the following selections:

For I believe in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in his only Begotten Son, that God will shew me Hero upon my Throne. Do thou therefore press forward in thy Course. I charge thee before the God of the Universe, and before Christ, and in the Presence of the Holy Spirit, and of the ministering Orders, Keep that sacred thing which I and Christ have committed to thee: And do not judge thy self unworthy of those Things which have been shown [me] concerning thee by God. I commit to thee the Church of Antioch. I have committed you to Polycarp in the Lord Jesus Christ. (7) p. 388-389

Inasmuch as we are the Children of Abraham, Be strong, therefore, O Hero, and act Heroically, and like a Man. For from henceforth thou shalt lead the People of the Lord, which are in Antioch, in and out; and so the congregation of the Lord shall not be like Sheep which have no Shephard. (8) p. 390

He charges him with the memory of Stephen, the Church's first martyr, who would have been Ignatius' much older brother:

But thou ministerist to them, as the holy Stephen did at Jerusalem for James and the presbyters . . . Let no man despise thy youth. (III) p.113/114

And from his salutation,

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, To Hero the Deacon of Christ, the Minister of God, who is honoured by God, and highly beloved; famous for his Gravity; who carries Christ and the Holy Spirit in him; who is mine own Son in Faith and Love.

Notice that it is not rendered "mine own Son in [the] faith . . ." Whiston supplies the Greek side-by-side with his translations. The definite article is absent. It is rendered the same in the Schaff/Coke Edition of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Volume 1, published by Hendrickson (1994).

In our last Peshier we took under consideration the question of why Ignatius should call himself "Theophorus" as a surname. We suggested it was a term which created a Desposynic association.

"Hero" as a name for his son was even more explicitly Desposynic. It is a name, which in Greek legends, clearly identifies with a deity. Ignatius draws attention to the meaning of his name, by encouraging him to act "heroically." It tells us that Hero was so named with much thoughtfulness and care.

With what deity, then, was "Hero" supposed to be associated? How was it that he could have been considered of "supernatural origins"? By our calculation, as a son of Ignatius, he would have been also the grandson of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two: The Book of Days

In the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, many days of the year are dedicated to various saints: biblical figures and non-biblical. Non-biblical saints usually come to be as a result of a "canonization" process, by which a historical figure is recognized as a true *fide defensor* – "defender of the faith." Such people are exalted in Christian iconography as examples or standards for the faithful to emulate, either in their life work or in their teachings.

The Eastern Churches use a stronger term to describe this canonization process: they call it *apotheosis*, deification.

Usually the days commemorated are the natal days of these saints, the day of their death. Very often, these saints die in martyrdom, and their personal sacrifice is recognized with veneration.

[“Natal day” so-called is the martyr’s “birth” into his heavenly life.]

Of course, most of the days of the year are dedicated to the memory of our Lord Jesus Christ: all the important phases of His birth, life, death and so on are commemorated in feast days such as Christmas and Easter, but also less notable days such as Epiphany, etc.

Other biblical figures are prominent, as well: the Virgin Mary has three feast days dedicated to her, for example.

The Apostles and various noteworthy disciples are recognized, depending upon their importance to a particular tradition.

In addition to these feast days, Christians try to incorporate into their roots some form of the Old Testament feasts such as Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Followers of Jewish traditions emphasize these more, but there are no feast days dedicated to the Old Testament saints, unless we can call John the Baptist an Older Testament saint.

This is unfortunate because as our Peshers have progressed, we are beginning to discover a proto-Christian, even a paleo-Christian tradition in the Older Testament. Many of the Old Testament saints lauded in the New Testament, such as in the Book of Hebrews and its famous litany of the champions of faith in Chapter 11 - they certainly deserve to be memorialized. **Jesus stood in the paleo-Christian tradition** and we discover that in the 2nd Century, the neo-Christian tradition began which became "Churchianity" and eventually supplanted the *paleo* tradition.

The various branches of Christianity have feast days that are different. The Roman Catholics differ from the Eastern Othodox. The Asian branches of Christianity as well as the Celtic Churches have feast days dedicated to saints which are known to their cultures.

