

Astrology, King Jesus & King Arthur

by Ralph Ellis

Introduction

In my previous article, regarding evidence for the zodiac within Judaeo-Christian religions, we saw how the veneration of the astrological Great Months had evolved to become a central component within the creed of the Nazarene Church of Jesus and James (often called the Ebionites or the Jewish Christians in historical literature [1]). But the Nazarene-Ebionite Jewish Christians were heavily persecuted during the early centuries AD and so it would appear that their teachings migrated into other sects and creeds, and were preserved more within Greco-Pagan legend and mythology than in the more popularist Sauline Church of Christianity.

Some of this ancient *gnosis* or knowledge may well be preserved within Arthurian legend, and so this article seeks to compare the knowledge of the precessional zodiac within Arthurian legend and compare it with the the similar *gnosis* of the Nazarene creed uncovered in the previous article. As readers will discover, much of the evidence we shall explore resides within the design of something as mundane as a table - the famous Round Table of Arthurian legend. The unfolding evidence here will hopefully demonstrate an underground stream of 'heretical' astrological knowledge that has influenced and shaped modern culture and society, despite the often conflicting and opposing standpoint of the ruling Christian Church.

The Israelite Zodiac

In my previous article we saw that both the Old and New Testaments are actually infused with a great deal of astrology, if we did but know how to discover and identify it. While this aspect of Judaeo-Christianity is studiously ignored by the religious establishment, it is a fact that large segments of ancient Judaism and Nazarene Christianity revolved around the veneration of precessional astrology/astronomy and the twelve signs of the zodiac. Josephus Flavius, for instance, says of the vestments of the High Priest Aaron, the brother of Moses:

> *Each of the sardonyxes (semi-precious stones) declares to us the sun and the moon; I mean those that were in the nature of buttons on the high priest's shoulders. And for the twelve stones, whether we understand by them the months of the year, or whether we understand them as the signs of that circle which the Greeks call the Zodiac, we shall not be mistaken in their meaning. (author's brackets)* [2]

Josephus, who was himself descended from a family of priests and was sufficiently versed in Judaic history to write his own version of the Talmud, considered that the semi-precious stones on the high priest's tunic represented the Sun and the Moon and the twelve constellations of the zodiac. And this astrological tradition within early Judaism was maintained all the way through to the 1st century, when Josephus describes the furniture and offerings in the Temple of Jerusalem in similar terms:

> *Now the seven lamps signified the seven planets; for so many there were springing out of the candlestick (the menorah). Now the twelve loaves that were upon the table signified the circle of the zodiac and the year. (author's brackets)* [3]

Evidence like this, together with the lack of animal sacrifices within modern Judaism, would suggest that the Judaism of the Exodus and the Second Temple period was a very different creed to the one we see in Jewish communities today. Although it will be hotly contested and denied, it is apparent that Judaism is very slowly evolving, as all religions eventually do.

But why would a religion venerate the precessional zodiac? It was my assertion in the previous article, that this veneration arose because this was the only accurate method of maintaining an accurate record of a royal and a cultural history through many millennia. With a calendar derived from precessional astrology, one only needs to mention the symbol of the zodiac that an event or monarch was associated with, and the era concerned can be narrowed down considerably: sometimes to just a few years.

The fact that the Israelites were known as Shepherds (Aries) and that Moses' own brother Aaron had fashioned a golden Apis-bull (Taurus),[4] during the infamous 'golden calf' affair at the foot of Mt Sinai, strongly suggests that this event occurred just after the constellation of Taurus had ceded its dominant position at the vernal equinox (the spring equinox), to Aries. In other words, this slaughter of 3,000 Apis-bull worshippers by Moses [5] probably happened a short time after the Great Month of Taurus turned into the Great Month of Aries in about 1750 BC. And if we are bold enough to equate the Israelite Exodus out of Egypt to Jerusalem with the Hyksos Shepherds Exodus out of Egypt to Jerusalem, as does Josephus Flavius,[6] then this would be correct, for the accepted date for the Hyksos Exodus is around 1570 BC. And so it would appear that this religious dispute had simmered for more than a century, before the final exodus occurred, much as Egyptian history records.

