

## ***ORIGIN OF THE CONSTELLATIONS AT BABEL: Why Do Diverse Cultures Have Similar Constellations?***

If the Biblical story of the dispersion from Babel were true, peoples from Babel would carry common ideas which might survive today in the cultures they founded after the dispersion. From a biblical point of view, therefore, **any common denominator among diverse modern cultures is a possible indication that all peoples really did once live at a single place identified in the Bible as Babel.**<sup>1</sup>

However, in today's secular culture, nothing is supposed to point back to the true history of the Bible, especially to the creation, the Flood, or the dispersion from Babel. Indications from science and history that the Bible might be accurate are vigorously denied, particularly for the events in Genesis chapters 1 - 11. Thus it is claimed that, "Different cultures do not have more or less the same constellations, beyond what is expected from the few most striking star groups like the Big Dipper and Orion." Or it may be admitted that most cultures recognize more or less the same constellations, followed by the claim, "They do today, dominated by Western culture, but did not in the past."<sup>2</sup>

Though no two cultures share constellations identical in every detail, **nevertheless there are deep and basic similarities that have attracted the attention of secular researchers who give no credence to Genesis 1-11.** Emphasizing the differences cannot erase the similarities, and these similarities are too wide-ranging to be due to coincidence alone. The truth is that **the constellations are due to Nimrod, were common knowledge at Babel, and have since been preserved amongst the world's cultures.**<sup>3,4</sup>

### **I. When Did the Constellations Originate?**

Using the spread of Western culture to account for the cross-cultural similarity of constellations overlooks the existence of similarities in *ancient* constellations. As we will see, similarities in ancient constellations are a difficulty for conventional views of the past. On the other hand, similarities among ancient constellations does not mean that ancient cultures had *identical* constellations. Biblical creationists have recognized these similarities as being connected with the dispersion from Babel.<sup>5</sup>

Even more, the existence of any similarity at all is damaging to the belief that isolated groups of primitive peoples evolved in different localities. In fact the constellations have no objective existence. **The patterns that we call constellations are in the minds of the beholders.** The stars comprising them, with few exceptions, do not even lie on the same plane in space. The stars that seem to be situated on the surface of the "celestial sphere" are actually at various distances from us.<sup>6</sup>

With the thousands of stars visible to the naked eye, the probability of independently evolving cultures arriving at the same constellations *by chance alone* is remote. There is no evolutionary approach that explains how different cultures, supposedly developing in separate parts of the world, managed to *imagine* the same or similar star patterns in the sky. **Conversely, the existence of even a few identical constellations suggests that all of mankind was once**

**congregated at one point from which all ethnic groups dispersed.**

Since the Bible describes such a dispersion scenario, at least some of the constellation similarities among ancient cultures represented shared ideas originating before mankind dispersed. While some post-dispersion borrowing may have occurred among adjacent cultures, **borrowing cannot account for the existence of similarities between ancient Old and New World cultures now separated by the ocean.**

**Even secular authorities place the origin of constellations at a time consistent with the biblical date for Babel.**

Astronomer and historian of science James Jeans wrote: "The earth wobbles as it rotates ... so that the portion of the sky which can be seen from any portion of the earth's surface is continually changing; that part in which the constellations bear ancient names is the part which could be seen from about latitude 40° N., in about the year 2750 B.C., and this is thought to suggest that these constellations were grouped and named by the Babylonians of some such date. They are practically identical with our present-day constellations of the northern sky."<sup>7</sup> **The biblical date for Babel is about 2400 BC,<sup>8</sup> comparable with the 2750 date that Jeans cited.**

Jeans' assessment was not new. In 1913, one writer noted that, "[According to Maunder] there was a tradition that Taurus was the original leader in the zodiac; the equinox, therefore, was probably in Taurus when the constellations of the zodiac were formed, and this was the case between 4000 and 1700 B.C."<sup>9</sup> Maunder himself claimed that "... the [celestial] sphere was mapped out in North latitude 40° and about 2800 years B.C."<sup>10</sup>

**Astronomer Michael Ovenden later confirmed a similar date of origin for the constellations.** He "found the mean of the different dates from the various constellations to be 2800 B.C. ± 300 years ... There can ... be no doubt that the constellations are, individually, oriented symmetrically with respect to the celestial poles of about 2800 B.C."<sup>11</sup>

