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*Donec repleat orbem.*" 153 Schlegel mentions the story that Mahomet "wished to pass with his disciples as a

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person transfigured in a supernatural light, and that the credulity of his followers saw the moon, or the moon's light, descend upon him, pierce his garments, and replenish him. That veneration for the moon which still forms a national or rather religious characteristic of the Mahometans, may perhaps have its foundation in the elder superstition, or pagan idolatry of the Arabs." 154

No doubt this last sentence contains the true elucidation of the crescent. For astrolatry lives in the east still. The *Koran* may expressly forbid the practice, saying: "Bend not in adoration to the sun or moon"; 155 yet, "monotheist as he is, the Moslem still claps his hands at sight of the new moon, and says a prayer." 156

We come next to the Persians, whom Herodotus accuses of adoring the sun and moon. But, as Gibbon says, "the Persians of every age have denied the charge, and explained the equivocal conduct, which might appear to give colour to it." 157 It will certainly require considerable explanation to free from lunar idolatry the following passage, which we find in the *Zend Avesta*: "We sacrifice unto the new moon, the holy and master of holiness: we sacrifice unto the full moon, the holy and master of holiness." 158 Unquestionably the Persian recognised the Lord of Light in the ordinances of heaven; and therefore his was superior to many forms of blind idol-worship. So far we may accept Hegel's interpretation of the *Zend* doctrine. "Light is the *body of Ormuzd*; thence the worship of fire, because Ormuzd is present

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in all light; but he is not the sun or moon itself In these the Persians venerate only the light, which is Ormuzd." 159 In fact, we owe to the Persians a valuable testimony to the God in whom is no darkness at all. "The prayer of Ajax was for light"; and we too little feel the Fire which burns and shines beyond the stars.

In Central India the sun and moon are worshipped by many tribes, as the Khonds, Korkús, Tunguses, and Buraets. The Korkús adore the powers of nature, as the gods of the tiger, bison, the hill, the cholera, etc., "but these are all secondary to the sun and the moon, which among this branch of the Kolarian stock, as among the Kols in the far east, are the principal objects of adoration." 160 "Although the Tongusy in general worship the sun and moon, there are many exceptions to this observation. I have found intelligent people among them, who believed that there was a being superior to both sun and moon; and who created them and all the world." 160\* This last sentence we read with gratitude, but not with surprise. There is some good in all, if there seem to be all good in some.

"The aboriginal tribes in the Dekkan of India also acknowledge the presence of the sun and moon by an act of reverence." 161

The inhabitants of the island of Celebes, in the East Indian Archipelago, "formerly acknowledged no gods but the sun and the moon, which were held to be eternal. Ambition for superiority made them

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fall out." 162 According to Milton, ambition created unpleasantness in the Hebrew heaven.

In Northern Asia the moon had adoring admirers among the Samoyedes, the Morduans, the Tschuwashes, and other tribes. This is stated by Sir John Lubbock. 163 Lord Kames says: "The people of Borneo worship the sun and moon as real divinities. The Samoides worship both, bowing to them morning and evening in the Persian manner." 164 The *Samoides* are the "salmon-eaters" of Asia.

Moon-worship in China is of ancient origin, and exists in our own time. Professor Legge tells us that the primitive *shih* "is the symbol for manifestation and revelation. The upper part of it is the same as that in the older form of *Ti*, indicating 'what is above'; but of the three lines below I have not found a satisfactory account. Hsü Shān says they represent 'the sun, moon, and stars,' and that the whole symbolizes 'the indications by these bodies of the will of Heaven! Shih therefore tells us that the Chinese fathers believed that there was communication between heaven and men. The idea of revelation did not shock them. The special interpretation of the strokes below, however, if it were established, would lead us to think that even then, so far back, there was the commencement of astrological superstition, and also, perhaps, of Sabian worship." 165 Sabianism, as most readers are aware, is the adoration of the armies of heaven: the word being derived from the Hebrew *tzaba*, a host. Dr. Legge leaves [paragraph continues]

