



# Media Spotlight

A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR MEDIA

## SPECIAL REPORT

# THE GOSPEL IN THE ZODIAC

## A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS

By Albert James Dager

As time draws to a close man's search for life's meaning is taking him on a frenzied foray into ancient wisdom and occult philosophy. It's as if he senses an innate truth which he thinks can only be discovered by going back to his origins—as if with the passing of the centuries he has lost touch with eternal truths essential to his spiritual life and happiness.

Perhaps that's why many of today's Christians feel a need to prove the veracity of the Gospel by some means outside God's Word. Many attempt to glean diamonds of hidden truth from the gravel pit of occult theory. An example of this penchant for rushing in where angels fear to tread is the theory that I call "The Gospel in the Zodiac."

This theory is based on the tenuous assumption that the Zodiac was originally designed by God as a witness of His plan of redemption, and was later corrupted by occult science into an instrument of divination (the predicting of the future and/or the determining of personality traits based on the positions of the heavenly bodies).

The-Gospel-in-the-Zodiac theory is nothing new; it is a century-old "wind of doctrine" which seems to be enjoying new popularity among many of today's Christians. It may seem harmless enough, but every theory that touches upon God's plan of redemption carries with it the possibility of leading souls into spiritual error. The more fantastic the theory the stronger the danger—and, unfortunately, the more likely it is to be followed.

### ORIGINS

There are several recent books which, to those unfamiliar with the antiquity of the "Gospel in the Zodiac" theory, seem to offer original insight into a new, and fascinating subject. Some lack any semblance of documentation as to the origins of the theory. This has resulted in many readers assuming



astrology blended with original thinking and a special revelation from God. In truth, their claims are over a century old, the earliest traceable work being that of a Miss Florence Rolleston, of Keswick, England. Her study of the ancient names of over a hundred principal stars led to the publishing in 1863 of her findings in the form of notes under the title, *Mazzaroth: or, the Constellations*.

The ancient names of those stars—names such as Prince, He Shall Be Exalted, The Redeemer, He Who Comes to Suffer, and the like—seem to indicate that God gave them their names. Although many of the names are not quite so easy to place in the "Gospel" category, it would be only reasonable to assume that God did name the stars. After all, He created them. But there is a difference between the stars and the constellations of the Zodiac.

Rolleston's concept gained wider popularity with the release in 1884 of Joseph A. Seiss's book, *The Gospel in the Stars*. Almost a decade later, in 1893, Ethelbert (E.W.) Bullinger sought to popularize the theory further with his book, *The Witness of the Stars*, which is still available in a 1967 edition published by Kregel Publications based in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Bullinger, a 19th-century Anglican clergyman and descendant of Swiss Reformer J. Heinrich Bullinger, did give credit to Miss Rolleston for her labors in providing him with ancient astronomical facts and the names and signification of those hundred or more principal stars. But he also clearly stated, "...for their interpretation I am alone responsible."<sup>1</sup>

It was from learning the names of those some one hundred principal stars that Seiss and Bullinger drew the conclusion that the Zodiac was also an invention of God. Yet because some one hundred out of over ten thousand stars visible to the naked eye possess names that seem to relate to the Redemption is hardly reason to suppose that the Zodiac is also God's invention. The individual stars are not necessarily related to the concept of constellations.

that the authors discovered this "truth" themselves—independently of others—through diligent study of the Scriptures and certain ancient records pertaining to the names of the stars and constellations.

At best, some contain a cursory reference to and a bibliography of the earlier works of others; some don't even contain a bibliography. This could easily lead the reader to assume that the author has a unique understanding of astronomy and

Lacking any solid evidence that the names of the stars have any direct relation to the Zodiac, the proponents of the "Gospel in the Zodiac" theory have attempted to build their case on conjecture. In so doing they have—with all good intentions, I'm sure—melded God's truth with pagan myth, traceable to Babylon.

Bullinger, in fact, believed that the Tower of Babel was an attempt to preserve the heavenly record. The sin, he felt, was not in the building of the tower, but rather in not dispersing over the earth. This seems somewhat ridiculous in light of God's Word which clearly shows that the reason God scattered humanity was so that they couldn't complete the project (Genesis 11:1-9). Had man not attempted to develop his occult science God would not have had to confuse his language. In any case, whether the Tower of Babel was based upon truth or not, building of it was contrary to God's will. Why then, in an attempt to "prove" what cannot be proven, should Christians rebuild that Tower in men's hearts through this theory?

Current proponents of the Gospel-in-the-Zodiac theory are taking advantage of the fact that the sensational attracts. Yet no other such works being extant prior to those of Rolleston, Seiss and Bullinger (at least as far as we have been able to determine), we may assume that some of these current authors are capitalizing on these people's labors while failing to credit them, or at least give adequate recognition to their labors.

It seems that some writers (or copiers) are reluctant to credit those from whose labors they obtain income and prestige. I'm sorry to say that such practices are not uncommon in the Church.

This dishonesty exists in the Church primarily for two reasons besides the egotism that seeks the acclaim of men: 1) Christians who produce honest, original labor are either deceased, or are reluctant to sue those who steal their works; 2) Christians who plagiarize others' works assume that no one should complain if the truth (or at least what they assume is the truth) gets out by any means. (Of course, the plagiarizers copyright their works.)

This gives reason to question the veracity of the hypothesis to which today's proponents of the Gospel-in-the-Zodiac theory lay claim. If we can't trust their integrity how can we trust their teachings? For this reason we will ignore the current works, and will use as our primary source of reference what I believe to be the most comprehensive and the most readily available of the earliest writings, Bullinger's *The Witness of the Stars*.

