



# “Star of the Sun”

Saturn is not a conspicuous planet in the sky. Were it not for its sluggish movement, an unaided eye would hardly distinguish it from the surrounding stars. In many ancient sources Saturn is called “sun.” The usual name for Saturn in Chaldean astronomy was Alap-Shamas, meaning “Star of the Sun.” <sup>(1)</sup> Diodorus of Sicily reported that the Chaldeans called Cronos (Saturn) by the name Helios, or the sun, and he explained that this was because Saturn was the most conspicuous of the planets; <sup>(2)</sup> Hyginus also wrote that Saturn was called “Sol.” <sup>(3)</sup> In the Babylonian astrological texts the word Shamash (Sun) was used to designate Saturn: “We learn from the notes written by the astrologers that by the word ‘sun’ we must understand the ‘star of the sun,’ i.e., Saturn.” <sup>(4)</sup> Ninib was the Babylonian name for Saturn: “Ninib in various places is said to shine like the sun.” He was known as UT-GAL-LU, the “great sun of storms.” <sup>(5)</sup> The Greeks used to call Saturn *Phaenon*, “the shining one.” <sup>(6)</sup>

If Saturn was always as inconspicuous as it is at present, what could have caused the races of antiquity, as if by common consent, to give to Saturn the appellation “sun” or “the shining one”? “The astrologers certainly must have found it increasingly contrary to reason to associate the star that gives us light and life with one of the palest, and the slowest of the planets.” <sup>(7)</sup>

The folk etymology of the Hebrews explained the name Khima as meaning “about a hundred (*ke’me-ah*) stars.” <sup>(8)</sup>

The *Bhagavat Gita* contains the following description of a deity: “If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be like the splendor of the mighty one . . . the shatterer of worlds.” <sup>(9)</sup>

All that we have considered up to now indicates that Saturn once exploded in a nova-like burst of light. The date of this event I would be hard-put to specify, even approximately, but possibly it took place about ten thousand years ago. The solar system and reaches beyond it were illuminated by the exploded star, and in a matter of a week the Earth was enveloped in waters of Saturnian origin.

## References

1. J. Menant, *La bibliotheque du Palais du Ninive* (Paris, 1890), p. 99.

2. He calls Saturn “*epiphanestaton*”—the most conspicuous (II. 30. 3-4). [J. Bidez, *Revue de Philologie* XXIX (1905), pp. 319-320 drew attention to the fact that one of the best manuscripts of the Platonic *Epinomis*, the Parisinus 1807A, has “Sun” where “Saturn” would be expected in the passage where the role of the planets is discussed. Bidez commented: “. . . La designation qui fait du Saturne ‘l’astre du soleil’ se trouve attestee par un temoignage nouveau, extremement remarquable a cause de son anciennete.” Cf. F. Boll, “Kronos-Helios,” *Archiv fuer Religionswissenschaft* XIX (1919), p. 344. The author cites also other examples. In 1869 a stele dedicated to “Kronos-Helios” was found in Beirut. See G. Colonna Ceccaldi, “Stele inedite de Beyrouth,” *Revue Archeologique* 23 (1872), Vol. I, pp. 253-256. On the solar aspect of Saturn’s cult in Roman Africa, see M. Leglay, *Saturne Africain* (Paris, 1966), pp. 183-187, 229.]

3. "Secunda stella dicitur solis quam alii Saturni dixerunt. Hanc Eratosthenes a Solis filio Phaethonta appellatam dicit. (Hyginus, *De Astronomia* II. 42, 8-10. Cf. A. Bouche-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque* (Paris, 1899), p. 93, n. 2.
4. R. C. Thompson, *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon in the British Museum*, Vol. II (London, 1900), pp. xxv-xxvi (nos. 174 and 176). [Cf. M. Jastrow, "Sun and Saturn," *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archeologie Orientale* VII (1910); and idem, *Die Religion Babylonien und Assyrien* (Giessen, 1905), Vol. II, p. 483 n. 4; 578, n. 4.]
5. P. Jensen, *Die Kosmologie der Babylonier* (Strassburg, 1890), pp. 116, 140. [Cf. Jastrow, *Die Religion Babylonien und Assyrien* Vol. I, pp. 57, 154.]
6. Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II. 52. [Cf. Manetho, *Apotelesmaticorum libri sex* IV. 14. Cf. also J. Geffcken, "Eine gnostische Vision," *op. cit.*, p. 699. "The Shining Star" was a designation for Saturn in Babylonia. See for instance, an inscription of Nabonidus in James B. Pritchard ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, 1950), p. 310.

In India the appellation of the sun, *arki*, was also applied to Saturn. R. Temple writes (*The Sirius Mystery* [New York, 1976], p. 180):

In Sanscrit again *arka* means "belonging or relating to the sun." *Arkam* means "as far as the sun, even to the sun inclusively." *Arki* has become a name for Saturn, thought at that time to be the most distant planet. *Arc* means "to shine, be brilliant," and can mean "to cause to shine." *Arkin* means "radiant with light."

Arkaja, the name often applied to Saturn, designates it as an offspring of the Sun (*Markandeya Purana*).].

7. Bidez, *Revue de Philologie*, *op. cit.*, p. 320: "Les astrologues trouverent sans doute de plus en plus deraisonnable de donner en appanage a l'astre d'ou nous vient la lumiere et la vie, une des plus pales et la plus lente des planetes."
8. Rabbi Samuel in Tractate Brakhot, Seder Zera'im of the *Babylonian Talmud*, IX, fol. 59.
9. *The Bhagavat Gita*, ch.