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Chinese Sabianism in some doubt, in the above quotation; but later on he speaks of the spirits associated with the solstitial worship, whose intercession was thus secured, "I, the emperor of the Great Illustrious dynasty, have respectfully prepared this paper, to inform the spirit of the sun, the spirit of the moon, the spirits of the five planets, of the constellations of the zodiac, and of all the stars in all the sky," and so on: and the professor adds: "This paper shows how there had grown up around the primitive monotheism of China the recognition and worship of a multitude of celestial and terrestrial spirits." 166 This is ample evidence to prove moon-worship. True, these celestial beings were "but ministering spirits," and the "monotheism remained." There was no *henotheism*, no worship of several *single* supreme deities: *One only* was supreme. So among the Hebrews, Persians, Hindoos, there was one only God; and yet they offered prayers and sacrifices to heaven's visible and innumerable host. When we come to modern China we shall find some very remarkable celebrations taking place, which throw sunlight upon these ancient mists. Meanwhile to strengthen our position, we may draw additional support from each of the three great stages reached in the progress of Chinese religion: namely, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Dr. Edkins describes them as the moral, materialistic, and metaphysical systems, standing at the three corners of a great triangle. 167 The god of Confucianism

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is *Shang-ti* or *Shang-te*. And with the universal anthropomorphism "Shang-te is the great father of gods and men: Shang-te is a gigantic man." 168 Again "Heaven is a great man, and man is a little heaven." 169 And now what does Confucianism say of moon-worship? "The sun and moon being the chief objects of veneration to the most ancient ancestors of the Chinese, they translated the soul of their great father heaven

or the first man (Shang-te) to the sun, and the soul of their great mother earth or the first woman (the female half of the first man) to the moon." 170 In Taoism there is no room for question. Dr. Legge says that it had its Chang and Liü, and "many more gods, supreme gods, celestial gods, great gods, and divine rulers." 171 And Dr. Edkins writes: "The Taouist mythology resembles, in several points, that of many heathen nations. Some of its divinities personate those beings that are supposed to reside in the various departments of nature. Many of the stars are worshipped as gods." 172 Buddhism not only supplies further evidence, it also furnishes a noteworthy instance of mythic transformation. Sakchi or Sasi, the moon, is literally one who made a sacrifice. This refers to the legend of the hare who gave himself to feed the god. The wife of Indra adopted the hare's name, and was herself called Sasi. "The Tantra school gave every deity its Sakti or consort, and speculation enlarged the meaning of the term still further, making it designate female energy or the female

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principle." 173 Buddhism, then, the popular religion in China at the present day, the religion which Dr. Farrar ventures to call "atheism fast merging into idolatry," 174 is not free from the nature worship which deifies the moon. But Buddhism, like most other imperfect systems, has precious gold mixed with its dross; and at the expense of a digression we delight to quote the statement of a recent writer, who says: "There is no record, known to me, in the whole of the long history of Buddhism, throughout the many countries where its followers have been for such lengthened periods supreme, of any persecution by the Buddhists of the followers of any other faith." 175 How glad we should feel if we could assert the same of the Christian Church!

We come at once to those celebrations which still take place in China, and illustrate the worship of the moon. The festival of *Yuě-Ping*--which is held annually during the eighth month, from the first day when the moon is new, to the fifteenth, when it is full--is of high antiquity and of deep interest. Dr. Morrison says that "the custom of civil and military officers going on the first and fifteenth of every moon to the civil and military temples to burn incense, began in the time of the Lüh Chaon," which would be not far from A.D. 550. Also that the "eighth month, fifteenth day, is called Chung-tsew-tsëë. It is said that the Emperor Ming-hwang, of the dynasty Tang, was one night led to the palace of the moon, where he saw a large assembly of Chang-go-sëëñ-neu--