More recently, astronomer William K. Hartmann concluded that the constellations *as we know them* date from sometime between 2600 ± 800 BC: "Many constellations may be Minoan ... handed down to us from around 2600 B.C., **with still earlier elements incorporated into them. We should not assume that 'it all started with the Greeks.'**"<sup>12</sup>

Much of this range of dates, especially the lower end, is consistent with a tight biblical chronology without "gaps" which places the dispersion from Babel around 2300 BC. Further, Hartmann is not saying that the constellations began with the Minoans, but that they continued the use of "earlier elements." This blending of "earlier elements" into new cultural frameworks explains the modifications which became the differences now commonly taken as proof that the constellations were not shared among the early (post-Babel) cultures.<sup>13</sup>

**Thus the common belief that the constellations as we know them originated with the Greeks cannot be true:** "[The Greek naturalist] Hipparchus was not the originator of the constellations. He had before him the description of the sky known as 'The Sphere of Eudoxus' (Eudoxus of Cnidos, c. 403-

350 B.C.), and a poetic description of the sphere of Eudoxus given by Aratus (c. 315-250 B.C.) in the work known as the *Phaenomenon*. If [2800 BC for] the date of the constellations is correct, then Aratus and Hipparchus lie about half-way between us and the constellation-makers, and Hipparchus will be trying to fit what he sees with descriptions in the sphere of Eudoxus that are really appropriate to a situation 2500 years before his time."<sup>14</sup>

Maunder likewise observed, "... the correspondence between the Greek and Indian planispheres [sky maps] shows that one of them was copied from the other, or both from the same original model."<sup>15</sup>

## II. Constellation Similarities Are Not Coincidence

A number of historians has asserted that the very earliest cultures, those we would recognize as early post-dispersion peoples, did in fact employ the same constellations.

### Differences developed, but similarities remained.

For example, historian Kenneth Brecher pointed out that, "The Babylonians identify [Sirius] as part of a constellation which they describe as a bow and arrow. The Chinese independently described a bow and arrow in the sky, but they used different stars for their construction. For them, Sirius is part of the image at which the arrow is shooting; and curiously, the image at which that arrow is shooting is a dog. In Western tradition, Sirius is part of the constellation Canis Major, the Big Dog. **It is remarkable that the same images - dogs, bows and arrows - occur in the cosmographies of different cultures;** after all, if you look at the sky, you see only points of light on a dark field. ... [This can be taken] as an indication that **the astronomical myths of China and Mesopotamia derive from a common origin.**"<sup>16</sup>

Historians Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend have also noted that the Orion motif is "common to the spheres of Mesopotamia, Egypt and China." Further, "there is strong circumstantial evidence of this bow and arrow in Mexico also: the bow of the Chichimeca, the Dog-people."<sup>17</sup> Orion with modifications was also recognized in ancient Iran and India,<sup>18</sup> but modification is what one would expect for diffusing legends. Orion was also familiar to the ancient Norwegians,<sup>19</sup> and old Norse rock art depicted Orion.<sup>20</sup>

The Pleiades were another constellation known worldwide in ancient times, even among Australian aborigines: "In Aboriginal mythology there are many stories of the Pleiades: they are given female attributes and are known as seven sisters. **In this there is a pronounced similarity to legends from all over the world.**"<sup>21</sup>

The Pleiades' renown is not due to their prominence in the heavens: "These stars are apparently only six (for the seventh is sometimes so dim as to be invisible), yet all the world over, among civilized and savage races, in Europe, in India, China, Japan, America, and Africa, this diminutive group is not merely regarded as seven stars, but what is still more surprising, as 'The Seven Stars,' though the far brighter seven stars of the Great Bear might seem to deserve the title."<sup>22</sup>

The Great Bear was also known worldwide in antiquity: "The star group in Ursa Major was seen as a bear in Europe, Asia, North America, and even ancient Egypt, where

there are no bears ... the bear identification may go all the way back to ice-age Euro-Asia, from where it spread."<sup>23</sup> Significantly, "ice-age Euro-Asia" would have been the location of Babel, and would have existed at the time indicated by biblical chronology for Babel.