Even a cursory glance at the Torah or Josephus *Antiquities*, will convince the reader that the Israelites were meticulous record keepers, with genealogies and dates of events being assiduously recorded. And even the seemingly exaggerated lifespans that we see in some of these ancient records may have a mundane explanation, for the Egyptian historian Manetho claims that many of the early Egyptian records used the Lunar Year or Lunation, measuring 29.5 days in duration.

> *The year I take, however, to be a lunar one, consisting, that is, of 30 days: what we now call a month the Egyptians used formerly to style a year.* [7]

However, since the quotes from Josephus and Manetho that were explored in the previous article have indicated that the Israelites were the Hyksos Egyptians, then surely the Israelites would be using the Egyptian Lunar calendar in the same fashion as the Egyptians. If so, then the 930-year life span of Adam would become 75 solar years while Noah's 950 years become 76 solar years. [8] And this small adjustment means that the Torah account is less exaggerated and far more reasonable that we may have previously thought. It would appear that the ancient Egypto-Judaic priesthood were recording a precise history of their people and the many momentous events in their lives, and it would appear that they were using precessional astronomy to shape their chronological framework.

But the Judaic and Nazarene Judaic knowledge of precessional astronomy was nearly exterminated in AD 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. [9] As is related in the books *King Jesus* and *Jesus, King of Edessa*, by the 1st century the knowledge of precessional astrology had withered on the Judaic vine until it was

almost exclusively the preserve of the Nazarene Church of Jesus and James, and also of the Nazarene Church of Queen Helena and King Monobazus of Adiabene (Edessa). The monarchs of Adiabene (Edessa) are mentioned by Josephus and the Talmud as saving Judaea from famine in AD 47 and possessing the largest tomb and palace in Jerusalem,[11] and so it is not so surprising that they too shared this arcane astrological knowledge and veneration. Surprisingly, the *Toledoth Yeshu*, a Medieval Jewish anti-Christian polemic based upon much earlier material, claims that Queen Helena became Queen of Judaea in the mid 1st century and presided over Jesus' trial (rather than Pontius Pilate). [12] It is unusual, to say the least, that a Jewish source would claim that Judaea was ruled by a queen.

The books just mentioned also claim that Jesus was not a pauper prince of peace, but a warrior king - the King of the Jews. The aim of this royal family had been to take over the Roman East, with a view to taking over the entire Roman Empire, which is why Jesus was dressed in a purple cloak before the crucifixion. [13] The purple cloak was normally the preserve of the Emperor of Rome, so the dressing of Jesus in the Imperial cloak covertly signified the nature of the throne that he truly wished to attain.[14] But by the late AD 60s the grand plan of the Nazarene had gone horribly wrong. The Romans used the might of their near-invincible army to crush the Jewish Revolt, ravage Judaea and destroy Jerusalem. And since the traditions of precessional astrology were held almost exclusively by the Nazarene-Ebionite Church of Jesus and James, the destruction of Judaea was very nearly a terminal blow to the veneration of the precessional zodiac. If any knowledge of precession was to survive this onslaught, then these ancient traditions would have to be relocated elsewhere and if necessary go underground. So where did they go to?

Arthur's Round Table

Surprisingly, it is my contention that many of these ancient traditions from Judaea were transferred to Northern France and England, where they became the foundation for the many mythologies that underpin the legends of King Arthur. Again, the evidence for this transfer mechanism will have to wait for another article as it is verbose and complex. However, the origins, history and identity of King Arthur is of little consequence here, as we are only looking at the traditions and symbolism that surround this famous semi-fictional monarch.