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female divinities playing on instruments of music. Persons now, from the first to the fifteenth, make cakes like the moon, of various sizes, and paint figures upon them: these are called *Yuě-ping*, 'mooncakes.' Friends and relations pay visits, purchase and present the cakes to each other, and give entertainments. At full moon they spread out oblations and make prostrations to the moon." 176 Dennys writes: "The fifteenth day of the eighth month is a day on which a ceremony is performed by the Chinese, which of all others we should least expect to find imitated among ourselves. Most people resident in China have seen the moon-cakes which so delight the heart of the Chinese during the eighth month of every year. These are made for an autumnal festival often described as 'congratulating' or 'rewarding' the moon. The moon, it is well known, represents the female principle in Chinese celestial cosmogony, and she is further supposed to be inhabited by a multitude of beautiful females; the cakes made in her honour are therefore veritable offerings to the Queen of the Heavens. Now in a part of Lancashire, on the banks of the Ribble, there exists a precisely similar custom of making cakes in honour of the 'Queen of Heaven,'--a relic, in all probability, of the old heathen worship which was the common fount of the two customs." 177 Witness is also borne to this ceremony by a well-known traveller. "We arrived at Chaborté on the fifteenth day of the eighth moon, the anniversary of

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great rejoicings among the Chinese. This festival, known as the *Yuě-Ping* (loaves of the moon), dates from the remotest antiquity. Its original purpose was to honour the moon with superstitious rites. On this solemn day, all labour is suspended; the workmen receive from their employers a present of money, every person puts on his best clothes; and there is merry-making in every family. Relations and friends interchange cakes of various sizes, on which is stamped the image of the moon; that is to say, a hare crouching amid a small group of trees." 178 And Doolittle says: "It is always full moon on the fifteenth of every Chinese month; and, therefore, for several days previous, the evenings are bright, unless it happens to be cloudy, which is not often the case. The moon is a prominent object of attention and congratulation at this time. At Canton, it is said, offerings are made to the moon on the fifteenth. On the following day, young people amuse themselves by playing what is called '*pursuing*,' or '*congratulating*' the moon. At this city [Fuhchau], in the observance of this festival, the expression '*rewarding the moon*' is more frequently used than '*congratulating the moon*.' It is a common saying that there is 'a white rabbit in the moon pounding out rice.' The dark and the white spots on the moon's face suggest the idea of that animal engaged in the useful employment of shelling rice. The notion is prevalent that the moon is inhabited by a multitude of beautiful females, who are called by the

name of an

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ancient beauty who once visited that planet; but how they live, and what they do, is not a matter of knowledge or of common fame. To the question, 'Is the moon inhabited?' discussed by some Western philosophers, the Chinese would answer in the affirmative. Several species of trees and flowers are supposed to flourish in the moon. Some say that, one night in ancient times, one of the three souls of the originator of theatrical plays rambled away to the moon and paid a visit to the Lunar Palace. He found it filled with Lunarians engaged in theatrical performances. He is said to have remembered the manner of conducting fashionable theatres in the moon, and to have imitated them after his return to this earth. About the time of the festival of the middle of autumn, the bake shops provide an immense amount and variety of cakes: many of them are circular, in imitation of the shape of the moon at that time, and are from six to twelve inches in diameter. Some are in the form of a pagoda, or of a horse and rider, or of a fish, or other animals which please and cause the cake to be readily sold. Some of these 'moon-cakes' have a white rabbit, engaged with his pounder, painted on one side, together with a lunar beauty, and some trees or shrubs; on others are painted gods or goddesses, animals, flowers, or persons, according to fancy." 179

If we turn now to Jeremiah vii. 18, and read there, "The women knead dough, to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink offerings

