

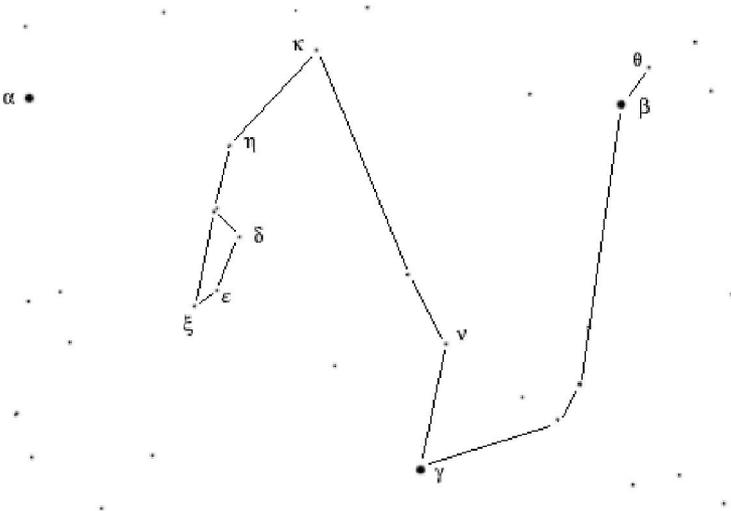
HYDRA THE SERPENT

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In the previous issue of the *Biblical Astronomer*, we started examining the celestial testimony of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We discovered that the constellations, in their most ancient form, do attest to what is commonly known as “the gospel in the stars,” or “the witness of the stars.” In this article, we continue our examination of the draconic constellations: Draco, Serpens, Hydra, and Hydrus, having covered Draco last time.¹

Hydrus and the chambers of the south

Two constellations bear the name Hydra. Commonly thought of as water snakes, the southern, smaller one is called *Hydrus*, the northern one *Hydra*. Hydrus was introduced in the star charts of the German astronomer Johann Bayer (1572-1625), and the constellation is thus attributed to him. Prior to that time, the constellation of Hydra was occasionally called Hydrus (the Latin masculine form of Hydra), but today, doing so causes confusion.



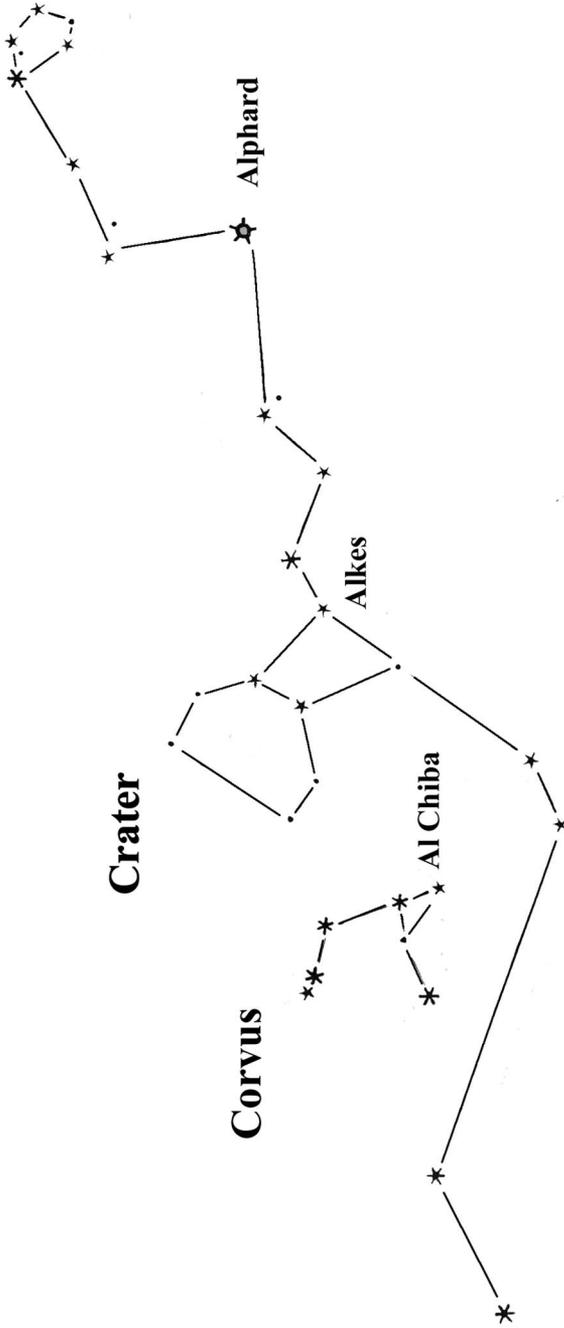
¹ Bouw, G. D., 2002. “Draco the Dragon,” *B.A.* **12**(99):51.