So in what manner is the precessional zodiac related to the legends of King Arthur? Well, it would seem that the historical and mythical thread for the zodiac is interwoven into the legends of the Arthurian Round Table, as narrated in the *Vulgate Cycle* - that enormous but turgid and impenetrable corpus of Arthurian legend that is well known for its soporific effects. [15] Within this great Arthurian library there are many accounts of the Round Table and one of them, *Quest for the Holy Grail*, says that the original Round Table was actually the Last Supper Table of Jesus and his twelve disciples. So Leonardo da Vinci may have been wrong in his famous depiction of the Last Supper in the Santa Maria delle Grazie, for it is likely that his much debated fresco should have depicted a circular table. *Quest for the Holy Grail* goes on to say that Joseph of Arimathaea took many of the rituals of the Nazarene creed of Jesus and James, including the traditions of the Last Supper Round Table, to England after the 'storm of persecution' against the Christians (ie: the Nazarenes) in Judaea. But surely that 'storm of persecution' - as William of Malmesbury terms it [16] - just has to be a reference to the aftermath of the Jewish Revolt in AD 70, when there was indeed a great persecution of the Nazarene Church at this time. This is one of many indications in this research, that the gospel stories narrate the tragic events of the Jewish Revolt.

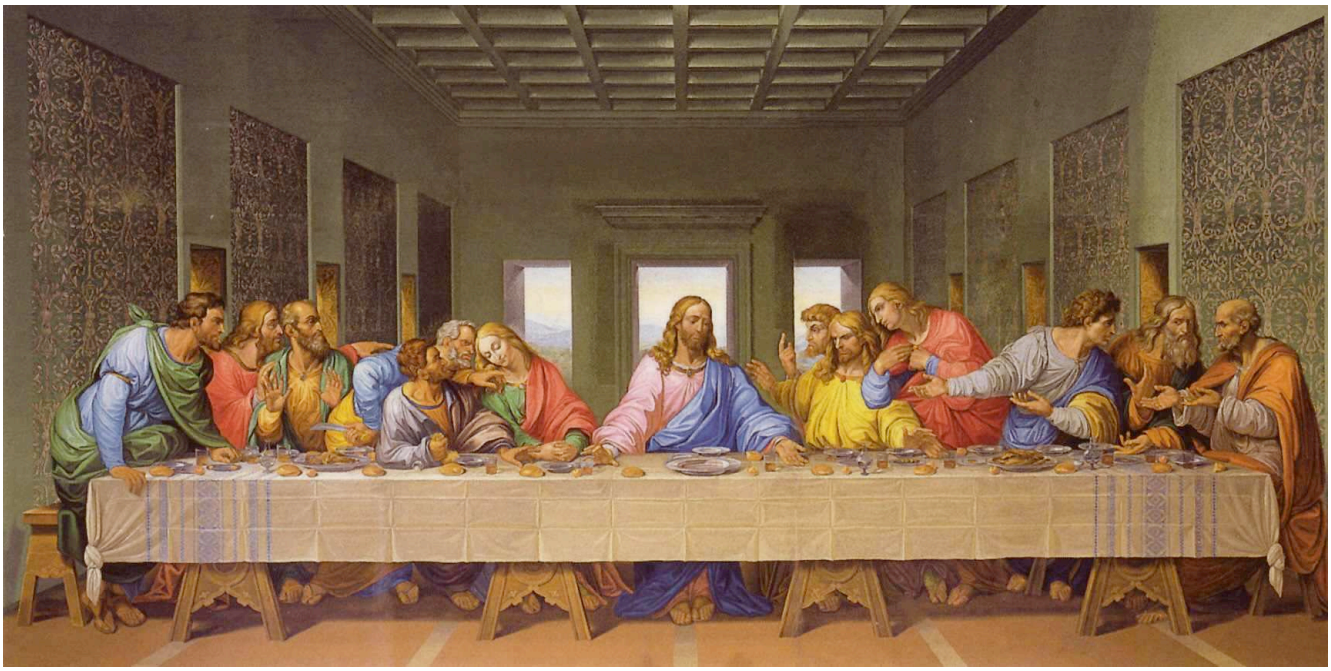


Fig 5.1 The Last Supper painting by Giacomo Raffaelli, a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's famous Last Supper mural. However, Arthurian legend maintains that the Last Supper Table was a circular, Arthurian-style table.