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unto other gods," and remember that, according to Rashi, these cakes of the Hebrews had the image of the god or goddess stamped upon them, we are in view of a fact of much interest. We are so unaccustomed to think that our peasants in Lancashire can have anything in common with the Chinese five thousand miles away, and with the Jews of two thousand five hundred years ago, that to many these moon-cakes will give a genuine surprise. But this is not all. Other analogies appear between Buddhist and Christian rites, such as those mentioned by Dr. Medhurst. "The very titles of their intercessors, such as 'goddess of mercy,' 'holy mother,' 'queen of heaven,' with the image of a virgin, having a child in her arms, holding a cross, are all such striking coincidences, that the Catholic missionaries were greatly stumbled at the resemblance between the Chinese worship and their own, when they came over to convert the natives to Christianity." 180 It is for the philosophical historian to show, if possible, whether these Chinese ceremonies are copies of Christian or Hebrew originals; or whether, many of our own Western forms with others of Oriental character, are not transcripts of primitive faiths now well-nigh forgotten in both East and West. The hot cross buns of Good Friday, at first sight, have little relevancy to moon worship, and those who eat them suppose they were originated to commemorate the Christian Sacrifice; but we know that the cross was a sacred symbol with the earliest Egyptians, for it is

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carved upon their imperishable records; we know too that

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# Astrolatry

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**Astrolatry** is the worship of stars and other heavenly bodies as deities, or the association of deities with heavenly bodies. The most common instances of this are sun gods and moon gods in polytheistic systems worldwide. Also notable is the association of the planets with deities in Babylonian, and hence in Greco-Roman religion, viz. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

The term **astro-theology** is used in the context of 18th to 19th century scholarship aiming at the discovery of the original religion, particularly primitive monotheism. Unlike *astrolatry*, which usually implies polytheism, frowned upon as idolatrous by Christian authors since Eusebius, astrotheology is any "religious system founded upon the observation of the heavens",<sup>[1]</sup> and in particular, may be monotheistic.

Babylonian astronomy from early times associates stars with deities, but the heavens<sup>[2]</sup> as the residence of an anthropomorphic pantheon, and later of monotheistic God and his retinue of angels, is a later development, gradually replacing the notion of the pantheon residing or convening on the summit of high mountains.

Sayce (1913) argues a parallelism of the "stellar theology" of Babylon and Egypt, both countries absorbing popular star-worship into the official pantheon of their respective state religions by identification of gods with stars or planets.<sup>[3]</sup>

Astrolatry does not appear to have been common in the Levant prior to the Iron Age, and becomes popular under Assyrian influence. The Sabaeans were notorious for their astrolatry, for which reason the practice is also known as "Sabaism" or "Sabaeism". Similarly, the Chaldeans came to be seen as the prototypical astrologers and star-worshippers by the Greeks.

Astrology in the Hellenistic period grew out of Near Eastern and Egyptian practices of astrolatry. Mithraism was a Roman era mystery religion which incorporated many aspects of arcane astral lore derived from Hellenistic astrology.

## Prohibition in Abrahamic religions

The Hebrew Bible contains repeated reference to astrolatry. Thus, Deuteronomy 4:19, 17:3 contains a stern warning against worshipping the sun, moon, stars or any of the heavenly host. Relapse into worshipping the host of heaven, i.e. the stars, is said to have been the cause of the fall of the kingdom of Judah in II Kings 17:16. King Josiah in 621 BC is recorded as having abolished all kinds of idolatry in Judah, but astrolatry was continued in private (Zeph. 1:5; Jer. 8:2, 19:13). Ezekiel (8:16) describes sun-worship practiced in the court of the temple of Jerusalem, and Jeremiah (44:17) claims that even after the destruction of the temple, women in particular insisted on continuing their worship of the "queen of heaven".

Augustine of Hippo criticized sun- and star-worship in *De Vera Religione* (37.68) and *De civitate Dei* (5.1-8). Pope Leo the Great also denounced astrolatry, and the cult of *Sol Invictus*, which he contrasted with the Christian nativity.

The Qur'an contains strong prohibitions against astrolatry. Wikipedia:Citation needed

Strong prohibition of Astrolatry is mentioned in the Quran through Prophet Abraham observation of celestial bodies whose worship was common in Babylonian religion of that time.

Below is the reference from Al-Quran, Surah Anaam, chapter 6, verses 75-80

75. Thus did we show Ibrahim (Abraham) the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he be one of those who have Faith with certainty.