Within the scope of the witness of the stars, the recently-invented southern constellations would not be considered, but Hydrus is a special case because it was known to the Chinese. Perhaps this is why Bayer introduced it. The Chinese divided Hydrus into four asterisms: **e** and **z** denoting *Shay Show*, the serpent's head; *Shay Fuh* the serpent's belly; and *Shay We* the serpent's tail. The fourth part was called *Foo Pih*, the meaning of which is lost but which was marked by the star **g**. So there is evidence attesting to the antiquity of this constellation. The figure on the previous page is based on the Chinese asterism.

The brightest star of a constellation is called its *lucida*. For Hydrus the *lucida* is the star labeled **b**, in the tail. **b**, at magnitude 2.7, is the nearest conspicuous star to the celestial south pole, although it is 12° from the pole. The unnamed star is slightly (half a magnitude) fainter than Polaris, the North Star.

There is no clear-cut reference in Scripture to any particular southern constellation. By southern is here meant any constellations that in have not been above the horizon of the mid-East since the Noachic flood. There is a possible indirect reference to them in Job 9:9, "Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south." The "chambers of the south," have long puzzled commentators. Over time, there has developed a consensus that the chambers refer to constellations. Though weak, there is no other explanation other than that it might be high or low-pressure cells (Job 37:9, "south"), but if it were, why is the same idiom not applied to the north in that same verse. That leaves the southern constellations as the only viable interpretation.

Some may ask why we do not study the constellations of the Australian Aborigines, but doing so may lead us into the same trap we encountered in our study of Draco. There, in the course of time the pronunciation of the Arab name of the constellation "Dib" (dragon, serpent) had been changed to "Dih" (jackal) among the nomadic tribes. The altered pronunciation was deemed by the revisers of the Bible to be more authoritative than the overwhelming testimony of ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Armenians, etc. Thus the jackals entered the modern versions and the Dragon (Satan) was relegated to mythology, or, at least, to allegory. For a study of a discipline to be Biblical or scriptural, it must not contradict or strive with the Bible. Thus, the ancient testimony of the mid-East, whence man spread over all the face of the earth, must be the starting point for our study of the witness of the stars. The children of Ham (Egyptians, Canaanites, etc.) are the least reliable sources of history because their propensity for ancestor worship tends to pervert history to the glory of those ancestral gods. The Aborigines' constellations, as those of the nomadic Arabs, were mostly local.



Hydra

Hydra the water snake

Originally, the constellations Hydra, Corvus, and Crater were one. Their separation into three constellations happened in the 18th century, when for a time they were divided into four, viz. *Hydra*, *Hydra et Crater*, *Hydra et Corvus*, and *Continuatio Hydrae*. The Hebrew name Hydra appears related to the Hebrew *darak*, (Strong's H1869), to tread upon, to shoot, from which stems the word *drakon*, dragon. From it comes *Derek*, (Strong's H1870) meaning a road or, figuratively, a course of life or mode of action. The English word "direct" derives from it. In the constellation, it is a false way, of course. Eventually because of the similarity in sound between hydro and hydra, the serpent was associated with water and thus became a water snake. The Arabians called it *Al Hayyah*, another of their words for snake.