## MISAPPLIED SCRIPTURES

E.W. Bullinger (1837 - 1913) begins his thesis with a unique interpretation of Romans 1:19-20:

*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even the ends of the world.*

(Romans 10:18 is cross-referenced to Psalms 19:1-6 which refers to the heavens declaring the glory of God.) Regarding these verses, Bullinger asks,

But how was God known? How were His 'invisible things,' i.e., His plans, His purposes, and His counsels, known since the creation of the world? There is only one answer, and that is THE HEAVENS! This is settled from Ps.xix., the first part of which is occupied with the Revelation of God written in the Heavens, and the latter part with the Revelation of God written in the Word.<sup>2</sup> [Emphasis Bullinger's.]

Though apparently utilizing his theory in an honest attempt to verify the Gospel, Bullinger erred by assuming that "them" in Romans 1:19 ("...that which may be known of God is manifest in them...") is a pronoun for "the stars." The previous verse, Romans 1:18, reveals that "them" refers not to the stars, but rather to ungodly men. Verses 18 and 19 together comprise a single thought:

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

Also, the "invisible things" of God in Romans 1:20, are not "His plans, His purposes, and His counsels," as Bullinger claimed,<sup>3</sup> but rather they are, as verse 20 continues, God's "eternal power and Godhead."

The entire context of the first chapter of Romans deals with men rejecting the knowledge of their Creator and worshiping the creation. In fact, one of the great sins of mankind (which is dangerously close to applying to the "Gospel in the Zodiac" teachers) is recorded in that same first chapter of Romans, verses 21-23:

*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

*And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*

By extension, then, it was from the vanity of man's imagination that the pagan deities pictured in the Zodiac were conceived. Romans 1:21-23 is an accurate description of the Zodiac wherein we find imaginative portrayals of men and women, animals, insects, and even mythological concoctions. As we shall see, the "Gospel in the Zodiac" theory insists on ascribing to these imaginary creatures the various attributes of the Godhead. These applications go far beyond those which God has made in His Word through imagery such as "the Lamb of God," "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and so forth.

It wasn't out of biblical imagery but out of nature worship that astrology was born and the Zodiac implemented, as far back as the Babylonian civilization. Such creatures as the winged horse Pegasus, the half-men-half-animals Centaurus and Sagittarius—and others in the Zodiac—are clearly inventions of man's imagination, which God's Word declares is only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). To ascribe to these fanatic "creatures" the exclusive attributes of God and Christ merely confirms the wickedness of man's venerated imagination.

Genesis 6:5 ("And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually") applies to everyone, not just those in Noah's time. Nor does it apply exclusively to those whose imaginative fantasies have gained notoriety. Man is still the same sinful creature today that he was from the fall of Adam. Therefore, even the best of God's people are capable of the most vile imaginings if not submitted to the control of the Holy Spirit.

I point this out so that our readers will not be inclined to think any less of Bullinger or his modern-day counterparts. If anything we might blame their indiscretions on zealotness clouded by a lack of wisdom.

## THE SIGNS OF ISRAEL'S TRIBES

Building on an erroneous interpretation of certain Scriptures, Bullinger sought to confirm his theory by ascribing to the figures of the Zodiac attributes of Christ and other biblical personalities. While he claimed that man perverted the divinely inspired Zodiac by applying other interpretations, he failed to realize the possibility that those same people could have changed some or all of the original figures, and/or added or subtracted others. Somehow he managed to apply to every figure, no matter how fantastic, some analogy to a portion of the Scriptures.

Bullinger says of the signs of the Zodiac, "It is more than probable that each of the Twelve Tribes [of Israel] bore one of them on its standard."<sup>4</sup> Without any specific scriptural justification, he assumes that the placement of the tribes around the camp as recorded in Numbers Two followed in the order of the Zodiac. Based on this assumption he determined which sign applied to which tribe: "If the Lion (Leo) were appropriated to Judah, then the other three would be thus fixed, and would be the same four that equally divide the Zodiac at its four cardinal points."<sup>5</sup> Thus Bullinger attributed the Zodiacal signs to the tribes in the following manner:

East: Issachar (Cancer), Judah (Leo), Zebulon (Virgo);

South: Simeon (Pisces), Reuben (Aquarius), Gad (Aries);

West: Ephraim and Manasseh (Taurus), Benjamin (Gemini);

North: Asher (Sagittarius), Dan (Scorpio), Naphtali (Capricorn).

In the center of the camp, represented by Libra, Bullinger placed Levi, who had no standard (or banner).

Bullinger's reasoning is vague, though not entirely implausible. However, lacking any historical evidence or definite scriptural reference, the "Gospel in the Zodiac" theory is just that—a theory.

Be that as it may, we must address this issue on both its strengths and weaknesses. If it has any merit at all it is that it might convince a few people who are into astrology that their use of the Zodiac is a perversion of one of God's instruments of revelation. On the other hand, it could easily blur the truth with error and cause Christians who are weak in the faith to become involved in astrology.

In fact, a woman I know personally, after hearing Dr. D. James Kennedy extol the virtues of this theory on a national Christian television network, became convinced that she is "a Scorpio," possessing certain character traits as defined in astrology. No doubt she isn't the only one so affected by the promotion of this theory in the Church. To become taken in by it would, at the least, result in a terrible waste of time, and may even result in Christians looking to the stars and reading horoscopes rather than the Scriptures for knowledge. Perhaps it won't be long before zodiacal charms are sold in Christian bookstores.