76. When the night covered him over with darkness he saw a star. He said: "This is my lord." But when it set, he said: "I like not those that set."

77. When he saw the moon rising up, he said: "This is my lord." But when it set, he said: "Unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among the erring people."

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78. When he saw the sun rising up, he said: "This is my lord. This is greater." But when it set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from all that you join as partners in worship with Allah.

79. Verily, I have turned my face towards Him Who has created the heavens and the earth Hanifa (Islamic Monotheism, i.e. worshipping none but Allah Alone) and I am not of Al-Mushrikun (see V.2:105)".

80. His people disputed with him. He said: "Do you dispute with me concerning Allah while He has guided me, and I fear not those whom you associate with Allah in worship. (Nothing can happen to me) except when my Lord (Allah) wills something. My Lord comprehends in His Knowledge all things. Will you not then remember?

Al-Quran, Surah Anaam (chapter 6, verse 75-80)

## Astro-theology

Astrotheology is the study of the astronomical origins of religion; how gods, goddesses, and demons are personifications of astronomical phenomena such as lunar eclipses, planetary alignments, and apparent interactions of planetary bodies with stars.

The term *astro-theology* appears in the title of a 1714 work by William Derham, *Astro-theology: or, A demonstration of the being and attributes of God, from a survey of the heavens* based on the author's observations by means of "Mr. Huygens' Glass". Derham thought that the stars were openings in the firmament through which he thought he saw the Empyrean beyond.<sup>[4]</sup> The 1783 issue of *The New Christian's magazine* had an essay entitled *Astro-theology* which argued the "demonstration of sacred truths" from "a survey of heavenly bodies" in the sense of the watchmaker analogy. Edward Higginson (1855) argues a compatibility of "Jewish Astro-theology" of the Hebrew Bible, which places God and his angelic hosts in the heavens, with a "Scientific Astro-theology" based on observation of the cosmos.

Manly P Hall (1901-1990), mystic and a 33rd degree mason, taught that each of the three Abrahamic faiths has a planet that governs that religion. Judaism is Saturn: the symbol of Judaism is a hexagram symbol of Saturn, and the day of worship is on Saturday, day of Saturn. Christianity is the Sun: the symbol of Christianity is the cross symbol of the Sun, and the day of worship is Sunday, day of the Sun. Islam is Venus: the symbol of Islam is the star and crescent (the star commonly thought to represent Venus), and the day of worship is on Friday.

D.M. Murdock, a proponent of the study, has released books on the subject and teaches the connections between the solar allegory and the life of Christ. She also goes beyond the astronomical comparisons and postulates ties between the origins of many of the early Abrahamic religions to ancient mythologies of that in Egypt, Rome, and Greece.

The same term is used by Jan Irvin, Jordan Maxwell and Andrew Rutajit (2006) in reference to "the earliest known forms of religion and nature worship", advocating the entheogen theory of the origin of religion.

## References

[1] OED, citing Derham (1714) as the first attestation of the term.

[2] [http://toolsserver.org/%7Edispenser/cgi-bin/dab\\_solver.py?page=Astrolatry&editintro=Template:Disambiguation\\_needed/editintro&client=Template:Dn](http://toolsserver.org/%7Edispenser/cgi-bin/dab_solver.py?page=Astrolatry&editintro=Template:Disambiguation_needed/editintro&client=Template:Dn)

[3] Archibald Henry Sayce, *The religion of ancient Egypt*, Adamant Media Corporation, 1913, 237f.

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## External links

- Jewish Encyclopedia, Star-worship (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1042&letter=S>)
  - Blackwell Reference Online, Star-Worship (Astrolatry, Sabaism) ([http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9780631181392\\_chunk\\_g978063118139220\\_ss1-156](http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9780631181392_chunk_g978063118139220_ss1-156))
  - Interdisciplinary Encyclopedia of Religion and Science (<http://www.disf.org/en/Voci/39.asp>)
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