As mentioned earlier, Maunder estimated that the latitude of the constellation makers was 40° north. A more recent investigation placed the latitude slightly farther south, at approximately 30° to 38° north.<sup>24</sup> The latitude of Babylon, 32½° north, is within this range.<sup>25</sup>

A significant fact about the constellations is that the oldest ones fill only the northern sky and are absent in an empty zone surrounding the south celestial pole.<sup>26</sup> This is consistent with the existence of Babel in the northern hemisphere, together with the fact that dispersing cultures did not reach the extremities of the southern hemisphere until relatively recently.

## III. The Constellations: Remembrance of Noah's Flood?

There is a view that God mapped out the constellations as a kind of primeval revelation before man had the Bible.<sup>28</sup> An even older view of the constellations is that they were a device of Nimrod at Babel to lead mankind away from God, or at least they reflect the corrupted mythologies that mankind fell into at Babel and afterward.<sup>29</sup> In between these extreme views is a middle view that **constellations are corrupted memories of significant events happening early in history.**

The most traumatic such event was the global Flood of Noah, and one of the most expansive constellations is "the large constellation of Arago the Ship, often shown in early representations [of the constellations] as though atop a mountain. Coming from the ship is the Centaur, a man-animal, sacrificing a Beast upon the Altar. We see, too, the Water-snake (Hydra) with a Raven (Corvus) eating its flesh. **There can be no doubt that here we have, in imagination pictured in the sky, a version of the story of Noah and the Flood.** The picture is complete with the Milky Way seeming to rise as smoke from the Altar.

"Consider the following quotation, with which we are all familiar: 'And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings at the altar. ... And God said, "This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in a cloud, and it shall be a token of a covenant between me and the Earth".' The bow of Sagittarius is fixed pointing to one of the most obvious rifts, or clouds, in the Milky Way. Of course, this association of the Southern constellations with the flood story that occurs in Genesis, and in the Babylonian Book of Gilgamesh, is no new insight, for when the stars left vacant by changing the course of Eridanus [due to precession] were later given a name, Columba the Dove was chosen [i.e., the "Dove" motif was preserved even as the star patterns in the heavens changed over the centuries because of precession]. ...

"Did the constellations inspire the myth [of the Flood] or did the myth inspire the constellations? I am sure that the latter was the case. Indeed, what better aid to memory of the pattern of the stars by uneducated sailors could there be than to

associate the star-patterns with the stories known to the sailors from their childhood, as a pictorial mnemonic."<sup>30</sup>

**Arago is not the only stellar reminder of the Flood,** for "from the Lake Eyre region [Australia] there is a myth that links [the Pleiades, known as the Seven Sisters] with a flood ..."<sup>31</sup> In this myth, "the ancestor figure who tried to capture one of them was prevented by a great flood."<sup>32</sup>

**By association with the Flood, the Pleiades became associated with the giving of rain,** even though the aborigines were not farmers and therefore had no practical reason to monitor rainfall. "Primitive peoples have commonly timed the various operations of the agricultural year by operation of [the Pleiades'] heliacal setting or rising. ... Great attention has also been given to these stars by savages in the Southern Hemisphere *who do not till the ground*. ... Now, amongst the rudest of savages known to us are the Australian aborigines who never practised agriculture. Yet they dance to gain the favour of the Pleiades, which they believe is the giver of rain."<sup>33</sup>

There is also a Jewish legend that links the Pleiades with the Flood: "The upper waters rushed through the space left when God removed two stars out of the constellation Pleiades."<sup>34</sup> **How the Pleiades became connected with the Flood is not known, but the Pleiades are another component of legends worldwide that testify to the reality of Noah's Flood.**

#### IV. Conclusion

The cultures of today emanated from a single point which the Bible identifies as Babel. Constellation similarities are an evidence of this fact. The question has been asked, "[I]s there not a good deal of evidence to show that the constellations grew up gradually in Babylonia, and approximated more and more nearly to those we know as time approached the age of Greek astronomy?"<sup>27</sup> The answer is a resounding Yes!

**Notes.** Bolding in quotations is added.

**1** A common denominator crossing many cultures past and present is the prevalence of legends about the creation, the Flood, and the dispersion from Babel itself. See J. Henry, "Legends of the Creation, Flood and Babel," <creationconcepts.org>, 2005; and J. Henry, "More Legends of the Creation, Flood and Babel," <creationconcepts.org>, 2006.