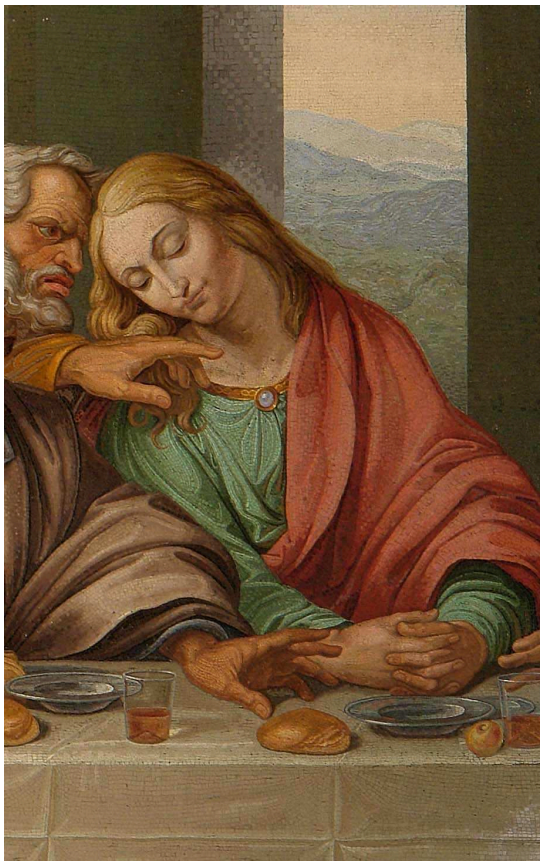


Fig 5.2
A detail from Raffaelli's Last Supper showing 'St John'. Clearly this St John is decidedly female (even more so than in Leonardo da Vinci's original version). And since she is wearing orange and green robes, this just has to be an image of the golden-haired Mary Magdalene. In Renaissance artwork, Mary the Virgin is invariably portrayed in blue and white, while Mary Magdalene wears orange and green.

According to *Quest for the Holy Grail* there were three Round Tables. This tabular lineage begins with the famous table of the Last Supper, where Jesus broke bread and drank wine with his twelve disciples. The second table in this lineage was the table of Joseph of Arimathaea, which was fabricated in England at some time during the first century AD, presumably after the Jewish Revolt in AD 70 (*Quest for the Holy Grail* records Joseph of Arimathaea as being a contemporary of Emperor Vespasian). And in a similar fashion to Jesus at the Last Supper, Joseph of Arimathaea placed either 12 or perhaps even 24 disciples around his Round Table, in an attempt not simply to imitate the Church of Jesus but also to usurp his authority and position.

Then we come to the third of these influential tables, the equally famous table of the Grail - the famous Round Table of Arthurian legend. And, just as one might expect from an ancient tradition of this nature, King Arthur also chose to surround himself with twelve knights (or disciples), in a direct imitation of Jesus' Last Supper Table. However, since Jesus' disciples were armed with swords, as the gospels clearly relate, then perhaps they too could be considered knights of the (round) Last Supper Table:

> Then (Jesus) said unto them (the disciples): He that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his wallet: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. (author's brackets) [17]

A 13th century copy of the third, Arthurian table, is still to be found in the Great Hall at Winchester, and just like Joseph of Arimathaea's Round Table, this table also has segments reserved for 24 knights. The Arthur figure on this table has been repainted in the 16th century to show an image of King Henry VIII, and that may be due in part to Henry's late brother being called Arthur.



Fig 5.3
The Round Table at Winchester, constructed in about the 13th century. This table has positions for 24 knights/disciples, instead of 12. The Arthur figure on this table has been repainted in the 16th century to show an image of King Henry VIII.

