

The Queen of Sheba and the Ethiopian problem

Patrick Clarke

A study of ancient literature, cartography, and the Bible Old Testament narrative shows that the peoples of the Ancient Near East (ANE) viewed their world very differently from our 21st-century eyes. The Æthiopia (Ethiopia) described by many Greek and Roman writers, and relied upon by a number of chronological revisionists, bears no resemblance to the modern State of Ethiopia, its location, or extent. The idea that the biblical Queen of Sheba ruled ancient Egypt and a land equating to modern Ethiopia is based on a faulty understanding of the Greco-Roman Æthiopia.

A quarter of a century ago, creationist Dr Charles V. Taylor made this observation:

“I hold no brief for Velikovsky’s theology, or lack of it, but one must admit that his chronologies have never seriously been disproved, but rather slandered and libelled without proper examination.”¹

What was true 25 years ago is no longer the case today—Taylor’s observation was justified back then, but now a new generation of scholars is emerging who, while often not holding any brief for conventional chronologies, are challenging Velikovsky’s chronology and theology using multi-disciplinary skills.

When I read Velikovsky’s *Ages in Chaos* I was surprised by the manner in which he took other people’s statements out of their original context, and blended them into novel arguments for chronological revision of the ANE (note that I support the need for revision, but this needs to be on a sound footing). Some of these contextomies were discussed in my 2010 paper *Why Pharaoh Hatshepsut is not to be equated to the Queen of Sheba* (hereafter *PHQS*).² The central argument of David Austin’s 2012 Viewpoint in this Journal, “‘The Queen of the South’ is ‘the Queen of Egypt’”³ (hereafter *QSQE*) is that the Queen of Sheba was a queen of both Egypt and Ethiopia. *QSQE* bases its biblical proof that the Queen of the South refers to a Queen of Ethiopia on a very small part of the Book of Daniel (11:5, 6, 8–11). This is supplemented with comments from three authors—Young,⁴ Calvin,⁵ and Mauro⁶—all from works that discussed the end-times Great Tribulation.

The core of the *QSQE* case is this: if Jesus’ ‘Queen of the South’ can be linked to Daniel’s ‘King of the North’ (Syria), and ‘King of the South’ (Egypt), the Queen of the South must be Egyptian also. It all sounds very straightforward, but as we shall see, linking this idea to the notion of this queen being monarch of Egypt and of a land or region called Æthiopia by Greek and Roman historians is not as simple as followers of Velikovsky’s revision would have us believe.

Fallacies in the QSQE abstract

Before discussing the Ethiopian question in depth, let us examine the *QSQE* abstract. It begins with a bold assertion: “Biblical and geographical arguments support the idea that The Queen of Sheba ... was The Queen of Egypt, not Arabia.”

Nowhere in the Bible is mention made of any *Queen of Egypt*—this was covered in my original paper, *PHQS*.⁷

The region today called Arabia was not known by that name in the period in question. The first written record of the name Arabia seems to be Herodotus’ *The Histories*, Book III, c. 430 BC:

“There is a great river in Arabia, called the Corys, which empties itself into the Erythraean Sea.”⁸

The name Arabia comes from the Old Persian where it is pronounced ‘Arab’ya’, and does not appear in the crucial period of Solomon in the 10th century BC timeframe required by the *QSQE* proposal. *QSQE*’s reliance on a modern map (figure 1) to explain things, with its modern names and geo-political boundaries, is pointless—the modern and ancient worlds were, and are, quite different places.

The next sentence of the abstract reads:

“The reigns of the Queen of Sheba and Queen Hatshepsut were also contemporaneous.”

The reigns of Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain (1953–present) and that of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands (1948–1980) were also contemporaneous. No-one would claim that they are one and the same monarch as a result of any contemporaneity. That someone was a contemporary of someone else proves nothing, other than that they were *living* (in this case reigning) *at the same time*. It does not indicate that the Queen of Sheba and Pharaoh Hatshepsut, mentioned in the abstract, were the same person. The *QSQE* argument seems to be some sort of analogical inference that involves noting the shared properties of two or more things (in this case *Queen*), and from this basis inferring that they also share some further property (a ruler of *Egypt*). In short, *contemporaneous* is not *identical*.

The final sentence of the abstract reads:

“This fact and others vindicate Immanuel Velikovsky’s chronology, which was basically correct, although in error in some areas.”