This isn't so far fetched. One world-famous "evangelist" has publicly stated on Christian television that he has a stone lion in his yard because he's "a Leo."<sup>5</sup>

Considering that the earliest historical records of the Zodiac have been traced to Babylon, any attempts to prove it

originated with God are futile. The fact is that the Zodiac is an instrument of occult divination, and any association with it may open the door to demonic activity.

As much as Bullinger and his modern counterparts attempt to distinguish between "their" (i.e., Rolleston's) theory and astrology, those who are young in the faith or are naive because they lack understanding may be led by this theory into astrology. Nowhere in God's Word are we told that we may look anywhere but to the Scriptures (rightly divided by the Holy Spirit) for understanding God's purposes.

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

*that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Timothy 3:16-17).*

In light of this great truth, we need nothing else. The dangers of the "Gospel in the Zodiac" theory far outweigh any potential good.

### THE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC

Let's take a look now at this "Gospel in the Zodiac" as espoused by Bullinger and his disciples. As we deal with the figures in the Zodiac and their names, we'll see how arbitrary they are, being capable of having just about any meaning applied to them according to one's fancy. Since Bullinger is the principal source of current commentaries on the meanings of the names of the constellations and stars, we'll begin each examination with a paraphrase of his application of the symbolism (in italics), followed by a commentary.

#### VIRGO - THE VIRGIN

*Virgo represents Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus.*



Although a virgin did play a part in God's plan of redemption, virgins also play a significant part in almost every idolatrous religion.

### The Constellations in Virgo

**Coma—Mother with a child:** *Represents the Virgin Mary and Jesus.*

Coma's full name is Coma Berenices, or "Berenice's Hair." It is a relatively modern constellation having been named after Berenice, a third-century B.C. Egyptian queen who dedicated her hair to Venus in gratitude for the safe return of her husband from war.<sup>6</sup>

This constellation is often pictured as a woman holding a wig and, because of its fairly recent origin, complicates Bullinger's theory. If this constellation was unknown, or called by another name at the time the Lord supposedly gave his "revelation" to early man, how did Bullinger manage to fit it in as a part of that "revelation"?

The picture of a woman with a child in her lap is common to many idolatrous cultures. The Madonna of the Renaissance era was the result of attempts to "Christianize" the Egyptian goddess Isis, who is often pictured with the baby god Osiris in her lap. The purpose of such an image has always been to glorify the mother figure rather than the child. In Roman Catholicism, the Madonna Mary is the Co-redemptrix of salvation. If the Zodiac were of God, it seems the constellation Coma would supersede Virgo since Virgo is a representation of the virgin alone, without Christ. But in the Zodiac Virgo is predominant, and Coma a smaller constellation among others within Virgo's environs. This is more in keeping with the pagan tradition of giving preeminence to female deities: the "Queen of Heaven" of Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and virtually every major idolatrous culture. This was Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians for whom Solomon built a temple, bringing God's chastisement (I Kings 11:5, 33; II Kings 23:13).

**Centaurus—The Centaur:** *Represents the two natures of Christ, divine and human.*

In this ludicrous analogy utilizing a half-man-half-horse picturization, God is represented as a man, and man is represented as an animal. This coincides, in a roundabout way, with the pagan evolutionists' belief that man is just a highly evolved animal, and God is just a highly evolved man.

**Bootes—A man brandishing a spear:** (in some depictions he carries a sickle in the other hand.) *Represents Christ coming to rule.*

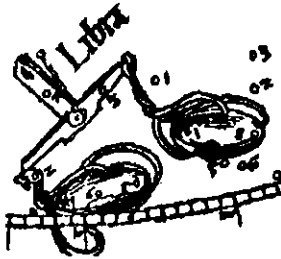
More appropriately, Bootes represents some barbarian about to wreak havoc. Actually, there is some confusion about the meaning of Bootes. Most tables of the constellations refer to him as a herdsman rather

than a ruler per se. But in order to make Bootes fit Bullinger's general theme for the constellations of Virgo, it is more convenient if Bootes is the ruler that was to come from the seed of the woman, rather than a shepherd.

In fact, we'll discover as we go along that Bullinger's arbitrary assigning of constellations to the twelve principal characters of the Zodiac is not always as represented in the sky charts. For instance, he assigned Centaurus to Virgo, while connecting Lupus, the Wolf or Victim which is attached to Centaurus, to Libra. The Southern Cross, which is beneath Centaurus, he also assigned to Libra in order to justify his hypothesis.

### LIBRA - THE SCALES

*Libra represents the Redeemer's Atoning Work; or The Price deficient balanced by the Price which covers.*



But there is no balance, for we are not worthy for Christ's blood to be considered equal payment for us. His mercy and the value of His life far outweigh any worth we may have in our own eyes. Christ died for us while we were yet ungodly (unworthy, unprofitable, and unsuitable)—Romans 5:6.

### The Constellations in Libra

**Crux—The Cross:** *Represents the cross of Christ.*

The cross has certainly been adopted by the Church as a symbol of redemption. But it's also an important part of pagan symbolism, often connected with nature worship.<sup>7</sup> The cross has been used to represent the four elements used in making the Philosopher's Stone in Alchemy, the four major divisions of the human structure (bones, muscles, nerves, and arteries), and the four elements of man's nature—spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical.<sup>8</sup>

An interesting aspect of this constellation is that it is the only one in which the major stars almost perfectly form the picture it is meant to represent. Yet the formation is not as perfect as one would expect God to make it had He meant it to be recognized as a cross. The transverse arms are slightly off-center and tilted. Poor work for a Master Carpenter.