Arthur's Zodiac

So what is this table symbolism all about? Why is a humble table such an integral component of leadership, kingship, and the history of both Judaea and England? The surprising answer to this, is that this famous table is not a table at all - in actual fact, the twelve-segmented layout of the Round Tables of Jesus, Joseph, and King Arthur came directly from the circular design of the Egypto-Greco-Judaean zodiac. A very good example of this zodiac imagery can be seen in the Hamat Teverya zodiac from Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, the very same zodiac that was discussed in the previous article. [18]

So the Arthurian table was probably a real table, fabricated in wood just like the Winchester Round Table, but its twelve dividing segments would have been marked out not simply with the names of the twelve

knights/disciples, but also with the twelve signs of the zodiac that each knight/disciple was associated with. Thus the circular design of the Arthurian table was not simply a method of ensuring equality among the knights/disciples of the realm, as the mythology maintains, it was also a teaching aid that graphically described and explained the movement of the astrological constellations in the heavens above. But do note the position of the kingly/christly figure on the Hamat zodiac. Unlike the Winchester table shown above, the King/Christ/Sun figure is actually sitting in the center of the Hamat zodiac, because the Sun sits at the center of the zodiacal constellations. And so the Hamat zodiac graphically demonstrates the true form that all of these Round Tables would have originally taken, with the Sun-god (ie: Jesus, Joseph or Arthur as the 'Suns of God') sitting in the center of the zodiac/table surrounded by his twelve disciples/knights/constellations.

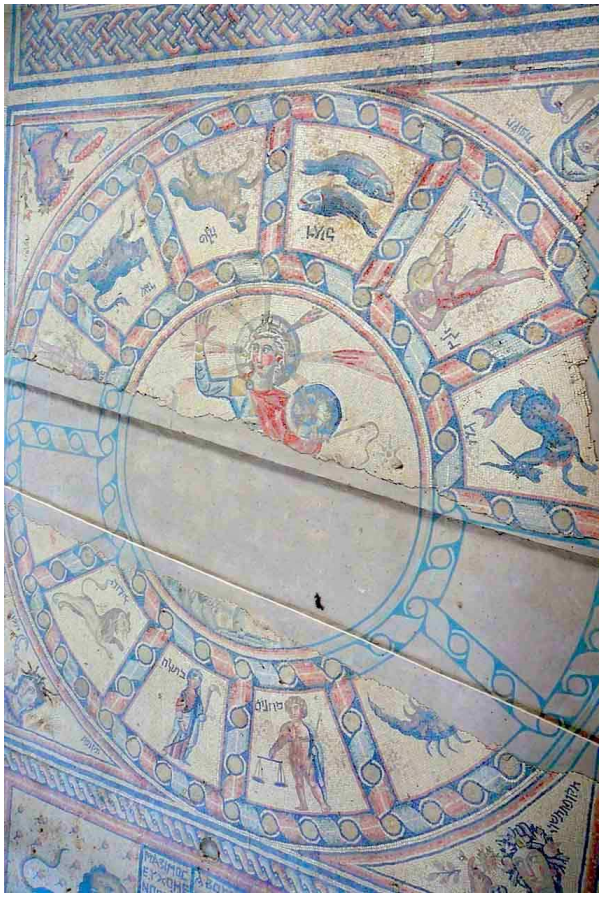


Fig 5.4 The first century Hamat Teverya zodiac at Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee - the template for the Round Table imagery of New Testament and Arthurian legend. This zodiac was probably constructed in the early first century, during Jesus' lifetime. Note that the central Sun-figure, Helios, carries a spherical blue Earth and so the form of the Earth was obviously well-known in this early era. And since the Sun is the main figure, with the Earth being held at arm's length, then the layout of the Heliocentric Solar System must also have been known in this era.

Note that the head of Helios in the Hamat zodiac points at the join between the constellations of Aries and Pisces, a position that precisely marks the year AD 10, and so this zodiac is most definitely an early 1st century construction. This is one reason why Jesus was such an important prince, because he was born at the beginning of the new Great Month of Pisces, the new precessional era when Aries changed to Pisces. This was an auspicious moment in the precessional-astrological calendar as each month lasts for about 2,140 years, and so the Persian Magi would have been searching for a special king (a messiah or christ) who was born at this time. That king was the biblical Jesus, and so he was portrayed on this zodiac as Helios, the Sun (of) God, standing at the center of the zodiac and pointing at the start of the new Great Month, which lies between Aries and Pisces. And in like fashion, just to reinforce this symbolism, he was portrayed in the biblical texts as the Lamb of God (Aries) who became the Fisher of Men (Pisces). Jesus, was the first of a long line of Arthurian Fisher kings, the Kings of Pisces.



