

## BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE MAGI

Allison, Dale C. "What Was the Star that Guided the Magi?." *Bible Review*. 1993, 9(6): 20–24, 63.  
Abstract—In antiquity stars were thought to be living beings, sometimes identified with angels (e.g. in Job 38:7). Angels in the Bible and other ancient literature have many star-like qualities: they serve as guides, they are bright, they descend from heaven to earth. It is best to identify the star in the birth narrative as an angel.

Bakon, Shimon "Witchcraft in the Bible." *Dor Le Dor*. 1987, 15(4): 234–243

Abstract—Reviews the biblical injunctions against witchcraft. One reason was to have the prophet replace the magi. The medieval Christian opposition to witchcraft was because of a war against Satan.

Baskin, J. R. "ORIGEN ON BALAAM: THE DILEMMA OF THE UNWORTHY PROPHET." *Vigiliae Christianae*. 1983, 37(1): 22–35

Abstract—Balaam was a perplexing figure for patristic exegetes: his prediction of the star (Num 24:17) was widely read as foretelling the Incarnation and secured him a place among the Gentile prophets and established him as a founder of the Magi; yet his misdeeds (Num 25; 31:16) raised serious questions about his worthiness to deliver God's word. Origen reflected this ambiguity. Since for Origen the true prophet collaborates in the delivery of the divine message, he could not number Balaam among the prophets. The prophetic message, not the messenger, was important; yet the unworthy Balaam found redemption.

Bertram, Robert W. "AN EPIPHANY CROSSING—PROGRAMMING MATTHEW 2:1–12 FOR READERS TODAY." *Currents in Theology and Mission*. 1980, 7(6): 328–336

Abstract—An Epiphany crossing (that is, a systematician's reading) of the story of the wise men. It exposes that kind of authority-seeking in us that subjects others to our control until we finally want to exclude or even purge them. God let us have our own way in this, thus coming under his judgment. But he also sees us through thanks to Jesus, who made such a difference to God because of his compassion for the strays. Identifying with his friends, the sinners, cost Jesus his life, and that is the basis of his new-style authority. The magi then, and we now, are moved by him to believe and to redeploy the old quest for authority, not to be served but to serve.

Charlesworth, James M. "RYLANDS SYRIAC MS. 44 AND A NEW ADDITION TO THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA: THE TREATISE OF SHEM, DISCUSSED AND TRANSLATED." *Bulletin John Rylands Library*. 1978, 60(2): 376–403

Abstract—Fifteenth century ms. 44 in the John Rylands Library, a collection of astrological texts, contains the only extant copy of a document attributed to Noah's son, Shem. The treatise of Shem describes the characteristics of the year according to the house of the zodiac in which it begins. Considers its original language to be Hebrew or Aramaic, its date of composition to be shortly after 31 BC, its author an Alexandrian Jew in Egypt. Shows a significant Jewish response to the unexpected defeat of Antony and Cleopatra. Adds to our perception of intertestamental Judaism's theological variety. Shows that ancient Jewish interest in astrology was not merely a Qumranite aberration. Discusses its implications for understanding the Magi and the Christmas star. Presents a new translation of the Treatise of Shem with notes.

Corbett, Cecil "An Indian Christmas." *Reformed Liturgy and Music*. 1988, 22(3): 144–145

Abstract—American Indians of the Southwest make clay figures of Mary, Joseph, the Child, the magi, and the shepherds for gifts while they tell again the ancient Christmas story. First appeared in *Indian Highways*, 1983, 190:2. "Epiphany: Studying the Scriptures." *Liturgy*. 1991, 9(3): 45–50.

CROSSAN, COMINIC M. "STRUCTURE AND THEOLOGY OF MT. 1.18–2.23." *Cahiers de Josephologie*. 1968, 16(1): 119–135

Abstract—The Messianic and Mosaic themes are exploited; the latter is based not so much on the Bible as on the Midrashim. The Magi episode, which is part of the Mosaic theme, is intended to show that Jesus is a new and universal Moses.

DENIS, ALBERT "L'ADORATION DES MAGES VUE PAR S. MATTHIEU (The Adoration of the Magi as Seen by Matthew)." *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*. 1960, 82: 32–39

Abstract—Chapter II of Saint Matthew describes the Magi. The fact that it was addressed to the Christians of Palestine explains much. Insight can be gathered through the use made of citations from the Old Testament: References to the Bethlehem of David, to the Exodus, to the Prophets are handled in the light of the salvation of the Gentiles.

Derrett, J. Duncan M. "FURTHER LIGHT ON THE NARRATIVES OF THE NATIVITY." *Novum Testamentum*. 1975, 17(2): 81–108

Abstract—Important extraneous material has been neglected which sheds light on Luke's reference to the census of Augustus and Matthew's concern with the magi. The coincidence of a census and the birth of the Messiah is based upon midrashim on Micah 5:1–4 and Ps. 87. The journey to Bethlehem is intelligible against the Egyptian pattern of taxation: a citizen of a metropolis paid only half of the poll-tax, even if he lived in one of the villages. Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to secure this reduction for himself and his unborn child. Matthew's account of the magi reflects a complex of material clustering around the theme of the search for wisdom in the remote East. Important in this regard is the Alexander-romance, which influenced tales of the birth of Abraham and Moses. Matthew shows that Jesus is greater than Moses, Abraham, and Alexander.

