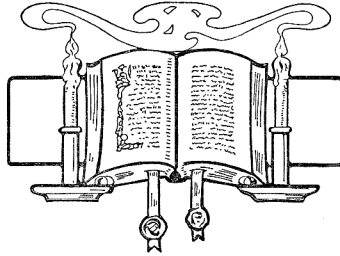


The Bible and Mythology

The Legend of Phaethon and the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac

BY CORINNE S. DUNKLEE



EVERY religion that has been given to mankind contains in some form the story of the passage of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac.

In the Old Testament of our Christian Bible we have the account of Jacob, who represents the sun, giving an especial blessing to each of his twelve sons. These blessings refer to the characteristics of the different signs which the sun passes through during his annual circuit of the heavens. This account is to be found in the 49th chapter of Genesis.

In the New Testament we have this same description outlined in the various events in the life of Christ Jesus and His twelve disciples as they are portrayed in the Four Gospels.

These star groups, or constellations, as they have come to be called, were probably first noted and named in Chaldea where the early shepherds during their long night watches in the hills occupied themselves by tracing among the distant stars the principal events in the lives of their favorite gods. Passing from one generation to another they were finally incorporated into the folklore of the early peoples and became an important factor in all their religious books, including astrology, the spiritual science of the stars, which formed a component part of the esoteric instruction of all teachers and priests.

The lovely, poetical mythology of Greece carries the same story in this manner:

Phaethon, the son of Apollo, the sun god, watched his father drive his golden

chariot across the sky and longed that he too might drive that shining chariot through the splendor of the clouds. Going into the palace of the sun, he entreated his father to

permit him to show to all Greece that he was truly a child of the sun, by being privileged to drive for one day along that radiant path of gold.

Apollo finally gave a reluctant consent. The ambitious youth leaped into the dazzling chariot, grasped the reins of the celestial steeds, and started along the great highway of the zodiac.

Ancient poets describe this daring ride and say that the heart of the earth trembled as she watched the snow-white horses of the sun god dash wildly up the flaming eastern sky.

Phaethon experienced great difficulty in passing each one of the signs of the zodiac. He reached the midheaven, and succeeded in passing the ferocious Lion, and was just beginning to become more calm as he left the Virgin and the Scales when to his great astonishment and horror he saw that terrible creature, the Scorpion, almost blocking the highway of the sky. Unable to control either himself or his horses, he turned aside and blazed a new pathway across the sky, which glowed awhile with the glory of his passing; but when it grew cold, left an ashy-gray trail along the way. This path is now called the Milky Way.

Here we find a most subtle allusion to the temptation and fall of man through the beguilement of the Lucifers, the Spirits of Fire. Through their influ-

ence, man turned aside from the guidance of the twelve celestial Hierarchies and blazed a new trail for himself which soon lost its pristine splendor and became the ashy-gray trail of mortality with the attendant limitations of the "Sorrowful Star."

The horses rushed along the horizon toward the West as Jupiter hurled a thunderbolt and knocked Phaethon out of the chariot and he fell a "charred fragment" into the river Eridanus.

"And Phaethon caught in mid-career,
And hurled from sun to utter sunless-
ness,
Like a flame-bearded comet, with ghost-
liest hiss,
Fell headlong into the amazed Eri-
danus."

Phaethon's three sisters, the Heliades, wept so bitterly on the banks of the Eridanus, that the gods in sympathy and compassion changed them into poplar trees—trees which never cease their sighing. And their ever-flowing tears were transformed into gleaming amber.

Ovid in his "Metamorphosis" pic-
tures their eternal grief:

"All the night long their mournful watch
they keep,
And all day stand around the tomb and
weep."

Cygnus, Phaethon's friend, also grieved deeply and watched the waters of this "River of Tears" for many days, until the gods in pity for his grief transformed him into a swan and placed him, lonely and white, on the banks of the misty river of stars men know as the Milky Way.

Phaethon represents humanity which fell through the influence of Scorpio into generation. Cygnus represents the way of regeneration for those who, through sorrow, find the way that leads to the pure and lonely swan on the path of Initiation.

Virgil sings of Cygnus and Phaethon:

"For Cygnus loved unhappy Phaethon
And sung his loss in poplar groves alone,
Beneath the sister shades to soothe his
grief.
Heaven heard his song and hastened to
his relief,
And changed to snowy plumes his hoary
hair
And winged his flight to sing aloft in
air."

Are You Remembering---

That we get just what we attract

And reap exactly as we sow?

That evil speaking will not return void,

And blessings scattered will yield harvest of their kind?

That earth life is for gathering experience

And after-life the period for building these into faculties?

That we are gods in the making,

And that the goal is Perfection?