Fig 5.5 King Arthur and the Round Table. In this representation of the Arthurian table, there is an empty space in the center of this round table. In reality, this space should have been occupied by Arthur/Jesus figure as the Sun (of) God, just as can be seen in the Hamat Teverya zodiac. So Jesus/Arthur would not simply have been at the center of his court, he would also have been seated at the center of his table.

Jesus to Arthur

But here is the real conundrum. If the legends of King Arthur's round table were based upon the traditions of Jesus and from the image of Helios on the Hamat zodiac, then how do we get from the names Jesus or Helios to the name Arthur? A name change would have been obligatory, of course, because it would not have been wise during the Middle Ages to have mentioned that the legends of King Arthur of England were based upon the history of King Jesus of Judaea, as that may well have attracted the hot pokers of the Inquisition. But nevertheless most pseudonyms have a rationale behind them, so how do we get from 'Jesus' to 'Arthur', while still preserving the history and layout of the Nazarene round-table of the zodiac? Actually, the answer to this is quite straightforward, if readers use a little lateral thinking.

We are perhaps all very familiar with the classical layout of the zodiac, but within astronomy there is an alternative method of looking at the layout of the heavens. The Hamat Teverya design is based upon a standard cosmic view of the Solar System, with the observer looking from above in the heavens and seeing the Sun far below surrounded by the twelve astrological constellations. However, if the observer stands instead on the Earth and looks upwards, what they will actually see is the dome of the night sky with the northern stars and constellations in the center, surrounded by the twelve astrological constellations. Take a look at the standard planisphere layout in fig 5.6, that this Earth-bound view creates.

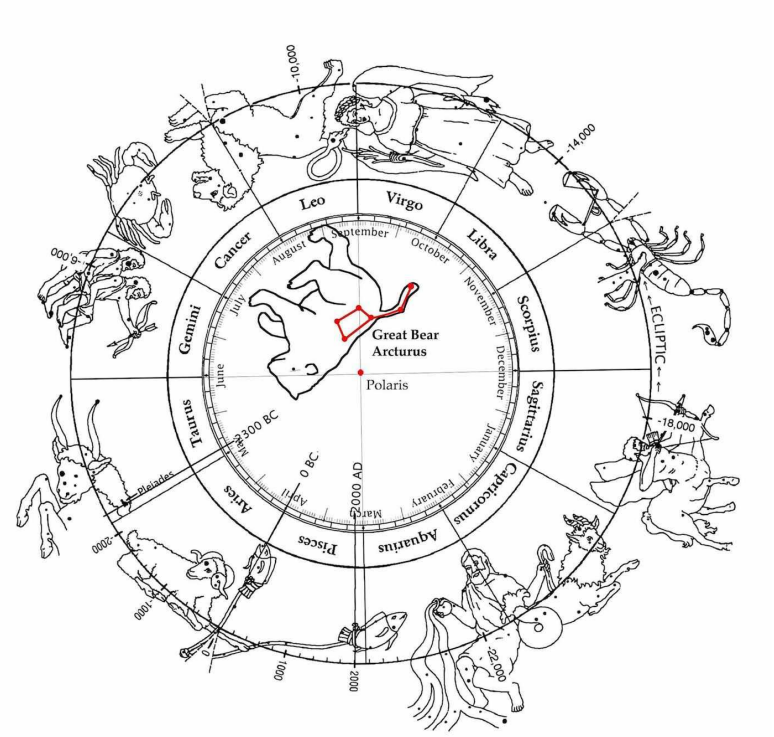


Fig 5.6
The constellations and the northern skies on an Earth-view zodiac. The center of this type of zodiac is occupied by the Great and Little Bears - Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. The Big Dipper section of Ursa Major is sometimes called 'Arthur's Chariot' or 'Arthur's Wagon'.