**2** These statements were made to the author in correspondence, from a missionary in Taiwan, and from an amateur astronomer in the United States. They were objecting to a statement in *The Astronomy Book* (J.F. Henry, Master Books, 1999, pp. 24-25) which reads, "... most cultures recognize more or less the same constellations."

**3** There has long been the idea that God defined the constellations as a pre-biblical revelation, a so-called "gospel in the stars." See the *Appendix, "Is the Gospel in the Stars?"*

**4** Besides the "gospel in the stars" idea, other "Christian myths" to avoid include (1) the computer that jammed when it "found" Joshua's long day (computers are only machines; how could it "know" when to jam?; see "Have NASA computers Really Proven Joshua's 'Long Day'?", <christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-a001.html>, 1997; Robert C.

Newman, "Joshua's Long Day and the NASA Computers: Is the Story True?," <reasons.org/resources/apologetics/joshualongday.shtml>, 1997); (2) the Soviet drilling project terminated when the operators heard the screams of demons in hell (a story untraceable to its ultimate source but helped along by a letter from a Norwegian school teacher who admitted that he "fabricated"; see Rich Buhler, "Scientists Discover Hell in Siberia," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 30 no. ??, July 16, 1990, p. 29; *Biblical Archeology Review* recounted this story tongue-in-cheek; see "Not Frozen Over – Hell Found Under Siberia: Screams Scare Scientists," *BAR*, Vol. 26 no. 6, November/December 1990, p. 6); and (3) Darwin's deathbed conversion (a posthumous story due to his wife; see Wilbert H. Rusch, John W. Klotz, and Emmett L. Williams (editor), *Did Charles Darwin Become a Christian?*, Creation Research Society, 1988, pp. 1-38).

**5** Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Institute for Creation Research, 1976, p. 278.

**6** "The stars of a constellation have no connection one with another apart from the fact that they happen to lie in approximately similar directions as seen from earth. A constellation is therefore an arbitrary or conventional grouping of stars. Indeed, the Chinese, for example, divided the sky up into groups different from those familiar to us" (Michael W. Ovenden, "The Origin of Constellations," *The Philosophical Journal*, Vol. 3, July 1966, p. 1).

**An exception is the three stars in Orion's belt.** Orion's belt has the three bright stars zeta Orionis (Alnitak), epsilon Orionis (Alnilam), and delta Orionis (Mintaka). These three stars are at the same distance from earth (1,500 light-years), so they lie in the very plane in which they appear to be situated. **Perhaps that is why, in Job 38:31, God asks Job, "Canst thou ... loose the bands of Orion?"** These three stars are also remarkably similar in other ways (the same size, about 20 times larger than the sun; and similar surface temperatures, about 50,000 degrees Celsius or somewhat higher). The Pleiades, also mentioned in Job 38:31, are "a physically related group of stars rather than any chance alignment" ("Pleiades Star Cluster," <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleiades>, April 22, 2007).

**7** James Jeans, *The Story of Physical Science*, Cambridge, 1951, p. 8.

**8** J. Henry, "What Is the Age of the Universe?," <creationconcepts.org>, 2001.

**9** M.A. Evershed, "The Origin of the Constellations," *Observatory*, Vol. 36, April 1913, p. 179.

**10** E. Walter Maunder, "The Zodiac Explained," *Observatory*, Vol. 21, December 1898, p. 441.

**11** Ovenden, p. 6.

**12** William K. Hartmann, *Astronomy*, Wadsworth, 1991, p. 15.

**13** Evershed (p. 181), for example, suggested that **the Assyrians imposed major modifications on the original constellations:** "Is it not possible that in the golden age of Assyrian astronomy, which began in the 8th century B.C., many traditional forms were gathered together, and the whole sphere definitely mapped out; while at the same time, in the new calendar which was introduced under Nabonassar, the first month for the first time connected with the invisible group of Aries, in which the Sun was known to be, instead of with the group Taurus which appeared after his [the sun's] setting in the west?"