The ‘fact’ referred to is the ‘contemporaneous is not identical’ fallacy shown above. It is hard to see how one can claim at the same time that Velikovsky’s chronology is “basically correct” while admitting that it is “in error in some areas”—an admission which would seem to contradict the claim that Velikovsky’s chronology has been vindicated. A chronology is like a chain that ‘links’ to (correlates with) a whole host of historical points. And like a chain, it is only as strong as its weakest link. If it is admitted to be flatly wrong in one area, the correlations in the rest of the chain are obviously worthless.

Geographical proof?

The major theme of the *QSQE* paper is based on the presumed geographical location of a nation bearing the toponym Ethiopia (written by Greek and Roman Historians as *Aethiopia*—both names are used interchangeably in this paper) and its presumed link to the biblical Queen of Sheba. The *QSQE* begins the section *Geographical proof* by claiming that Whiston (translator of the works of Josephus) had written that “this Queen of Sheba was a Queen of Sabea in South Arabia”.

This was used by the *QSQE*’s author to dispute a comment I made concerning the location of the land of Sheba.⁹ By using selective quote editing, Whiston’s original words were taken out of context to suit the *QSQE* case. His original statement was:

“That this queen of Sheba was a queen of Sabea in South Arabia, and not of Egypt and Ethiopia, as Josephus here asserts, is, I suppose, now generally agreed; and since Sabea is well known to be a country near the sea, in the south of Arabia Felix, which lay south from Judea also; and since our Saviour calls this queen ‘the queen of the south’, and says, ‘she came from the utmost parts of the earth’ (Matt. xii, 42; Luke xi, 31); which descriptions agree better to this Arabia than to Egypt and Ethiopia, there is little occasion for doubting in this matter [*QSQE* contextomy emphasized].”¹⁰

When Whiston’s words are placed back in their original context it is absolutely clear that Whiston was certain that the Queen of Sheba came from what is now Arabia, and Ethiopia is ruled out.

Understanding the map

The *QSQE* choice of map (figure 1) can be used to show that modern nation-states in the Middle-eastern region do not correspond to the world of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba 3,000 years ago. The nations featured are recent creations with modern internationally recognized borders.

- Iraq’s borders were demarcated in 1920 by the Treaty of Sèvres. Formerly this region was called Mesopotamia.
- Modern Syria was established after WWI as a French mandate, extending from the Turkish border to Sinai, and became independent in 1946, occupying its present borders.
- The establishment of the modern State of Israel occurred in 1948.
- The Hashemite Emirate was founded in 1921. In 1946, it became the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan.
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded by Abdul-Aziz bin Saud in 1932.
- Sudan was formerly the Kingdom of Cush. The modern Sudan of the *QSQE* map was established in 1956.
- Ancient Egypt was established on different borders to the modern state. Egypt began 40 centuries before the above states were formed, and was centred on the Nile valley.

These states, with the exception of Egypt, were created in the 20th century, between 60 and 100 years ago. My papers discuss events that happened 30 centuries ago. I have deliberately omitted Ethiopia from this list as this will be discussed separately.

How map reading ought to work

The *QSQE* author, a little further into his paper, states that in order to find south on a map, someone must “drop a plumline”, or that one should “follow in a parallel line the edge of the atlas page ...”.

However, the world has a curved surface, and longitudinal lines grow wider apart the nearer to the equator one travels. Does the *QSQE* author understand how using longitudinal references affects his case?



Figure 1. Modern map of the Middle-East used in *QSQE*.

A longitudinal line running through Jerusalem at 35°13'E will pass through modern Egypt in its south-eastern corner (placing 1.5% of Egyptian territory to the east of the line). The 'Jerusalem line' does not pass through Syria as claimed: the *westernmost* point of Syria, close to Latakia, is at 35°47'E. The *QSQE* claim that "Syria sits 'on top' of Israel" is misleading—a difference of 35 minutes longitude at that latitude is significant—the westernmost point of modern Syria lies east of Jerusalem.

The easternmost border of ancient Egypt was demarcated by a line of fortifications that lay along the length of the Bitter Lakes, a body of water that was more extensive then than today, stretching in an almost unbroken line from the Mediterranean to modern-day Suez. The *QSQE* claim that Egypt was south of Syria and Israel is nonsense since the Sinai Peninsula (Egy. *bi3w* 𐤁𐤓𐤏𐤏) was where ancient Egyptians considered Asia began. Suez (the furthest point east) lies at 32°33'E, some three degrees west of both Latakia in Syria 35°47'E, and Jerusalem 35°13'E. The *QSQE* margin of error at this latitude is approximately 240 km (150 miles).