In this alternative layout, the center of the zodiac (the center of the Round Table) is not occupied by Helios the Sun (ie: Jesus or Arthur) as it is in the Hamat zodiac; instead, we see the constellation of the Great Bear (Ursa Major). However, it so happens that the most common explanation for the name 'Arthur' is that this famous king was named after the Celtic word *artos* meaning 'bear', or even *art-fawr* meaning 'great bear', from which we are supposed to derive the name 'Arthur'. However, while this may be the most popular explanation in books on Arthurian legend,[19] the true linguistic root for the name of the Great Bear was not Welsh, but Latin and Greek. The name 'Arthur' was actually derived from the Latin *arctus*, which refers to the north (from which we derive the English word 'Arctic'). But in its turn this Latin word was derived from the Greek *arktos* αρκτος, meaning 'bear'. It would appear that the bear was named first, by the Greeks, while the Latin word for 'north' was derived from the position of that great cosmic bear in the northern skies. No doubt the Celts took their name for a bear from this same linguistic lineage.

Thus the bear that stood in the center of the zodiac (in the center of the astrological Round Table, as depicted in fig 5.6), was actually called Arktos or Arctus, in the Greek and Latin respectively. It is from this word, together with a little influence from the Celtic pronunciation, that the troubadours and chroniclers of the Middle Ages have derived the name for their King Arctur or King Arthur. But since the Great Bear occupies the same position in the center of a zodiac as does the Helios/Jesus figure on the Hamat zodiac, then 'Arthur' would have been the perfect pseudonym for Jesus - as anyone well versed in the occult world of precessional astrology would have been able to join up the dots and discover which famous individual the legends of King Arthur were originally based upon. And this deception was so astute and breathtaking, that very few initiates of Celtic mythology have ever seen the truth about Arthurian legend - that much of this mythology simply recounted the epic story of Jesus-Arthur and his twelve disciple-knights of the Round-Zodiac-Table of the Last Supper.

Precession

At the very beginning of this article, it was stated that the Nazarene wisdom of the precession of the equinox had not been forgotten; it had merely been transferred to other lands. So where within Arthurian legend do we see evidence for the precession of the equinox? In addition to being representational of the kings Arthur and Jesus, the constellation of the Great Bear was also known in these Grail legends as Arthur's cosmic chariot or wagon. Some have indicated that this symbolism is due to the central stars of Arctus or Ursa Major - the Big Dipper portion of this constellation, marked in red on the planisphere in fig 5.6 - looking like the outline of a chariot. [21] However, I think the imagery and symbolism for this Arthurian Great Bear-wagon is much more scientific and esoteric than that.

There are two great axles or central shafts that penetrate the northern skies: the first is the celestial pole, around which the Earth spins on its daily rotation, which is currently located near the star Polaris. And then there is the ecliptic pole (the pole of the Solar System), around which the celestial pole rotates once every 25,700 or so years during the Great Year, and this is located in the middle of the constellation of Draco. Since the heavens can be seen to rotate around these two poles or axles, they have been described as great wheels in the heavens above, as can be seen on the diagram of the northern constellations in fig 5.7. [22]