Protestants may ignore these traditions, even snicker at them, but they will substitute them with celebrations of their own. In the United States, Columbus, the famous navigator who discovered America along with various American Presidents and racial leaders - all have their days of celebration in a secular apotheosis. Religious groups, such as the Mormons, will have their "saints days."

Even Evangelicals, while not formalizing these memorials in canonical decrees, nevertheless, have frequent events honoring their spiritual heroes, Martin Luther, John Calvin and so on. The wild Charismatics, too, have their pantheon. Most recently, the long-deceased musician-evangelist, Keith Green, was celebrated in a 40th anniversary of his natal day in a tragic plane crash.

Is Christmas a Sacred Day?

How then were they [the three mysteries] manifested to the ages? A star shown in the heaven . . .

- Ignatius to the Ephesians 19.

And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.

- Genesis 21:8

The Feast of the Octave is celebrated at Christmas time, for Westerners, on the first day of the New Year. The Season is a conflation of celebrations. The "Octave" (the Eighth) feast was dedicated to the *naming* ceremony at Christ's circumcision.

As explained elsewhere, we do not believe Jesus was born at Christmas. The astrological calculation in Revelation 12 places His birth on September 11, 3 B.C., assuming that the transition from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian was not done in error.

The coming of the Wise Men from the East bearing gifts occurred at our Christmas/Epiphany season. But the occasion signified the weaning of Jesus from His mother's breast which was a thing to be celebrated in ancient Israel. Their journey was instigated by the appearance of the Messianic Star in the East, but which had not yet appeared in Judea.

The tradition of the "Weaning Feast" was established by Abraham for Isaac, a thing copied by his descendants. It usually occurred in the child's second year. This explains why Herod ordered the slaughter of the baby boys of Bethlehem who were two years or under.

Biologically, science recognizes that "weaning" represents the true independence of the child because it is then that sufficient maturity has been achieved that the child can gain its nourishment directly from the food grown from the earth. It is then that the son can fellowship with the father because he can now follow his father in his daily work and in his travels and be sustained by the same food which his father eats. The mother is no longer needed.

Theologically speaking, weaning is a thing which can be celebrated because the eternal relationship of "the father and the son" is then perfected to perpetuate the natural order of the Universe. The Epistle to the Hebrews presents weaning as a doctrinal transition from the "milk of the Word" (5:13) to the "meat" (5:14) and marked by leaving behind "the first principles of Christ" (6:1) to embrace matters pertaining to ethics and dominion:

For every one that useth the milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

At his weaning, the son is declared an heir. It was at Isaac's weaning ceremony, especially in the light of Ishmael's inappropriate behavior, that Sarah declared "Ishmael shall not be heir with my son" and cast him out of the house (Genesis 21:10). As St. Paul also provides important commentary on this incident in Galatians Chapter 4, he adds,

[T]he son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman (4:29).

Sons follow the condition of the mother. If the mother is a slave, the son is not an heir, and in this case, Ishmael could only have become an heir had Sarah adopted him, which she elected not to do.

The appearance of the Star not only led the Wise Men to the place of Christ's birth but also to the appropriate *time* of His weaning in which his royal status might be acknowledged. By presenting to Him royal gifts, they were paying homage to a king who now came into his inheritance by the announcement of the "Star":

Where is the king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and art come to worship him.

- Matthew 2:2

Compare now the Longer and Shorter Recensions of Ignatius upon the Star (cf. Whiston, p 151):

Larger

Three Mysteries to be noised Abroad, which were done in Silence, but are reveal'd to us. A Star in the Heavens shined above all that were before it; and its Light was unspeakable: and the Novelty thereof surprised those that saw it. Now all the rest of the Stars, together with the Sun and the Moon, were but a Chorus to this Star: for it exceeded them all in Brightness: and Men were troubled to discover whence this strange Appearance proceeded.

Smaller

How then was our Saviour manifested to the World? A Star shone in Heaven beyond all the other Stars, and its Light was Inexpressible, and its Novelty struck Terror into Men's Minds. All the rest of the Stars, together with the Sun and Moon, were the Chorus to this Star.

