

## Stars of Wonder

by Mike Tucker \*

God moves in mysterious ways. The Christmas event gives us the best opportunity see the truth of this cliché through the roles played by the cast of characters in the story. Like shooting stars, many of the characters enter and leave the stage without much fanfare, shining their light briefly before quickly vanishing.

John the Baptist is one such example. From his miraculous conception to his father's muteness, the Scriptures leave no doubt that he was a unique child. All who knew about him could not wait to see what he would become (Luke 1:66).

Jesus would say later that John was greater than any prophet who had existed up to that point. But the whole purpose of his existence was reduced to the occasion of announcing the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah. Like a shooting star, John's light fizzled out when the Messiah entered the scene. A petty potentate snuffed out John's life, but not before John fulfilled his purpose. John's role on the stage was quite short-lived.

Another such character was Simeon, to whom God had given the promise that he would live to see the birth of the Lord's Christ. Taking the child in his arms, Simeon could not help but offer praise to the director of the entire production for dismissing him in peace. One could also mention Anna, an eighty-four year-old woman who had prayed and fasted in the temple ever since her seven-year marriage came to an end with the death of her husband. She, too, had a role to play in the drama of the birth of Jesus: her shining moment was the solitary event of holding Baby Jesus in her arms and saying something about him!

The minor roles played by these characters in the Christmas story teach us that though the world is indeed a stage on which we make our entrances and exits, as Shakespeare claimed, God takes special interest in every role. Although my part may not seem as glamorous as the roles played by others, it is an indispensable piece of the larger puzzle in the mind of God.

One more thing! "Shooting stars" are not stars at all. They are broken pieces of rock or metal that burn up once they come into contact with the earth's atmosphere, eventually landing upon the earth as dust. Just like the moon, the light they reflect is not their own, but unlike the moon, they are used up in the process of lighting up the sky. What a fitting metaphor for characters like John the Baptist, Simeon, Anna, and countless others throughout history, who have been content to be used up for the sake of the Kingdom of God! Even though they do return to the earth as dust, the earth itself will eventually have to give up their bodies, for the Babe of Bethlehem clothed himself with dust so that the person of dust may be eternally clothed with glory.

Merry Christmas!  
Mike

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Faith Moment  
December 18, 2014