Syria

The *QSQE* author wrote:

"Geographically, taking the countries between the longitudinal 35° and 40° lines, starting from the northern position of Israel and Syria (Syria sits 'on top' of Israel), we find, moving latitudinally south, that the countries that lie directly south in our current maps are not Yemen or Southern Arabia, but part of Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan. These last four countries are all in Africa. Yemen lies between the 40° and the 55° longitudinal lines. Considering that Jerusalem is almost on the 35° line of longitude, it is impossible to find Southern Arabia as 'directly' south of Jerusalem whichever way we look at a map [emphasis in original]."³

My original point was to use Jerusalem (35°13'E) as the fixed position of Jesus' statement in Matthew 12:42. Jesus was speaking figuratively of something familiar to people of the time—"South" was used to indicate, in the general sense, a location south of Jerusalem rather than to the north; and 'ends of the Earth' was a common metaphor indicating the end of terra firma and the beginning of the sea. We will come across the phrase 'ends of the Earth' later.

There is no justification for using the toponym *Southern Arabia*—I did not use this name—this is a straw man. Modern nation names such as Yemen, Eritrea, or Sudan were not used in my paper either. By misusing longitude and latitude, the *QSQE* author again erects a strawman by inserting names of nations to prove that they were not where I claimed them to be. This sort of fallacy is practised often in the *QSQE* paper.

In some quarters, the classical name Syria is thought to be a modification of Assyria and to date from the period of the Assyrian subjugation of ancient Aram. The toponym Syria

does not occur in Homer (a source much relied upon in the *QSQE*), who refers to the region under a different toponym, Arimi (hence *Aram*): "By angry Jove in Arimi (εἰν Ἀριμοῦς) descend."¹¹

Strabo¹² also informs us that the people of that region were called Arimi (*Geographica*). The Arimi or Arameans were a Northwest Semitic semi-nomadic and pastoralist people whose origins are still hotly debated. Aram אַרַם—their eponymous founder, was the fifth son of Shem and thus cannot be confused with Asshur, the eponymous founder of Assyria, the second son of Shem.¹³

Why Bible translators chose *Syria* rather than the original *Aram* in Judges 10:6, and onwards after that point, remains as much a mystery as the replacing of *Cush* כּוּשׁ with the later misleading *Ethiopia* (Isaiah 45:14). Using modern names to explain ancient ones is unhelpful from a historical perspective.

The 'Ethiopian' problem

The *QSQE* author asks: "Did such a region as 'Αἰθιοπία' (Ethiopia) exist in the times of Solomon, Rehoboam, Queen Hatshepsut, The Queen of Sheba, Thutmose III, Sheshonk, or Shishak?";¹⁴ and then seeks to discredit my assertion that it did not.

Sheshonk (Sheshonk I) is viewed by some scholars to be the biblical Shishak, but that only works if the Conventional Egyptian Chronology (CEC) is correct—and it isn't. Later in the *QSQE*, Thutmose III is claimed to be Shishak. So why introduce Sheshonk to the argument? Thutmose and Sheshonk are separated by around 480 years: surely the *QSQE* is not suggesting they are the same person, which is implied in the question? The *QSQE* case needs the reader to accept the idea of contemporaneous characters which is essential to the success of the idea—yet the difficulty of bridging the gulf between *contemporary* and *identical* characters remains.

From the section of my (*PHQS*) paper headed *Josephus—a child of his time*, Austin cites a small portion:

"So for Josephus to mention Ethiopia as already existing in Hatshepsut's time generally suits the supporters of the VIC. However, there was in fact no such thing as 'Ethiopia' at the times of Hatshepsut/Solomon."

A look at the larger context is helpful. I made the point that:

"The region now known as Ethiopia was the probable location for Punt, a land with which Egypt eventually had trading interests. But the VIC needs to have Punt be, instead, Israel—to the north. *So for Josephus to mention Ethiopia as already existing in Hatshepsut's time generally suits the supporters of the VIC. However, there was in fact no such thing as 'Ethiopia' at the times of Hatshepsut/Solomon.* So for Josephus to use this term actually highlights that his title for the Queen was in error here [emphasis added]."¹⁵

Perhaps I should have made my point clearer in my paper by indicating that there was no such *nation state* as *modern Ethiopia* in the timeframe required. This does not let the author of the *QSQE* off the hook—his claim that he “could not find any proof of this” indicates one of two things: he either did not read my paper with care or simply chose to ignore inconvenient truths. The 1,128 words in the section *Josephus—a child of his time* explain clearly enough.

