

The analysis of all extant Greco-Roman systems of astrological geography (listed on pp. 303–309) shows that Michael Molnar's claim (*The Star of Bethlehem*, 1999) for an association of Aries with Judea in the first century BCE (and equally so in the 1st c. CE) is not plausible. It is likely that Judea did not feature in any system of astrological geography until Ptolemy devised his complex new system (diagram: p. 324). But even if one were willing to grant the possibility that Judea was associated with Aries in some hypothetical, no longer extant source, it would still be true that at the time of Herod a dozen other countries were certainly associated with Aries in the sources analyzed in the present article: Armenia, Babylonia, Cappadocia, Egypt, Libya, Mesopotamia, Persia, the Red Sea, Syria, Thrace, and western Arabia. The chances that hypothetical Eastern astrologers (the Magi) would have chosen Judea are minimal, especially if they came from Persia, because Persia was an important (arguably the most important) country associated with Aries in the Pre-Christian systems of Hellenistic astrological geography and had its own expectation of a saviour.

If one considers, in addition, the manifold other problems and methodological offenses connected to Molnar's view, it seems far better to read Matthew's story of the Magi in its scriptural context along the lines of traditional biblical exegesis and recognize it as a masterly coherent synthesis of literary, symbolic, political, and theological merits.