Add to this the fact that Crux, like Coma, is a constellation of modern origin,

and the veracity of Bullinger's theory suffers greatly.

**Lupus or Victima—The Wolf or Victim:** *Represents Christ slain by His own hand.*

A legitimate question arises: where is the typology in Scripture that equates Christ with a wolf? Were the victim of Centaurus a lamb there might be cause for such conjecture. But the wolf is a vicious animal of prey. In fact, in Scripture, wolves symbolize Satan's emissaries (Matthew 7:15, 10:16; Luke 10:3; Acts 20:29; etc.).

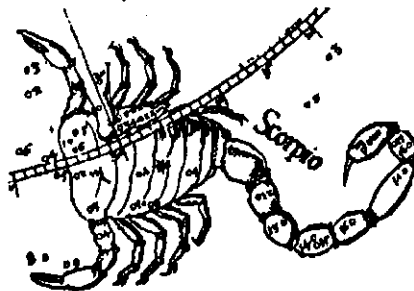
In one ancient Zodiac, that of the Egyptian province of Denderah, Victima "is pictured as a little child with its finger on its lips, and He is called Sura, a lamb."<sup>9</sup> In other pictures, according to Bullinger, the child has the horn of a goat on one side of his head.<sup>10</sup> This, Bullinger believes, is evidence that the victim represents the Lamb of God. However, this depiction is a rare exception to the common depiction of this constellation as a wolf.

**Corona Borealis—The Crown:** *Represents the Crown Bestowed.*

This constellation is one of the few that may find some legitimate correlation with the Christian faith. But that is hardly strong enough evidence to support Bullinger's theory, especially in the light of the preponderance of incredulous analogies attempted on almost all the other constellations.

### SCORPIO - THE SCORPION

*Scorpio represents the Redeemer's Conflict with the enemy of God who strikes at the heel of Christ.*



The biblical picture is that of a serpent that bruises the heel of Christ (Genesis 3:15). While the scorpion is deadly, it isn't a serpent. Nor does it belong to the same family. Serpents are reptiles; scorpions are arachnids. Nowhere in Scripture is the scorpion a symbol of Satan.

### The Constellations in Scorpio

**Ophiuchus—The Man Grasping a Serpent:** *Represents Christ struggling with Satan for dominion.*

This is another of the few constellations whose interpretations can be stretched with some logic to represent Christ. As Bullinger points out, one foot of Ophiuchus

does intersect with the head of the scorpion, and the tail of the scorpion appears to curl toward the man's other foot, though not in close proximity. But again, the scorpion is not a biblical symbol for Satan. So here, too, the analogy breaks down.

**Serpens—The Serpent in Ophiuchus' Hands:** *Represents Satan struggling with Christ for the Crown (the Corona Borealis).*

This is by far the most plausible of Bullinger's analogies for the struggle between Christ and Satan. But in occult theory the serpent also represents the "life force" which, in this pictorialization, could be reaching for higher expression through spiritual evolution.

**Hercules—The Mighty Man:** *Represents Christ, the mighty vanquisher.*

Holding an upraised club in one hand and, in some depictions (not seen here), a three-headed serpent growing from a branch in the other, the picture of Hercules is more consistent with pagan mythology than with Scripture. Most likely the three-headed serpent among the branches represents the multi-headed dragon, Hydra, that Hercules is supposed to have slain as one of his "Twelve Labours."

### SAGITTARIUS - THE ARCHER

*Sagittarius Represents the Redeemer's triumph.*



Like Centaurus, Sagittarius is pictured as a creature that is half-man and half-horse. Bullinger claims Sagittarius is shown pointing his arrow at the heart of the scorpion. However, his aim is slightly off, as the line of the planned trajectory of the arrow would intersect the place where Scorpio's tail joins his body. I would say the same thing about Christ being pictured as half-man, half-horse, as I would about Centaurus: this is not a biblical picture of Christ; to equate it with Him is irreverent.

### The Constellations in Sagittarius

**Lyra—The Harp:** *Represents Praise prepared for the Conqueror.*

Maybe yes, maybe no. But Lyra is pictured in the Zodiac as a lyre comprising the body of a phoenix, a mythical bird possessing magical powers. How would this fit the Scriptures?

**Ara—The Altar:** Represents consuming fire prepared for God's enemies.

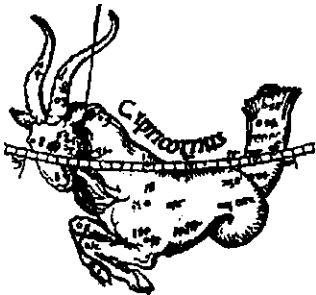
Altars existed in both idolatrous and biblical culture. So who's to say that this altar is one devoted to God?

**Draco—The Dragon:** Represents the Old Serpent, or the Devil, cast down from Heaven.

Another plausible picture from Scripture, but how much prominence must Satan be given in this scenario? Besides other symbols attributed to Satan by Bullinger, there are four pictures of serpents and dragons in the Zodiac.

### CAPRICORN - THE SEA GOAT

Capricorn Represents the Goat of Atonement slain for the Redeemed.



According to Bullinger, the head of this strange creature represents Christ, and the body in the form of a fish represents the people for whom He was slain. This is pretty farfetched. There is no such symbol in Scripture, nor did God ever create such a grotesque creature as Capricorn.