By discussing Josephus as being ‘a child of his times’, I pointed out that:

“Greco-Roman records render Cush incorrectly as either Nubia or Ethiopia, but earlier sources, *whether biblical or Egyptian*, always referred to this geographical location as Cush. The Septuagint (the 3rd Century BC translation of the OT into Greek, possibly one of the sources relied on by Josephus) also unhelpfully translates Cush as ‘Aethiopia.’”

Multi-century Homer error

The *QSQE* stated:

“In fact I found it quite possible that Ethiopia did exist in the times of Hatshepsut/Solomon. In checking Homer’s two poems, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which were apparently¹⁶ written or authored about the 8th century BC or before, it was found that Αἰθιοπία (Greek) is written as such about five times and is seen in the poems, already as an *established country ready for war, etc.* Even if these poems were ‘legendary’ or ‘mythical’, I do not believe that Homer would write concerning a non-existent region.”

Herodotus estimated that Homer lived 400 years before his own time, which would place Homer at around 850 BC. The consensus is that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* date from around the 8th century BC. Over the past few decades, some scholars have argued for a 7th century BC date. Taplin believes that the conclusion of modern researchers is that Homer dates to 750 to 650 BC.¹⁷ Solomon, by comparison, is securely dated to the 10th century BC, along with the Queen of Sheba. With the consensus ruling that Homer is 8th century or later, the mathematics of Homer being a near contemporary of Solomon are wrong. The *QSQE* assumed that Herodotus was correct about Homer’s placement in the historical timeline, but Herodotus has been shown wrong on many accounts due to the sources he used sometimes being corrupted. The claim that only 19 years existed between Solomon and Homer is incorrect, the consensus claims around two centuries—the earliest recording of Αἰθιοπία did not appear in Homer’s text until at least 2–3 centuries after the time of Solomon and Sheba. *As I am about to discuss, the country was in fact a far larger region.*

Let ancient witnesses speak

Αἰθιοπία appears twice in Homer’s *Iliad* and three times in the *Odyssey*. Herodotus specifically used the name for all the lands south of Egypt.¹⁸ Previously, Homer made an interesting observation regarding Αἰθιοπία:

“Howbeit Poseidon had now departed for the distant Ethiopians, the Ethiopians that are sundered in twain, the uttermost of men, abiding some where Hyperion [one of the 12 Titans of Greek mythology] sinks and some where he rises.”¹⁹

In the surviving accounts of that time, Αἰθιοπία in the Greek view of things was situated in a vast region covering much of Africa and a large part of the ANE. The phrase *sundered in twain* points to these Ethiopians as being so widespread that they were even separated into two groups; a fact noted by Herodotus, who distinguishes between straight-haired (Asian) and curly-haired (African) Ethiopians:

“The eastern Ethiopians—for two nations of this name served in the army—were marshalled with the Indians. They differed in nothing from the other Ethiopians, except in their language, and the nature of their hair. For the eastern Ethiopians have straight hair, while they of Libya [here he is talking about all of Africa] are more woolly-haired than any other people in the world.”²⁰

Both Homer and Herodotus, though separated by centuries, agreed that this ‘Ethiopia’ was a vast region split into two parts by something. The question of what that ‘something’ was is answered from the above accounts and by looking at a map of the general region. The western Ethiopians occupied much of Africa and a body of water, known today as the Red Sea, separated them from the eastern Ethiopians. Herodotus adds still more problems to the country of Ethiopia concept. He writes of:

“... the long-lived Ethiopians, who dwell in that part of Libya [Africa] which is by the Southern sea ...”²¹

Maps made in antiquity (see figure 2) up to the 1800s reveal a consensus as to how widespread the African Ethiopians were, even to naming the Southern sea (the modern South Atlantic/Indian Ocean as the Æthiopian (Ethiopian) Sea. The Æthiopian Sea (*Mare Æthiopicum* in Latin) was the name given to the southern part of the Atlantic Ocean in classical geographical works from ancient times up to the 19th century. This name has nothing to do with modern Ethiopia and is now obsolete. Several 16th-century maps show the name of the Northern Atlantic Ocean as *Sinus Occidentalis*, while the central Atlantic, southwest of present-day Liberia, appears as *Sinus Atlanticus* and the Southern Atlantic as *Mare Aethiopicum*. John Seller in his