However, **the Assyrians cannot be considered the originators of the constellations**, even though this has been claimed: "I have found 172 useful constraints for Eudoxus' lore [leading to the following conclusion]. ... (1) All lore reported by Eudoxus were based on observations from the year  $1130 \pm 80$  BC and at a latitude of  $36.0 \pm 0.9$  degrees north. (2) My derived date and latitude correspond only to the peak of the Assyrian culture. (3) The typical accuracy of the lore is 4-8 degrees even though 1 degree accuracy is easy to be gotten by primitive methods. (4) About half the rise/set pairs [of recorded star positions] recorded in the Mesopotamian MUL.APIN tablets are also given in Eudoxus' lore. (5) The MUL.APIN tablets have been independently determined to be based on observations from roughly 1000 BC at a latitude of 36 degrees north ... I conclude that both Eudoxus' lore and MUL.APIN were derived from the same old Assyrian observations" (B.E Schaefer, "The Latitude and Epoch for the Origin of the Astronomical Lore of Eudoxus," American Astronomical Society Meeting 203, #35.01, December, 2003, <adswww.harvard.edu>, July 8, 2004).

The low accuracy Schaefer perceives for the latitude the lore implies also implies a low accuracy in the *time* inferred from the lore. Having focused on the MUL.APIN tablets as supplying the time frame for the lore, Schaefer inferred the latitude necessary from the lore to give him the time frame he expected, then concluded that the time frame matched the time of Assyria's cultural dominance. His conclusion that the MUL.APIN tablets and Eudoxus derive from the same source is true, except that the ultimate source dates from c. 2800 BC (a date which should be revised downward by several centuries, as noted below), so could not have been Assyria.

**Nor could the Romans via Ptolemy have given us the constellations:** "... Ptolemy's catalogue bears witness to a constellation scheme that originated and *had received its completion* before his day" (E. Walter Maunder, "The Origin of the Constellations," *Observatory*, Vol. 36, April 1913, p. 330).

14 Ovenden, p. 8.

15 Maunder, p. 439.

16 Kenneth Brecher, "Sirius Enigmas," *Astronomy of the Ancients*, K. Brecher and Michael Feirtag (editors), MIT, 1979, p. 91.

17 Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill*, Gambit, 1969, p. 216.

18 De Santillana and von Dechend, p. 358.

19 Richard Hinckley Allen, *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning*, Dover, 1963; originally published as *Star-Names and Their Meanings*, G.E. Stechert, 1899, p. 313.

20 M. Schoemfeld, "Prehistoric Astronomy," *Scientific American*, Vol. 3, 1921, pp. 301-303; in William R. Corliss (editor), *Ancient Man: A Handbook of Puzzling Artifacts*, Sourcebook Project, 1978, pp. 557-559.

21 J.E. Aitchison, "The Pleiades in Aboriginal Mythology," *SIS Workshop*, Vol. 5 no. 3, September 1983; in Ian Tresman (editor), *Catastrophism!: Man, Myth and Mayhem in Ancient History and the Sciences*, CD-ROM version 1.41, Knowledge Computing (33 Reginald Street, Derby DE23 8FR, UK), May 2004. The Nazca Indians of Peru recognized the Pleiades (Evan Hadingham, *Lines to the Mountain Gods*, University of Oklahoma, 1988, p. 104).

22 Joseph Lockyer, "The Origin of the Year," *Nature*, Vol. 45, March 24, 1892, pp. 487-490. See also R.G. Haliburton, "Orientation of Temples by the Pleiades," *Nature*, Vol. 48, October 12, 1883, pp. 566-567.

23 Hartmann, p. 14.

24 "... [I]f we take the date to be 2800 B.B.  $\pm$  300 years, the observers' latitude becomes  $34^\circ \pm 4^\circ$  ... [On the other hand, a statistical analysis of star positions inferred from various statements in Aratus yields an estimate for the date and latitude of] 2600 B.C.  $\pm$  800 years,  $36^\circ\text{N} \pm 1\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ " (Ovenden, pp. 11, 12).

25 "Babylon," <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon>, April 27, 2007.

26 Hartmann, p. 14; Owen Gingerich, "On the Origin of the Zodiac," *Sky & Telescope*, Vol. 67 no. 3, March 1984, p. 218.

27 Evershed, p. 181. In contradiction, however, Ovenden (p. 15) asserted, "There are four main contenders for the title of constellation-makers. The credit is often given to the Babylonians, but their seafaring would have been in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, too far south for the latitude of the constellation makers [but Babel slightly south of Baghdad was at about  $32^\circ$  north, close to Ovenden's estimated latitude range for these people]. The Egyptians sailed in the Mediterranean, but much of their seafaring also would have been in more southern waters. The Phoenicians were great traders, with a great centre at Byblus, latitude about  $34^\circ$  (consistent with our determined latitude). ... But I would like to put forward the claims of the Minoans, based on Crete, who were out in the Mediterranean in strength by the beginning of the third millennium B.C."

