

Anyone ever heard of Hugh Ross? . . . How about the *Reasons to Believe* organization? . . . I hadn't either until this week. As a young man Ross was consumed by the study of physics and astronomy. He devoured scientific texts, and found in them a knowledge that excited him. His studies of science and the order of the universe led him to the belief that there had to be a Creator who set the whole thing in motion. Also, as a young man, he began studying the texts of the world's major religions. He measured each one against the known facts of science and history. His study of the stars and the planets led him to believe that there was a God. He often said: "My education led me to the stars; my faith led me beyond." He earned degrees in physics and astronomy from the University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto. In 1985, he and his wife established *Reasons to Believe*, an organization (based in California) that works to integrate science and faith. The initial staff of 3 grew to 12 and now to about 25, and includes a physicist, an astrophysicist, a biochemist, and theologians. They promote their work by means of books, lectures, a Web presence, and podcasts.

Now, I don't know enough about Hugh Ross or about *Reasons to Believe* to endorse and recommend them and their work. I present them as an example of the point I want to make today. Ross says he searched the stars, and he found God. . . . Isn't that the story of the magi from the east?

The Epiphany is always seen as the revelation of the Christ Child to all nations. And that, indeed, it is. Jesus is revealed to the magi, as representatives of all the nations on earth.

The great contemporary theologian, Karl Rahner, in his book *The Great Church Year*, (Crossroad Publication, 1994), suggests another perspective on this feast. He says that, in this second Christmas feast, there is a new movement. God came to us on Christmas; now, in the Epiphany, we, as believers, led by the astrologers from the east, go to God. What the magi did in their journey from the east sets the pattern for what we are to do.

This perspective has two important implications:

- 1. Our whole lives are to be a continuous movement toward God.** In other words, we have here on this earth no lasting city. Our life-journey takes us elsewhere. Our destiny lies beyond the confines of this world. Like the magi, we are pilgrim people, following a star, searching for the King of Kings. Saint Augustine says in one of his sermons: “Of his own will he was born for us today, in time, so that he could lead us to his Father’s eternity. God became man, so that man might become God.” [Sermo 13 de Tempore: PL 39, 1097-1098] The end-point of our journey takes us beyond this world.
- 2. Like the magi, we must be careful not to allow ourselves to be detoured by danger or difficulty, or anything else.** Just as the magi had to deal with obstacles along the way – like Herod’s evil intent, there are so many things along our way that can distract us, that can lead us off the path, that can take us in a different direction. We each know what those things are for ourselves. The challenge is to keep our gaze fixed on the star, to keep our eyes on our true and final destiny, and to keep moving in that direction.

Like the magi who followed the star and arrived at Bethlehem; and like Hugh Ross, whose studies of the stars and the planets led him to a belief in God and beyond; we too, with God’s grace, will arrive at our true destiny.