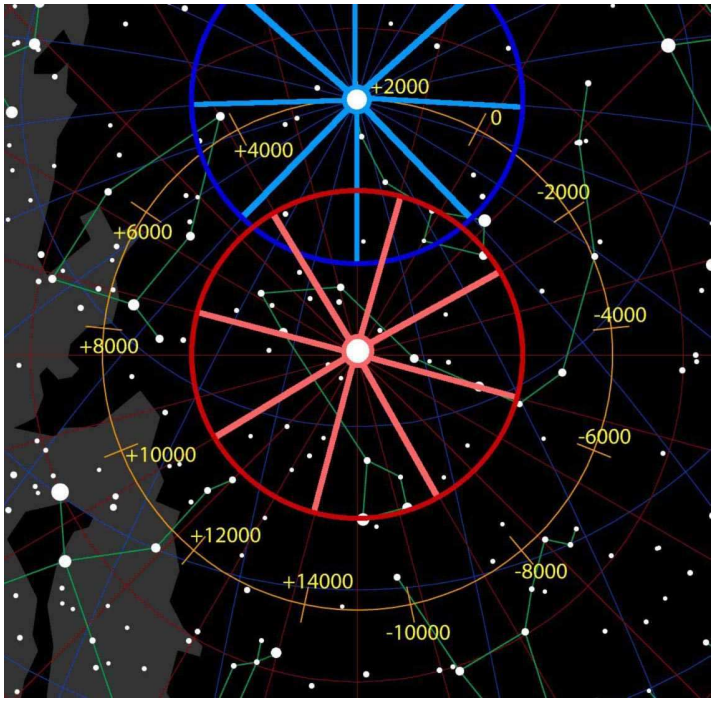


Fig 5.7
The two spoked wheels of King Arthur's chariot or wagon - the celestial circle and the ecliptic circle. The blue wheel marks the slowly moving celestial pole and its circuit, while the red wheel marks the stationary ecliptic pole and its circuit. The position of the blue celestial wheel, as it slowly rotates around the red ecliptic wheel, is marked in years BC and AD. Thus in 10 AD the axis of the blue celestial wheel would have been nearly 30˚ to the right of where it is now, in the 1 o'clock position on this diagram.

These poles are the axles of the two great wheels of the cosmic wagon of the northern skies. And these axles and wheels were certainly known about in the 5th century AD, because the Greek poet Nonnos of Panopolis says:

Beside the socket of the axle were the poles of the two heavenly wagons, never touched by water ... Between the two wagons he made the serpent, which is close by and joins the two separated bodies. [23]

And this description is correct, because from the 39 degree N latitude of Greece, both of the heavenly axles remain clear of the horizon (ie: clear of the water as observed in the northern skies by a sailor). In fact, both of these celestial and the ecliptic axles still remain clear of the horizon even down as far as Luxor in Egypt, where these observations may have been first made. The serpent that separated these two axles is a reference to the constellation of Draco, the serpent.

In a very similar fashion these poles were also the two great cosmic axles and wheels that formed the basis of King Arthur's chariot or wagon, and so this Arthurian 'mythology' demonstrates that this intimate knowledge of the workings of the cosmos had percolated its way up into northwestern European mythology. This *gnosis* or knowledge is likely to have come Egypt originally, and travelled via the Nazarene creed in Syria and Judaea and possibly through Greece too, and finally into Northwestern Europe. And so in mentioning the Cosmic Chariot the narrators of Arthurian legend were demonstrating their intimate knowledge of Egypto-Judaean philosophy and wisdom - the wisdom of Jesus and James and their Nazarene-Ebionite creed. And so the Medieval monastic scribes of Norman England and France must have been very satisfied with the delightful cyphers they had created within the complexities of Arthurian legend - an impenetrable code that kept them safe from the Catholic Inquisition.

Conclusion

It would appear that many ancient traditions and mythologies have understood the mechanics of the precession of the equinox, and utilized this knowledge in their chronicles and mythologies. But it is clear that this veneration and knowledge has often been covert: cloaked by claims of it being mere inconsequential mythology and folk-lore. In Judaea the precessional zodiac was a central component of the Nazarene religion, emblazoned on the floor of many synagogues. In Greece it had become a component of Dionysean mythology, while in northern Europe it had been absorbed within the turgid complexities of the Vulgate Cycle's narration of Arthurian legend. Knowledge of the precessional zodiac had been heretical for more than a millennia, during the Dark and Middle Ages, and it appears to have survived within the world of the occult or hidden mythology. Thus the overt and beautiful mosaic zodiacs of Judaea had become the hidden symbolism of a circular table, laid out for the dining of twelve knights or disciples. And so the evidence provided here, for an underground stream of gnostic astronomical knowledge, does suggest that ancient mythology and legend may well contain a greater historical and scientific content than is commonly acknowledged.

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Extracted from the books:
Cleopatra to Christ,
King Jesus,
Mary Magdalene, Princess of Orange.
All are available on iPad, Kindle, or Nook.
Paperback copies available from Adventures Unlimited of Illinois.

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