**Hartmann's reservation about naming the Minoans as the constellation-makers has been mentioned.** Further, Ovenden's proposals have a chronological problem. **The chronologies of his four candidates -- and of other ancient chronologies tied to conventional Egyptian chronology -- are too long by as much as a millennium** (J. Henry, "Fallacies of Radiometric Dating," Appendix A, "The Sothic Cycle and Egyptian Chronology," <creationconcepts.org>, 2007). Once the chronologies are scaled down, as they ought to be, by shrinking the Egyptian chronology appropriately, and by subtracting out the years of the non-existent "dark ages" from the Minoan and Greek chronologies, these cultures date not from c. 2500 BC, but from closer to 1500 BC, a date roughly a millennium too young to match the date of the constellation-makers.

28 See the *Appendix, "Is the Gospel in the Stars?"*

29 Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons: or the Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife*, Loizeax Brothers, 1959, p. 13. Hislop began this work in 1853 in the form of a pamphlet; it was first published as a book in 1919 ("The Two Babylons," <en.wikipedia.org/The\_Two\_Babylons>, April 24, 2007). Ralph Woodrow (*Babylon Mystery Religion*, Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1966) once advocated Hislop's ideas. But in *The Babylonian Connection?* (Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1997, pp. 23-28), Woodrow claimed that some of Hislop's conclusions were undocumented speculation. However, one should not swing from Hislop's assertion that nearly *all* cultural practices began at Babel to the opposite claim that virtually *nothing* began at Babel (Woodrow, 1997, p. 24). In fact, *History Begins at Sumer* is the title of a book by historian Samuel Noah Kramer (Doubleday Anchor, 1959). Sumer was the biblical Shinar (Genesis 11:1), the location of Babel, and the center of the first civilization after the Flood. **Kramer asserted that many cultural practices and patterns did in fact first appear in the Sumer of 2800 BC (p. 29).**

30 Ovenden, pp. 16-17.

31 Aitchison.

32 Jennifer Isaacs (editor), *Australian Dreaming*, Aboriginal Arts

33 James G. Frazier, *The Golden Bough*, Macmillan, London, 1955, p. 307, reprint of 1922 edition; in Atchison.

34 Louis Ginzberg, Henrietta Szold (translator), *Legends of the Jews*, Vol. 1, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968, p. 162; reprint of 1909 edition.

#### APPENDIX: IS THE GOSPEL IN THE STARS?

The gospel-in-the-stars concept is the idea that God originally defined the constellations as a primeval revelation preceding the giving of the written Word. The constellations were intended to tell the gospel story, but eventually the meaning of the constellations was corrupted into astrology; now we have God's revelation in His Word, a "more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19).

Though God made the stars (Genesis 1:16), and though the Bible mentions various constellations and groups of stars called "asterisms," e.g., the Pleiades (see Table 1), the Bible nowhere claims that God designed the constellations for a revelatory purpose. **Biblical references to constellations merely assert that God, not pagan deities, controls the stars in the constellations.** Biblical references to constellations are therefore a rebuttal of ancient and modern astrology, not proof of a "gospel in the stars."

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**Table 1. Constellations and Asterisms in the Bible**

Job 9:9	"[God] maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south [Scorpio?]"
Job 26:13	"...[God's] hand hath formed the crooked serpent [Serpens]"
Job 38:31-32	"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth [the Zodiac] in his season? Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons [Bootes and Coma Berenices?]"
2 Kings 23:5	"constellations" (NASV), same as Mazzaroth
Isaiah 13:10	"constellations"
Isaiah 27:1	"...that crooked serpent," an allusion to Serpens
Amos 5:8	"the seven stars," an allusion to the Seven Sisters; and Orion

Reference: Allen, p. 554.