### The Constellations in Capricorn

**Sagitta—The Arrow:** Represents the Arrow of God sent forth.

Bullinger claims that Sagitta is not the arrow of Sagittarius, meant for the enemies of God, but is that spoken of in Psalm 38:2, meant to pierce Christ on our behalf: "For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore." But the next verses reveal that David's lament in the first portion of Psalm 38 was not part of the messianic prophecies attributed to other Psalms, but referred to David himself:

*There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. (Psalm 38:3-5)*

Christ had no sin or iniquities. Nor was He foolish. True, He bore our iniquities, but that's a far cry from what the Psalmist was saying. We know also that it was prophesied that God would not allow Jesus' flesh to suffer corruption (Psalm 16:10). And His body was never diseased as the Psalmist described his own flesh in 38:7.

**Aquila—The Eagle:** Represents the Smitten One falling.

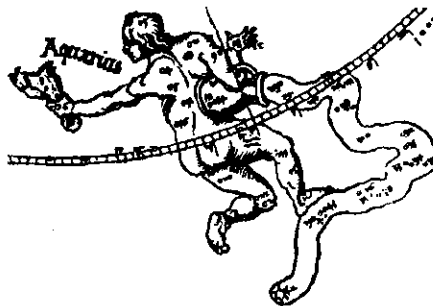
In the Table of Constellations there is no reference to the eagle pictured in Aquila as dying. He is seen as merely an eagle flying. Bullinger's fanciful account, however, has the Arrow of God piercing the eagle which is supposed to represent Christ. Yet if we look at the pictures in the Zodiac, we find that the arrow is pointing away from the eagle, not toward it. Nor has it passed through the body, but merely through the tail (if we want to see it as having passed through the eagle at all). And though there are minor references in Scripture likening the acts of God to those of eagles, there is no definitive typology of the eagle as Christ, particularly as Christ dying.

**Delphinus—The Dolphin:** Represents the Dead One rising again.

Here Bullinger likens the dolphin to the risen Christ because dolphins characteristically leap from the water. But the dolphin also dives back into the water. Christ rose never to die again. And where in Scripture is Christ likened to a dolphin?

### AQUARIUS - THE WATER BEARER

Aquarius represents Christ pouring forth the Living Water.



We could almost accept this as being a legitimate interpretation were the others not so arbitrary and, in some cases, even bizarre.

### The Constellations in Aquarius

**Piscis Australis—The Southern Fish:** Represents the blessings bestowed.

Piscis Australis is pictured as a fish upon whom the water of Aquarius flows. Bullinger states that this constellation "sets forth the simple truth that the blessings procured by [Christ] will be surely bestowed and received by those for whom they are intended."<sup>12</sup> But where is the Scriptural typology of the redeemed as fish? Though Jesus told Peter he would make him a fisher of men, He was merely identifying with Peter's profession as a fisherman. More appropriately, the redeemed are seen as sheep (John 10:27, 21:16-17).

For those who might point out that the fish symbol "Ichthus" represents Christ, it is not a biblical symbol but one adopted by

the first-century Church. Even so, Bullinger's interpretation of the Zodiac does not mention the Ichthus in relation to any constellation.

**Pegasus—The Winged Horse:** Represents the blessings coming quickly.

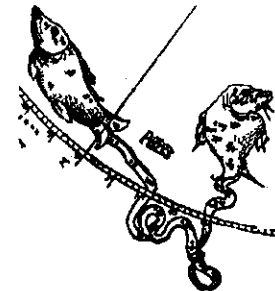
Here we have another mythical creature with no scriptural typology to support Bullinger's theory.

**Cygnus—The Swan:** Represents the Blessers surely returning.

As with so many analogies in this theory, the swan is not a scriptural type of Christ. If we try hard enough, we can find anything to represent Christ. So far Bullinger has pictured Him as a man, a man-beast, a wolf, a dolphin, an eagle, a goat, a winged horse, and now a swan. The most common picture of Christ in Scripture is as a lamb. Yet there are no lambs in the Zodiac. And if we are to say Ophiuchus and Scorpio represent Christ and Satan because Ophiuchus's foot is on the head of the scorpion, how is it that Pegasus is seen trampling on the wing of Cygnus, and butting heads with Aquarius, all allegedly representing Christ? What rules, if any, apply here?

### PISCES - THE FISHES

Pisces represents the blessings of the Redeemed in abeyance.



Pisces is pictured as two fishes whose tails are bound together by a band, one fish looking toward the height of the heavens, the other at almost a right angle, facing the line of the ecliptic (the Sun's path). The first, that looking toward the heights of heaven, supposedly represents the Church; the second supposedly represents the nation of Israel, which was satisfied with earthly blessings. But now we find in Bullinger's own argument the best case against his theory:

And here we must maintain that "the Church," which is "the Body of Christ," was a subject that was never revealed to man until it was made known to the Apostle Paul by a special revelation. The Holy Spirit declares (Rom. xvi. 25) that it "was kept secret since the world began." In Eph. iii. 9 he declares that it "from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God"; and in Col. i. 26, that it "hath been hid from ages and from

generations, but now is made manifest to His saints." In each scripture which speaks of it as "now made manifest," or "now made known," it is distinctly stated that it was "a mystery," i.e., a secret, and had, up to that moment, been hidden from mankind, hidden "in God."<sup>13</sup>

Bullinger also states that the Sign of Pisces has always been interpreted to symbolize Israel.<sup>14</sup> Yet this is not as inspired by God, but rather as interpreted by Jewish Cabalism, which blended the Word of God with the Egyptian mysteries. But more to the point, if the Scriptures say that the mystery of the Church has been hidden in God from the beginning, how then can we support the idea that the original Zodiac was God's revelation to early man of His plan of redemption? How could the Church have been a part of that revelation if it was a mystery hid in God until Christ established His Church just 2,000 years ago? Certainly God wouldn't have given an erroneous interpretation to those to whom He allegedly revealed the "Gospel in the Zodiac" at the dawn of man's history.