EGAN, ANSELM. "THE EUCHARIST AND THE CHRISTMAS LITURGY." *Dominicana*. 1960, 45: 302–305

Abstract—Christmas is the manifestation of God's love to the shepherds, to the Magi and to the Jews This mystery of the nativity of the Godman is extended to our times by the Eucharist.

GERSHEVITCH, ILYA "ZOROASTER'S OWN CONTRIBUTION." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. 1964, 23: 12–38

Abstract—The author seeks to explain the origins of: (1) Zarathustrianism, the original monotheistic doctrine of the prophet represented in the 6th-century BC. Gathas; (2) Zarathustricism, the polytheism of the Later Avesta from the 5th century BC; and (3) Zoroastrianism the dualistic orthodoxy known to the Greeks in the 4th century BC and transmitted to the present. The second may originate from the conversion of eclectic Magi to

Zoroaster's religion, and the last from the misinterpretation of the Gathas by the Magi.

Hultgard, Anders. "Prêtres juifs et mages zoroastriens. Influences religieuses à l'époque hellénistique (Jewish and Zoroastrian Magi: Religious Influences in the Hellenistic Era)." *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuse*. 1988, 68(4): 415–428

Abstract—The problem of relationships between Iran and Judaism in the Hellenistic era is treated from a sociological angle. The most influential group in society, both in Palestine and Iran, was the priestly caste. Notes a number of likenesses in both the beliefs and practices of magi and Jewish priests. These likenesses may be explained as the consequence of a convergence of religious and political interests which helped the spread of religious ideas by the magi. (French)

Humphreys, Colin J. "The Star of Bethlehem, a Comet in 5 BC and the Date of Christ's Birth." *Tyndale Bulletin*. 1992, 43(1): 31–56.

Abstract—Characteristics of the star of Bethlehem—newly appeared, traveled slowly, stood over Bethlehem—point to one astronomical object: a comet. The Magi originally saw the comet in the east in the morning. As they traveled (1–2 months) the comet moved to the south. It appeared ahead as they traveled and appeared to stand over Bethlehem with a near vertical tail. To 'stand over' is uniquely applied in ancient literature to a comet. From Chinese records, three comets are possible candidates: 12 BC, 5 BC, and 4 BC. The comet of 5 BC may be the star of Bethlehem. Three astronomical events cause the Magi to set off: a triple conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Pisces (7 BC); a massing of Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter (6 BC); the comet of 5 BC. Evidence suggests that the birth of Christ was in Spring (9 March–4 May) 5 BC.

Olsen, Glenn W. "REFERENCE TO THE ECCLESIA PRIMITIVA IN EIGHTH CENTURY IRISH GOSPEL EXEGESIS." *Thought: A Review of Culture and Idea*. 1979, 54(214): 303–312

Abstract—The "ecclesia primitiva" in the anonymous commentaries from the school of Salzburg in the 8th cent. is identified with the Holy Family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus; Mary alone; or the Holy Family and the Magi. It is the particular association of the primitive church with the Jewish beginnings of Christianity which is the most distinctive element of these passages.

PHILIBERT, PAUL. "JOURNEY TO CHRIST." *Dominicana*. 1980, 45: 285–289

Abstract—Can we help but be puzzled that while Scribes and Pharisees never were to accept Christ, the Magi undertook a journey involving great expense and much hardship to pay homage to the Messiah of the nation of Israel. It would be eternally embarrassing to us if we were to let these pagan wise men pass us on the road as we remained unmoved in self-sufficiency and unbelief. We must be grateful for the assurance they give us of the exceedingly great joy which comes from meeting God incarnate face to face.

Pratt, William. "To Doubt Yet Be Devout: The Lesson of the Later Eliot." *Soundings*. 1992, 75(4): 571–586.

Abstract—Radical skepticism and cynicism leading toward total despair were the messages of *The Waste Land*. Eliot reversed himself with *Journey of the Magi* (1927), *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and the *Four Quartets* (1935–1942), reuniting poetry and belief, restoring the traditional link between them to become the major Christian poet of the 20th cent. expressing the possibility

of the renewal of traditional, orthodox Christian faith. Each of these poems expresses a new phase of his spiritual evolution. Eliot may have resolved the doubt of his early poems into the devout faith of his later poems, but to doubt was public, a widely shared feeling of the 20th cent., whereas to be devout was to be alone with oneself—and perhaps with God.