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In fact God has a name for each star: "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names" (Psalm 147:4). Isaiah 40:26 links God's ability to create and name each star with His ability to control them: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, **that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names of the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.**" Isaiah 40:26 is a strong assertion that God controls the heavens, which means that God, not the heavens,

controls our lives. This assertion remains relevant today, for astrology was and still is a common belief. In antiquity, "... astrology was based on the doctrine that the outer spheres of the universe influenced the inner. ... This conception coloured all departments of thought and embedded itself deeply in speech. The scheme was conceived under an evil star', 'His fortune is in the ascendant', 'The seventh heaven of delight', 'He has gone to a higher sphere', 'The British sphere of influence', 'Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades' (Job XXXViii. 31), 'He has the influenza' are such cases" (Charles Singer, *A Short History of Scientific Ideas to 1900*, Oxford, 1959, p. 215).

The modern belief in the constellations as gospel revelation began with the publication in the 1800s of the book *Mazzaroth: or, the Constellations* by Frances Rolleston (Rivingtons, London, 1862, <philologos.org/\_eb-mazzaroth/>; reprinted 1882). Rolleston cited "proof texts" without context but in so doing made an argument which was quite popular. Rolleston's assertion was that "the signs [in the zodiac] were intended to symbolize prophecy, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures" (Rolleston, part 1, p. 7).

Subsequent books teaching a gospel in the stars trace back to Rolleston's *Mazzaroth*. For example, Joseph R. Seiss (*The Gospel in the Stars*, E. Claxton, Philadelphia, 1882; reprinted 1972, Kregel, p. 6) acknowledged: "[F]rom [Rolleston's] tables and references the writer of these Lectures was helped to some of his best information." E.W. Bullinger (*The Witness of the Stars*, Lamp Press, London, 1954, p. iii) likewise described his debt to Rolleston: "Some years ago it was my privilege to enjoy the acquaintance of Miss Frances Rolleston, of Keswick, and to carry on a correspondence with her with respect to her work, *Mazzaroth: or, the Constellations*. **She was the first to create an interest in this important subject.**" Kenneth C. Fleming (*God's Voice in the Stars*, Loizeaux, 1981, p. 143) cited Rolleston, Seiss, and Bullinger in a conceptual lineage spanning more than a century, as did Henry Morris (*Many Infallible Proofs*, Creation-Life, 1974, p. 343).

Christians gravitated to Rolleston's argument because it seemed to lend historical veracity to the early chapters of Genesis. **But similarities among the constellations provide intriguing evidence of biblical history without the need of resorting to Rolleston's "gospel in the stars" idea.** Rolleston and Seiss both advanced the claim of this paper, that the constellations of diverse cultures show basic similarities, implying that all humanity once lived at a single site. Rolleston, for example, noted that "the Egyptian and Chaldean signs were the same as everywhere else, but differently named" (part 2, p. 7).

Seiss maintained that he came to the gospel-in-the-stars concept by encountering skeptical polemical works attempting "to throw contempt on Christianity as a mere accommodation of certain old mythic ideas common to all primitive peoples," but rather than doubting Christianity, Seiss began noticing the "striking correspondence between [the ancient myths] and the subsequent Scriptural story of Christ and salvation" (p. 6). The skeptics had exploited the cultural