### The Constellations In Pisces

**The Band—The Band around the fishes' tails:** *Represents the Redeemed bound, but binding their enemy.*

This is one of the more preposterous of Bullinger's interpretations. There is no reference to the band as a separate constellation from Pisces in any tables of the constellations. And how is the band seen as binding the enemy of the Redeemed, unless Bullinger is inferring that Israel (supposedly represented by the other fish) is the enemy of the Redeemed? This proves further that one can make any case he wants if he tries hard enough.

A point which seems to have escaped Bullinger and his modern disciples is that the fish he says points toward the heights of the heavens does so only if seen from certain latitudes. It might just as easily be seen pointing downward toward the horizon from other vantage points on earth.

**Andromeda—The Chained Woman:** *Represents the Redeemed in their bondage and affliction.*

Yet according to the Scriptures, once we are redeemed we are no longer in bondage (Galatians 4:1-9). Afflicted, yes; and beset with heresies that threaten to destroy the purity of our faith by blending every form of paganism with Christianity.

**Cepheus—The King:** *Represents the Redeemer coming to rule.*

After seeing Jesus represented as any number of animals and even mythical creatures, at least we can find no fault in Bullinger's representation of Him as a king. But despite a king being one of few

scriptural types acceptable for application to Christ, Cepheus cannot validate Bullinger's theory in the face of the far more numerous unscriptural symbols in the Zodiac.

### ARIES-THE RAM

*Aries represents the blessings of the Redeemed consummated and enjoyed.*



The ram is the closest thing to a lamb in the Zodiac, and Bullinger calls Aries "The Ram or Lamb."<sup>15</sup> This sign, among them all, comes closest to representing Christ. Yet according to Bullinger's theory that the Zodiac shows the progression of God's plan of redemption, then Aries is out of order. The ram should symbolize the victim slain earlier in the progression, not the blessing coming later.

### The Constellations in Aries

**Cassiopeia—The Enthroned Woman:** *Represents the Captive delivered, and waiting for her husband, the Redeemer.*

This is obviously an attempt by Bullinger to associate Cassiopeia with the Church as the Bride of Christ. Cassiopeia is pictured sitting on a throne, yet her bare breasts are hardly in keeping with the modesty that should characterize the Bride of Christ.

**Perseus—The Breaker or Rescuer:** *Represents Christ delivering His Redeemed.*

Perseus is seen with the wings of Mercury on his heels, an upraised sword in one hand, and the serpent head of Medusa in the other. This is another case where the arbitrariness of Bullinger's theory is evident. How can anyone say Perseus, a pagan deity, is Christ?

**Cetus—The Sea Monster:** *Represents the Great Enemy bound.*

Cetus is a fantastic creature which, in some depictions, has the head of a grotesque kind of unicorn, front paws like a dog's, and a tail like a fish. Cetus is not bound as Bullinger would have us think, but looks rather comfortable in his dominance of his portion of the sky. And why does not the tail like that of a fish represent the Redeemed as in the case of Capricorn? The least we could expect from God would be consistency in assigning His symbolism.

### TAURUS - THE BULL

*Taurus represents Messiah, the coming Judge of all the Earth.*



Where in Scripture is Christ pictured as a bull? This is another inconsistency with the Word of God.

### The Constellations in Taurus

**Orion—The Man of Light:** *Represents light breaking forth in the Redeemer.*

Orion is pictured as a man with an upraised club in one hand and, in some depictions, with the head of a lion in the other. If Leo (the Lion) represents Christ, as Bullinger stated earlier, then consistency would dictate that the lion's head in Orion's hand represents Christ. Were this at the beginning of Bullinger's Zodiac he could say that Christ was slain by Himself. But the whole theme of Taurus rests on Bullinger's supposition that at this point the Zodiac speaks of Christ's victory and Second Coming, not of His sacrifice. Where then is the consistency with the Gospel in Bullinger's interpretation of this constellation?

**Eridanus—The River:** *Represents the River of Wrath breaking forth for God's enemies.*

Why is it a river of wrath? Why not a river of life? Because, at this point in the "Gospel of the Zodiac," Bullinger has determined that judgment is the issue.

**Auriga—The Shepherd:** *Represents safety for the Redeemed in the Day of Wrath.*

Auriga, supposedly a Christ figure, is seen holding a he-goat which Bullinger says represents God's children. Earlier we found that Bullinger assigned the office of Christ to the head of Capricorn, the goat-headed fish, and the tail he called the people of God. Why isn't Auriga holding a fish to represent God's people, instead of a goat?

### GEMINI-THE TWINS

*Gemini represents Messiah's reign as Prince of Peace.*



The Twins are seen by Bullinger as representing the two natures of Christ: God and man. Very nice, but again, totally arbitrary. Earlier, he said Centaurus represents the two natures of Christ. The Greeks called The Twins Apollo and Hercules; the Romans called them Castor and Pollux. These pagan gods bear not even the remotest similarity to Christ's two natures.

### The Constellations in Gemini

**Lepus—The Hare:** *Represents the Enemy trodden under foot.*

Because The Hare is situated near the feet of Orion, Bullinger assumes that Lepus is Satan. He quotes Aratus, a third-century B.C. Greek poet, who wrote, "Below Orion's feet, the Hare is chased eternally." But is the hare being chased by Orion, or by Canis Major (The Dog), whose front paws extend toward the tail of Lepus? Does the proximity of constellations necessarily mean they are connected in any particular way? Except for Bullinger's theory this is not even considered. And where in Scripture does the hare represent Satan, trodden under foot or otherwise?