Rahmani, L. Y. “THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI ON TWO SIXTH-CENTURY CE EULOGIA TOKENS.” *Israel Exploration Journal*. 1979, 29(1): 34–36

Abstract—Presents two eulogiae (devotional clay tokens fashioned in the 6th cent. AD and later at Holy Places and given to pilgrims as souvenirs) acquired some years ago in Istanbul, apparently originating from the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Schulze, Wilhelm August “ZUR GESCHICHTE DER AUSLEGUNG VON MATTH. 2, 1–12 (On the History of the Interpretation of Matthew 2:1–12).” *Theologische Zeitschrift*. 1975, 31(3): 150–160

Abstract—Traces the history of the interpretation of the magi, their number and their origin, from Ignatius to modern writers. Were they Persian or Arabian? Were they kings? The history of interpretation is a necessary preface to better interpretation.

Topping, E. C. “ST. ROMANOS THE MELODOS AND HIS FIRST NATIVITY KONTAKION.” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*. 1976, 21(3): 231–250

Abstract—An emotive dramatic epic on the incarnation, this work by Romanos expresses his own wonder at the coming of the Christ-child. The poet is profoundly awed at the concept of the child of the virgin and seeks to express poetically the plan of God, the wonder of the Magi, the amazement and delight of the Theotokos. Considered to be the greatest of his Kontakions, the poem stands as a model of piety and assurance of the work of God as well as a tribute to the devotion of the writer who saw his abilities as gifts from God.

Toppino, Eva Catafygiotu “ST. ROMANOS: IKON OF A POET.” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*. 1966, 12(2): 92–111

Abstract—After a brief summary of the little that is known of the great poet of early 6th cent. Constantinople, there is a critical exposition of one of his greatest hymns, that on the Birth of Christ. This like his other works is in the form he created, the kontakion, a hybrid form of sermon in verse set to music. This type of liturgical poem was commonly chanted from the pulpit following the reading of the Gospel for the day. This particular poem focuses on three actors who are expressive of God, saint and man; namely, Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the three Magi. The basic image of the poem is that of the journey or pilgrimage.

Vanek, Elizabeth-Anne “EPIPHANY, THE MAGI AND US.” *Liturgy*. 1984, 4(3): 81–83

Abstract—Epiphany is a feast of the gentiles, those outside the religious community. Most Christians do not want to worship a God whose very birth was, and is, a threat to the religious and secular establishment.

Walton, John H. “The Decree of Darius the Mede in Daniel 6.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 1988, 31(3): 279–286

Abstract—The decree of Darius the Mede most likely finds its origin in the syncretizing tendency of the Persian Magi and the Achaemenid kings themselves. To combat this Darius could have been persuaded to set himself up as the only legitimate mediator for prayers, a role that would force worship to be centered on Ahura Mazda and the teachings of Zarathushtra. As a foreigner, Daniel's prayers should not have fallen within the purview of the decree but as a public official he was implicated by his political foes.

Wijngaards, J. N. M. "THE EPISODE OF THE MAGI AND CHRISTIAN KERYGMA." *Indian Journal of Theology*. 1967, 16(1, 2): 30–41

Abstract—Presents a new exposition of the Midrash theory, in which a kernel of teaching from the OT is clothed in narrative explanations. Matthew 2 is a midrash on Christ's birthplace. Employing this literary form early Christian preachers did not want to teach the arrival of the Magi, the murder of the innocent children and the flight to Egypt as historical facts, They wanted to show that Christ's withdrawal from Bethlehem to Nazareth is in harmony with OT prophecy. It is only when Matthew's gospel entered Hellenistic Christianity that it began to be understood as literally historical in all its details, The Greeks did not know the force and value of midrash.

Willis, Steve. "Matthew's Birth Stories: Prophecy and the Magi." *The Expository Times*. 1993, 105(2): 43–45.

Abstract—Matthew's practice parallels rabbinic use of Scripture. His interest in Isa 7:14 seems to have been more in Emmanuel than in parthenos and in the Spirit's part in the conception. It is hard to defend his confounding of Nazarene and Nazirite, but the rabbis played the same game. The first two chapters are a prologue: the use of the reference to Egypt foreshadows the death, resurrection and exaltation. The Magi's perception of something stupendous, unlike the wise men of Herod, foretells the interest of Gentiles, while the Jewish people reject Jesus as Messiah.

Yamauchi, Edwin M. "MAGIC IN THE BIBLICAL WORLD." *Tyndale Bulletin*. 1983, 34: 170–200

Abstract—It is quite clear from the Scriptures themselves from extra-biblical texts, and from archaeological discoveries that the word of God came to Jews and Christians who lived in a world which was steeped with occult beliefs and practices. The biblical revelation did not come to sinless humans but reached them in their cultural situations. Reliance upon magic is quite incompatible with simple trust in God. We need not excuse or gloss over magical practices such as reliance upon mandrakes as aphrodisiacs. The sovereign God, who condemned idolatry, nonetheless used idolaters for His purposes. He used belief in necromancy to rebuke Saul, and popular astrology to guide the Magi to Bethlehem.