Table 2. Names of the 24 Brightest Stars According to Fleming<sup>1</sup>

Star	Bayer Nomenclature	Meaning of Traditional Name <sup>1</sup>	Bible Theme <sup>1</sup>	Ref. <sup>2</sup>
1. Sirius	α Canis Majoris	Prince	Isa. 9:6	122
2. Canopus	α Carinae	Possession of Him Who Comes	Isa. 60:4-9	68
3. Rigil Kent <sup>3</sup>	α Centauri	The Heretofore and Hereafter	Rev. 1:8	152
4. Vega <sup>4</sup>	α Lyrae	He Shall Be Exalted	Isa. 52:13	285
5. Capella	α Aurigae	She Goat	Ezek. 37:22-24	86
6. Arcturus	α Bootis	He Comes	Ps. 96:13	99
7. Rigel	β Orionis	The Foot That Crushes	Gen. 3:15	312
8. Procyon	α Canis Minoris	The Redeemer	Isa. 59:19-20	134
9. Achernar	α Eridani	After Part of the River (of Fire)	Nah. 1:5-6	217
10. Altair <sup>5</sup>	α Aquilae	The Wounded	Ps. 38:2, 10	60
11. Hadar <sup>6</sup>	β Centauri	unknown		154
12. Acrux <sup>7</sup>	α Crux	unknown		191
13. Betelgeuse	α Orionis	Coming of the Branch	Isa. 4:2, Mic. 3:1-2	311
14. Aldebaran <sup>8</sup>	α Tauri	The Governor	Ps. 22:28, Zech. 9:7	233
15. Pollux <sup>9</sup>	β Geminorum	He Who Comes to Suffer	Ps. 22	233
16. Spica	α Virginis	The Branch	Zech. 3:8, 6:12	466
17. Antares	α Scorpii	Wounding	Isa. 53:5, Zech. 13:6	365
18. Fomulhaut	α Piscis Austrinus	Mouth of the Fish		345
19. Deneb	α Cygni	The Judge	Ps. 9:8	259
20. Regulus <sup>10</sup>	α Leo	Treading Underfoot	Isa. 63:3, Gen. 3:15	256
21. Mimosa <sup>11</sup>	β Crux	unknown		
22. Castor <sup>12</sup>	α Geminorum	Ruler, Judge	Deut. 18:15	230
23. Alioth	ε Ursa Majoris	Goat, Sin Offering	Lev. 16:15, 27	440
24. Bellatrix	γ Orionis	Swiftly Destroyed	Ezek. 28:18	313

<sup>1</sup>Fleming, pp. 21-22. <sup>2</sup>Pages cited in Allen. <sup>3</sup>In Fleming (p. 21), Rigil Kentaurus is Toliman. <sup>4</sup>Vega and Capella are actually 5th and 6th; Arcturus is 4th (Christine Kornberg, "The Brightest Stars," <maa.mhn.de/StarDate/bright\_stars.html>, November 9, 1998). <sup>5</sup>Altair is actually 12th, after Betelgeuse and Hadar (Kornberg). <sup>6</sup>In Fleming (p. 21), Hadar is Agena. <sup>7</sup>Acrux is actually 24th (Kornberg). <sup>8</sup>Aldebaran, 14th, is actually preceded by HD 213468 (Kornberg), not listed in Fleming. <sup>9</sup>Pollux, Spica and Antares are actually 17th, 15th and 16th, respectively (Kornberg). <sup>10</sup>Regulus is actually 21st and Mimosa is 20th (Kornberg). <sup>11</sup>In Fleming (p. 22), Mimosa is B-Crux. <sup>12</sup>Castor is actually 25th, Alioth 33rd, and Bellatrix 28th (Kornberg).

similarities among the constellations as evidence that Christian beliefs were merely primitive archetypes. With input from Rolleston, Seiss interpreted these archetypes as evidence that the stars carried an ancient gospel message visible to all.

However, the remembrance, in legendary form, of *historical* events such as the Flood also accounts for these so-called "archetypes." Images of these "archetypes" were indeed imposed on star patterns. That is the claim of this paper. **Thus the similarities in constellations reflect the reality of historical events affecting all mankind rather than a supposed prophecy in the stars.**

**Was there ever a need for a gospel in the stars? A careful reading of the Bible suggests not,** for even among the antediluvians Enoch (Genesis 5:21-24) "prophesied ... saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints" (Jude 14-15). And long before this, Genesis 3:15 – the so-called "proto-evangelium" -- records that God, speaking to Adam and Eve, had prophesied the coming of His Son to earth.

Gospel-in-the-stars advocates also infer from star names that the stars must have been primeval revelation. Some

of the brightest stars, for example, for example, have names reminiscent of biblical themes (Fleming, pp. 21-22; see Table 2). **However, the Bible nowhere reveals the name that God has given to each star, so there is no guarantee that the traditional star names preserve elements of divine nomenclature.** Mankind's ancient awareness of special revelation as mentioned in Genesis 3:15 and Jude 14-15, along with mankind's memories of ancient historical "archetypes," however, explains the similarity between star names and biblical themes.

**Further, the primeval meaning of many star names is uncertain at best;** " 'etymology has full play with a word which has not traveled beyond astronomical language' – a statement ... applicable to very many ... star names" (Allen, p. 313). **By stretching uncertain meanings, the appearance of agreement can be produced between the supposed ancient meanings and biblical themes.** In addition, the errors in Fleming's list of star brightness order, noted at the bottom of Table 2, do not add credibility to the supposed "revelatory" significance that he attributes to each star name.