The lucida of the constellation is named *Alphard*, which in Arabic means the solitary one, it being the only bright star in the region. The name also means the separated one, as one cut off from life, that is, from God. The star **S**, at the nose of the serpent, is called *Minchir al Sugia*, casting down of the deceiver. The stars **d**, **e**, **z**, **h**, **r**, and **s**, forming the head of Hydra, were collectively known as *Min al Azal*, the reserved place. It lies directly in the path that Leo the lion is heading, as if the Lion of Judah is en route to bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15²).

Hydra is pictured on a stone constellation map from the Euphrates. Dating from about 1200 B.C., the serpent is there identified with the source of the fountains of the great deep, and is one of the several sky symbols of Tiamat, the great dragon.

Crater the cup

On or over the back of the serpent is the constellation of Crater, the cup. The early Greeks called it the goblet of Apollo, but generally it was called *Krathr*, which is its current name transliterated. The Jews called it *Cos*, a cup. Allen reports that: "A small ancient vase in the Warwick collection [bears] an inscription thus translated:

Wise ancients knew when Crater rose to sight,
Nile's fertile deluge had attained its height;

² And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Although Egyptian remains thus far show no allusion to the constellation.” That may still be true, but those who know the history of the British Isles, know that regular trade with Egypt existed back to the time of Moses. Irish history relates that one of the kings of Ireland even married one of Pharaoh’s daughters. It thus seems reasonable to suppose that the vase reflects a truth stemming back to Egypt.

Caesius (1571-1638), a Dutch globe maker, said that Crater represented the cup of Joseph found in Benjamin’s sack (Gen. 44), or one of the waterpots of the wedding at Cana (John 2), or the cup of Christ’s passion (Mat. 26:39). Others called it the Wine Cup of Noah (Gen. 9:20 v.f.). But those are all sixteenth and seventeenth century speculations, products of a zeal to Christianize all disciplines.

The only named star is Alkes, which is another form for “the cup.”

Corvus the crow

Now called a crow, originally it was seen as a raven. Usually “crow” is reserved for the North American variety of the raven. The main distinguishing feature is that crows have a raucous call whereas ravens have a croaking cry. Crows’ cries are *ca*, *car*, *caw*, *kahr*, or *cah*. Their calls are easily imitated. A raven’s cry sounds like *kraak*, *cr-r-ruck*, or *prruk*, or a metallic *tok*. The constellation was a raven to the Romans, Greeks, and Hebrews. It has also been associated with Noah’s Raven (Gen. 8:7), flying over the flood waters and alighting on Hydra in the absence of any dry land. It has also been associated with the ravens who fed Elijah (1 Ki. 17:4-6). Again, these are sixteenth or seventeenth century designations and today there is no evidence that they are any older than that.

The star which was once the lucida is called *Al Chiba* or *Al Chibar*, meaning joined together. It is at the beak of the raven, as reflected in its other name, *Minchir al Gorab*, which, in Arabic, means the piercing (beak) of the Raven. The brightest star is γ called *Gienah*, the cursed. The star δ is called *Al Gorab*, the raven.

The complete picture

Unquestionably, the serpent is a type of Satan. Even as Christ identifies himself with his Church (see Acts 9:5,³ for example), so those who take the mark of the beast are identified with the serpent, the old

³ And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

dragon. Thus Revelation 14:10 says of them “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation...” To this agree Jer. 25:15; Isa. 51:22; Psa. 75:8; and Rev. 16:19. Isaiah 51:17 says:

Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, *and* wrung *them* out.

The cup is poised over the serpent, and the raven is ready to feed on him. We see here the call of Ezekiel 39:17 namely,

And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, *even* a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.

Also, in the surrounding constellations, we see the Lion charging to bruise the head of the serpent.