While the sense between the two are essentially the same, the Larger Recension suggests that the "three mysteries" are revealed by the Star, while the Smaller version says it was the "Savior." However, in both texts, the mysteries pertain to Jesus: the Virginity of Mary, His Birth, and His Death. It remains to be discovered how the Star of Bethlehem could have attested to Mary's Virginitly and also foretold of Christ's death, unless the Star was associated somehow with Zadok, the Hebrew name for the Planet Jupiter, which was considered the Messianic Star. Astrological lore would have had to be attached to it somehow and known by the ancients in order to make those inferences.

The Christmas Star in the Dead Sea Scrolls

There shall come a Star out of Jacob.

- Numbers 25:17

The star is the Interpreter of the Law . . .

- The Damascus Document from the Dead Sea Scrolls

The "star prophecy" in Numbers did not go unnoticed by the Qumran community and those who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the Peshier for Amos 5:27, we find the following,

[The Biblical text]: *"I will exile the tents of your king and the foundation of your images beyond the tents of Damascus."*

[The Peshier]: *The "books of the Law" are the tents of the king, as it says "I will re-erect the fallen tent of David" [Amos 9:11]. The king is [Leader of] the nation and the "foundation of your images" is the books of the prophets whose words Israel despised. The star is the Interpreter of the Law who comes to Damascus, as it is written, "A star has left Jacob, a staff has risen from Israel" [Num. 24:17].*

- p. 57-58 Damascus Document, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*

(Wise, et al, HarperSanFrancisco), p. 59

(emphasis added)

This "fallen tent of David" is reflective of James' ruling in Acts 15 and shown to be yet another connection - among many - with the Qumran Community. **This Peshier would be saying that the prophecy of "the star" was with the "house" of David, not just with David himself.**

What are stars in biblical doctrine? According to the Scrolls cited here, they are the "interpreters of the Law" which are Messianic, Desposynic, and in light of what Ignatius said to Hero above, *the stars stand for the bishops of the Church.*

"Star of your god Remphan."

The reader should, at this point, revisit the St. Stephen's Day Peshier and Stephen's accusation against the Jewish rulers that they had thrown off the Davidic interpreters of the Law, in favor of their apostate, Cabalistic interpreters:

After quoting Moses' famous Messianic prophecy, v. 37 (which even Jews believe is Messianic, just that it does not apply to Jesus because they do not accept Him as their Messiah), Stephen forcefully argues that God "gave them up" to these satanic forces "to worship the host of heaven" - not the stars as such but the angelic powers which the stars represent. It was to them that in the ineffable NAME the Jews offered "slain beasts and sacrifices" and took up "the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship . . ." What is he talking about?

Here, he is quoting the Prophet Amos in the Septuagint, but in a peshier. Compare with the Received Text:

But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made for yourselves. (Amos 5:26)

You will recall that the prophecy in Amos accuses the Ten Northern Tribes - which had just rebelled and seceded from the Davidic monarchy - with the idolatry of Moloch and "Chiun" or "Repham" (*Rephaim*). Stephen accuses the Sanhedrin of the same apostasy: by rejecting Jesus Christ as their Messiah, they were rebelling against the House of David and were, implicitly, if not explicitly, embracing demonism:

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. (1 Samuel 15:23)

The Astronomical Account

So, the appearance of a star at the time of the birth of Christ forms an important part of the Christmas story. The Gospel account in Matthew tells us that the "Wise Men" from the East - the Magi - were alerted to his birth by the appearance of this star, which they "followed" until they arrived at Bethlehem.

Bible skeptics, of course, dismiss it as yet another fable of the Christian religion. However, if it is possible to identify a celestial apparition from this time period, then it would lend credence to the story. In other words, it is a story which should be corroborated by non-biblical accounts.

Curiously, Isaac Newton does not discuss the star. He calculates the birth and life of Christ from internal Gospel accounts in relation to the number of Passovers from which he reconstructs the chronology. Newton establishes the time in which Christ was crucified and then works back from that to the time of the census of Caesar Augustus.

This seems counterintuitive, although, as it turns out, it is a reliable calculation. My guess is that Newton was a loyal son of the Puritan movement which regarded Christmas as a pagan intrusion into the Christian calendar. A discussion of the Christmas star would elevate the festival to the discomfort of his fellow Puritan zealots.