**Canis Major—The Dog:** *Represents Christ as Sirius, the coming glorious Prince.*

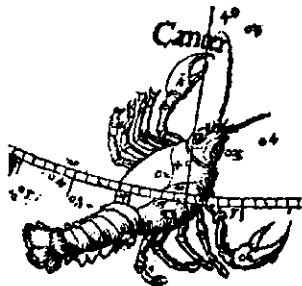
Bullinger states that in the Persians' astronomical planisphere Canis Major is pictured as a wolf, and in the Hebrew is the same. Just as in his interpretation of Lupus (The Wolf) in Libra, Bullinger pictures Christ as an unclean animal—a scavenger and vicious by nature. Even the most docile of dogs are so because they've been bred to be that way. Left alone they are dangerous. Is it not an insult to Jesus to picture Him as a dog or wolf?

**Canis Minor—The Second Dog:** *Represents the Exalted Redeemer.*

The same argument for picturing Christ as a dog in Canis Major must apply to Canis Minor.

### CANCER-THE CRAB

*Cancer represents Messiah's Redeemed Possessions held fast.*



The crab is not the one held, but the one who holds. This being the case, then Cancer must represent Christ. Is a crab a suitable picture of Christ? I have no less a problem with this than with His being seen as a dog, or as any other figure other than

those assigned by Scripture in its symbolism. The crab, like the dog, is a scavenger; both were unclean according to God's dietary laws (Leviticus 11:9-12,27). Not a fitting picture of Christ.

### The Constellations in Cancer

**Ursa Minor—The Little Bear:** *Represents the Lesser Sheepfold.*

Bullinger states, "It is sufficient to point to the fact that no Bear is found in any Chaldean, Egyptian, Persian, or Indian Zodiacs, and that no bear was ever seen with such a tail!"<sup>16</sup> From the names of the stars in this constellation, he judged that the proper representation should be that of a herd of cattle. Naming it the Bear, he thought, was a grievous mistake by the Greeks. But did he not err in calling a herd of cattle a "sheepfold" in his definition of Ursa Minor? Are the redeemed cattle, or sheep? If we are sheep, then it's obvious that Bullinger stretched his own imagination to assign to Ursa Minor the meaning of "The Lesser Sheepfold."

**Ursa Major—The Great Bear:** *Represents the Fold and the Flock.*

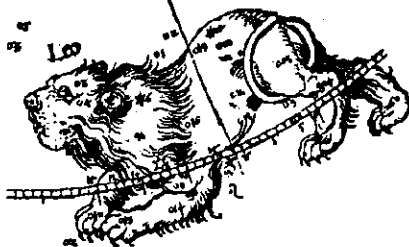
Bullinger makes the same mistaken claim for Ursa Major as he does for Ursa Minor. So the same inconsistencies also apply.

**Argo—The Ship:** *Represents the Pilgrims safe at Home.*

If the pilgrims are safe at home, why are they on a ship? Why not, instead, in a house?

### LEO-THE LION

*Leo represents Messiah's Consummated Triumph.*



Here is one of the allegorical symbols we may accept as consistent with Scripture: Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5). That is, we may accept it were this whole theory true—which it isn't.

### The Constellations in Leo

**Hydra—The Serpent:** *Represents the Old Serpent destroyed.*

Completing the Zodiac, according to Bullinger, is the sign of Leo which, in its constellations, records the final destruction of Satan. Hydra, the serpent, represents Satan in Bullinger's theory. This is plausible according to Scriptural symbolism, but Hydra is really a mythical water-monster, not a serpent per se.

**Crater—The Cup:** *Represents the cup of divine wrath poured out upon the Serpent.*

Very imaginative, but the cup is not seen being poured out upon Hydra. Nothing comes forth from the cup, as is the case with Aquarius's urn. And it would seem more fitting that, if Crater were pouring out God's wrath upon Satan it would be upon his head, not his tail. If anything, Crater is about to pour out upon Corvus.

**Corvus—The Raven:** *The Birds of Prey devouring the Serpent.*

Corvus does indeed ride the back of Hydra. But what does this prove in light of the many serious inconsistencies previously pointed out?

### ARBITRARY SYMBOLISM

As we've seen, the designations attributed by Bullinger to the Zodiac are purely arbitrary. There is no conclusive historical or scriptural evidence to support the "Gospel in the Zodiac" theory.

No knowledgeable person would dispute the fact that some pagan myths are perversions of truth relative to Christ. But most are not such perversions; they have nothing whatsoever to do with the person, work or character of Christ. Yet it doesn't take much effort to see in those myths what we want to see if it helps justify an otherwise untenable position.

Now obviously no one—ancient or modern—could simply look at the sky and see the symbolism represented in the Zodiac. As Bullinger rightly admits, "The figures themselves are perfectly arbitrary. There is nothing in the groups of stars to even suggest the figures."<sup>17</sup>

This being the case, the figures had to be handed down from generation to generation in order to be understood by those far removed from their origins. But was the original Zodiac inspired by God and later perverted by men? Or has it always been the product of pagan myth, albeit partially or wholly predicated upon a perversion of truth? Bullinger believed the former.

For more than two thousand five hundred years the world was without a written revelation from God. The question is, Did God leave Himself without a witness? The question is answered very positively by the written Word that He did not.<sup>18</sup>

It's at this point that Bullinger gives his erroneous interpretations of Romans 1:19-20 and 10:18, which I commented on in the early portion of this writing. Evidently he forgot that God did preserve the revelation of His truth, to the degree He wished it known, through His prophets and the patriarchs who lived during the period

from Adam to Christ. That is clear from the written Word. What is not in the Word is any record of God assigning to the Zodiac symbols of His plan of Redemption.

Though Bullinger's theory is brilliantly stated, pointing out the Scripture's references to certain of the stars and constellations by their astrological names, the basis for his argument is found wanting. Wrote Bullinger:

After the Revelation came to be written down in the Scriptures, there was not the same need for the preservation of the Heavenly Volume. And after the nations had lost the original meaning of the pictures, they invented a meaning out of the vain imagination of the thoughts of their hearts.<sup>19</sup>

To read Bullinger and his contemporary counterparts who have capitalized on this theory, one would think that the complete testament of Christ, including His death and Second Coming, was clearly portrayed in the Zodiac. Were this true, it seems there would certainly be some record of the true interpretation up to the time of the Gospels. But even the Old Testament saints did not have a clear picture of God's plan of Redemption. Only after Christ had risen from the dead and ascended on high was the full revelation given by the Holy Spirit to the writers of the New Testament books.

The fact is that the pagan interpretations of the Zodiac are the only ones of which any legitimate records exist, and they predate the Gospels by at least two thousand years.

These are the most significant points in the whole matter. If the stars proclaim the entire Gospel as clearly as this theory makes them seem to do, why didn't the Old Testament prophets understand fully the plan of Redemption?

Until it was clearly proclaimed by the Apostles after Christ's Resurrection, the mystery of God's redemptive plan was just that: a mystery. Even the learned scholars of Israel, both righteous and unrighteous, did not understand what they were witnessing in the unfolding of God's plan for the earth.

Thus, contrary to Bullinger's claim, God did leave the world without a complete witness until the fullness of time had come. Not that His people were not given a partial understanding of His plan of Redemption. But that understanding was somewhat clouded by the lack of revelations yet to come. God doesn't reveal His plans to just anyone, but only to His chosen saints, and then through them to the world:

*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29:29)*

In Romans 16:25-26, Paul tells us that the Gospel was a "mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of the faith." In other words, the only revelation of the complete Gospel is Scripture.

But if the "Gospel in the Zodiac" theory is true, then either early man already had the complete revelation, or that revelation must have been only for the benefit of the spiritual powers. In that case, certainly Satan would have known of the mystery of Redemption and would have taken steps to prevent the crucifixion. Yet Scripture tells us that had Satan's servants, "the princes of this world," known that plan they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (I Corinthians 2:8).

Another matter which is important to consider is the progression of the Zodiac. The popular beginning today is with Aries (The Ram). But Bullinger felt that his revelation proved that the beginning must be in Virgo (the Virgin). He points to the Sphinx, having the head of a woman and the body of a lion, as representing the completion from the beginning to the ending of the Zodiac.<sup>20</sup> Yet if Bullinger was correct, and God established Virgo as the beginning of His revelation in the Zodiac, the question remains why His new year, as given in Exodus 12:2, always begins not when Virgo is in prominence, but when Aries is in prominence. The Jewish New Year still begins with the month Abib, which corresponds to the Julian calendar's March-April timing, two weeks before Passover.

Again, the arbitrariness of the "Gospel in the Zodiac" theory is evident.

### CONCLUSION

In their attempts to validate the Gospel, some people chase after any fantasy that will bolster their faith. Unable to believe without seeing, they try to see something that doesn't exist. But the Gospel doesn't need to be validated by any means other than the results we see in our own lives through the working of the Holy Spirit. When anyone tries to substitute sight for faith they end up confusing the issue and building their house on sand.

While Christians chase after every spectacular theory and promise of secret knowledge to prove to themselves that the Gospel is true, they are wasting precious time that could be better spent in service to God based upon genuine faith. And true faith—from which springs all acceptable service to God—does not need proof. Rather, faith is a

gift from God to all who will receive it and act upon it. When faith is tested, those who need proof seldom stand.

God's truth cannot be validated except by the faith He gives through the Holy Spirit. Certain empirical facts learned through archaeology, geography, and history may prove certain points which validate what we already know by faith. (And, in fact, science has provided ample empirical evidence for the truth and reliability of God's Word.) Yet even conclusive evidence of the truth often fails to convert the skeptics. That being the case, can we expect unsupported theories like the "Gospel in the Zodiac" to convince them?

Whatever one may choose to believe, the fact remains that the only revelation upon which we may reliably base our belief is the Bible. The pyramids are crumbling; the stars are ever changing their positions. But God's Word has stood the test of time.

We should not, therefore, look to the Zodiac for truth, lest we be deceived into thinking it holds some special revelation for our personal lives. The temptation to identify with some "sign" may well lead some onto the path to destruction. ■■■

### NOTES

1. E.W. Bullinger, *The Witness of the Stars* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1967), p. iv.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
3. *Ibid.*,
4. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
5. Rex Humbard, Trinity Broadcasting Co., Praisathon, circa January, 1986.
6. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed., s.v. "Berenice."
7. Manley Palmer Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopaedic Philosophy; Being an Interpretation of the Secret Teachings concealed within the Rituals, Allegories and Mysteries of all Ages*, 13th ed. reduced facsimile (Los Angeles: The Theosophical Research Society, Inc., 1962), p. CLXXXII.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *The Witness of the Stars*, p. 51.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Age of Fable or Beauties of Mythology* (New York: David McKay, 1898), p. 178.
12. *The Witness of the Stars*, p. 89.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

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