I say it is counter-intuitive because I believe the Wise Men of the East were informed of their astrological calculations by the Prophet Daniel. He was admired by Newton. Likewise, Newton was heavily involved in the Copernican revolution, and with Edmond Halley, studied comets. It is a puzzle as to why he neglected this astronomical part of the biblical record.

"The Magi" was an ancient order and brotherhood which is known to history and numerous references to them can be found in the writings of the early Church fathers. It was also customary for the Magi to pay courtesy visits to new kings. So their quest to visit this new King of Israel was not so unusual.

Nevertheless, the suggestions offered over the years as to what this star might have been can be reduced to three:

- 1) It was a comet,
- 2) It was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, and
- 3) It was a stellar nova.

Each view has pros and cons which are easily discoverable from a little research on the internet. I believe that these are not contradictory views but three separate aspects of the same event.

[I am relying here on Colin J. Humphreys, "The Star of Bethlehem - a Comet in 5 BC - and the Date of the Birth of Christ," published November, 1991, in the *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society*, 32:389 and can be found at <https://researchgate.net>]

There are comets known to the Chinese records which occurred in 7 BC, 5 BC, and 3 BC. (Halley's Comet appeared in 12 BC and would have been too early). These comets appeared before Christ's birth. However, if a comet appeared "in the East" - a thousand miles away or even half that (assuming they came from Mesopotamia or far down the eastern coast of Arabia) - then it could have been seen by the Magi in the correct and expected coordinates. This would have motivated them to start their long and arduous journey. The comet may not have been observable to the star-gazers in Jerusalem because it was lost in the radiance of the daytime Sun, or as Humphreys suggests:

It is proposed that a remarkable sequence of three astronomical events stimulated the journey of the Magi: the triple conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in 7BC; the massing of the three planets Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in 6 BC; and finally the appearance in 5 BC of the 'star of Bethelhem', a comet intitially in Capricornus.

As time went on and the Magi got closer, they would have lost sight of the comet as it became a daytime comet . . . meaning that it was approaching its perihelion behind the Sun. They would now be relying upon star charts to finish their journey. When they arrived in Jerusalem, no one knew what the Magi were talking about. No help.

Jewish scholars in Jerusalem would have had access to biblical records, including the Book of Daniel. They should have had access to the word of travelers. Yet, they missed this celestial sign.

By their calculations, the comet was due for an encounter with Jupiter, which the ancients considered to be the Messianic star. The comet reappeared in a conjunction with Jupiter, perhaps causing Jupiter to brighten in a nova-like outburst. This reappearance enabled the Magi to find the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

It is important to remember that the Magi did not find Jesus at the time of His birth, but sometime after. The shepherd story, as recorded in Luke's Gospel, occurs on the night of His birth. There is nothing said in Luke's account about a star. But, the Magi came later when the baby Jesus was living in "a house." On the night of His birth, He was born in a stable, not a house. Trips to the Temple for his circumcision and his dedication (after Mary's time of purification) would have required a residency in Bethlehem for two months and perhaps longer. All was quiet at the Temple.

Herod ordered the massacre of males under two years old, so some time must have elapsed between the birth and their auspicious visit. However, Herod is known to history to have died in 3 BC - or so we are told. This all - including the flight to Egypt - had to occur before that time frame,

It so happens that this suggested comet also appeared in 524 BC, according to Chinese star records, about the time of Daniel the Prophet when he was "chief of the astrologers" in Babylon and Persia. One wonders if his calculation of Christ's birth - as suggested by his prophecy of the 70 Weeks - was understood to coincide with this comet's expected encounter with the Messianic star. If so, then this information must have been passed down in a secret oral tradition, of which the Magi were recipients. We believe that Pythagoras was influenced by Daniel's school through Ezekiel.

The Chinese astrologers ascribed prophetic significance to this comet, calling it a "new broom . . . [that] signals the sweeping away of evil." (Humphreys, p. 395).

It must remain for a future discussion the question of whether Daniel created his prophetic timeline based upon the significance of historical events, or whether there was a cosmological chronometer upon which he relied. I have suggested this before in reference to the Charlemagne Event as perhaps the real start of the 1,260 day vision of Daniel. He would have been consulting the star charts of the Babylonians, and considering the strategic influence of that great empire, he would have had diplomatic access to the star charts of the Far East, including the Chinese cited above.

An answer to this question would have bearing on our timeline of 2046 AD, which seems to, at this point, to be based upon historical events (i.e. the Donation of Pepin) and not cosmological ones.

There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel . . . Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. (Numbers 25:17, 19)

Chapter Three: The Star in the Esoteric Tradition

Now the virginity of Mary was hidden from the prince of this world, as was also her offspring, and the death of the Lord; three mysteries of renown, which were wrought in silence by God. How, then, was He manifested to the world? A star shone forth in heaven above all the other stars, the light of which was inexpressible, while its novelty struck men with astonishment. . . Hence every kind of magic was destroyed and every bond of wickedness disappeared; ignorance was removed, and the old kingdom abolished, God Himself being manifested in human form for the renewal of eternal life.

- Ignatius to the Ephesians 19 (ANF, v. 1, p. 57)

As for the Magi, Matthew's Gospel calls them "kings" and some have argued that these were Parthian kings. The Parthian Empire was in its ascendancy during this period and was known to be the mingled descendants of the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel which were deported by the Assyrians as recorded in 2 Kings 17:6

In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

By the 1st Century AD, Josephus would attest to their continued existence, their proliferation, and that they had not lost their ethnic identity:

[T]he ten tribes are beyond Euphrates [in Parthia] till now, are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers.

- "Antiquities of the Jews," XI, V, 2

They still made pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the Feasts and were present on the Day of Pentecost and converted to Christianity in Acts 2:8,9,

And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers of Mesopotamia . . .

Indeed, the Parthian kingdoms, in part, were divided according to the Tribes and even the clans of Israel. To this day, the nation of "Iran" bears the name of one of the clans of Ephraim:

These are the sons of Ephraim . . . the Shuthalhite . . . the Bachrites . . . the Tahanites . . . the Eranites. (Numbers 26:35-36)

The reader should appreciate that "Ephraim" is sometimes named in the Old Testament as the representative tribe of the Northern Kingdom. "Ephraim" stood for the Ten. At least three Parthian kingdoms can be identified with these descendants: the Eranians (Iranians), the Dahanites, and the Bactrians. The Ten Tribes were never lost. Westerners are simply ignorant of history and of Eastern cultures.

If the Magi were indeed Parthian kings, then their homage would have been a formal recognition of Jesus Christ as "the king of kings" - a customary Parthian assignation of their high king found on their coinage.

While the New Testament is primarily concerned with personal salvation and the gathering of the faithful, this "kingdom" message surfaces frequently in its record and must inform us of the collective goal which Christ's message represented: the Desposynic vicegerency of the Earth.

Parthia as the Kingdom People

There is not sufficient acknowledgement among theologians and historians of the role which Parthia had in the formation of Christianity.

The well-sourced works of Steven M. Collins, (e.g. *Parthia, The Forgotten Ancient Superpower And Its Role In Biblical History*, 2003 isbn 0-9725849-2-7 <https://israelite.info>) has attempted to fill the gap.

It will be in the Parthian kingdoms that we will find the Church of the East and the connection of Ignatius and Hero with the migrating tribes which will later invade Europe and destroy the Roman Empire. More in future Peshers.

Christmas/Epiphany, 2024

Obviously, in the light of what has just been said above, the celebration of Epiphany ought to be conflated with Christmas. It is sometimes called "the little Christmas."

The Wise Men did celebrate Christ's birth . . . *at His weaning ceremony*. Epiphany in the Western Church has become a conflation of the Magi, the Lord's Baptism by John, and the wedding of Cana: topics for future peshers.

As we celebrate the season, let us not be pulled to the extremes of its secular enthusiasts on the one hand, or on the other, the contempt which the iconoclasts have for it. Rather, let us simply restore it to its correct doctrinal context and appreciate it as a season of joy.

A Servant of Jesus,

James

Collect for the Day:

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Cambrian Peshier is the pastoral epistle of the Cambrian Episcopal Church of the Grail, a fellowship and abbey adhering to a spiritual tradition from ancient Wales. We use the Authorized Version of the Bible (King James Version) as our default translation and the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church for liturgical guidance. We are not an affiliate of any denomination.

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