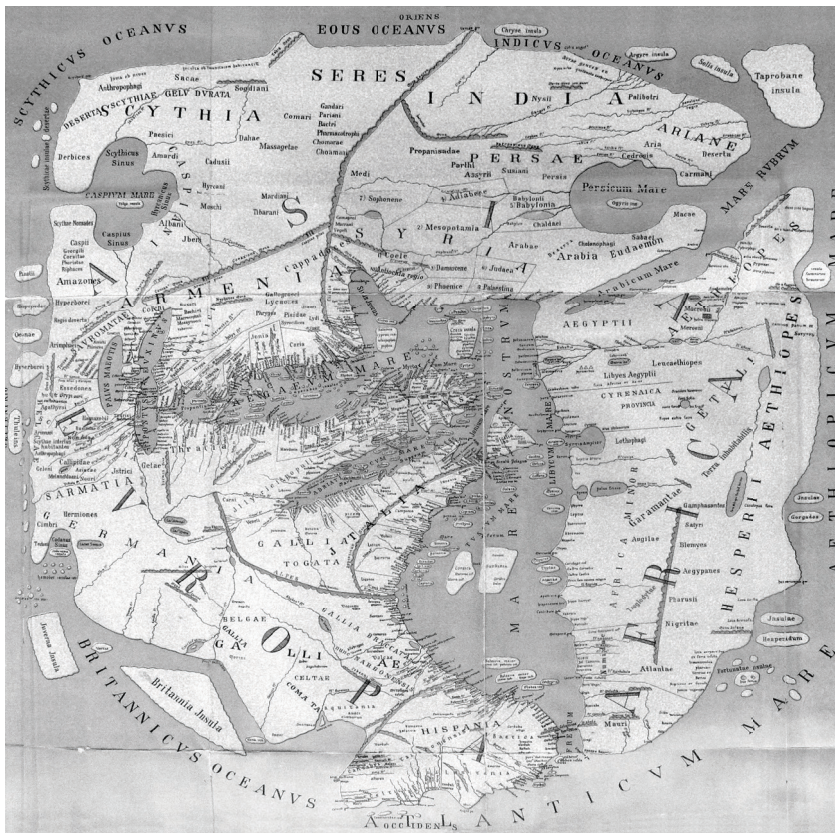


Figure 2. Map of Pomponius Mela, c. AD 40.

*Atlas Maritimus*²² divided the Atlantic Ocean into two parts by means of the equator. He called the northern portion of the Atlantic “*Mar del Nort*” and the southern part “*Oceanus Æthiopicus*”. These ancient geographer sources further confirm that the author of QSQE is completely wrong about his ‘Ethiopia’.

Rather unwittingly the QSQE author has conceded my point:

“I do not believe that Homer would write concerning a non-existent region [emphasis added].”

As I have already indicated, Ethiopia, the nation state, did not exist in the days of Solomon—a gigantic region spanning most of the African continent, and a significant part of the Levant, did.

Ethiopia is the width of Africa and extends into Southern Africa

Continuing the theme of this ‘Ethiopia’ being split in two, we find misuse of Matthew 12:42 rebounds on the author of QSQE, again from the pen of Homer:

“Now Neptune had gone off to the Ethiopians, who are at the world’s end, and lie in two halves [here is mention of the separation of the Ethiopians again], the one looking west and the other east.”²³

Homer uses the term *world’s end / ends of the earth* in this passage. Matthew 12:42—written in Greek—renders Jesus’ words as τῶν περᾶτων της γης (lit. ‘the limits/ends of the earth’). Jesus, in referring to the Queen of the South (aka the Queen of Sheba), used the same term as Homer. The evidence I have presented here indicates that the Hellenist Greek concept of Ethiopia was a region that encompassed almost all of Africa, a significant portion of the Arabian Peninsula, and even had a huge oceanic region named after it. If the central claim of the QSQE, that the Queen of Sheba ruled over (the then) *Ethiopia* is true, the extent of her kingdom was the largest known in the history of mankind. There should be evidence from all over the African and ANE continents that this queen, whatever her epithets, ruled there as a contemporary of Solomon. Apart from the present-day Yemen, nothing has been discovered that suggests a Sheba kingdom of the magnitude noted above.

Sailing to Punt

The final discussion centres on the QSQE’s statement:

“Concerning the ‘Sailing’ to the land of Punt from Ethiopia by Queen Hatshepsut ... [emphasis in original]” (p. 81.)

Most of the statement is italicized, which makes it appear this is a direct quote from a reliable source. No source is mentioned.

“If, as Clarke states, ‘The region now known as Ethiopia was the probable location for Punt’, and Queen Hatshepsut lived somewhere close to, or in, the Upper or Lower Egypt region, why does Clarke seem to agree with Breasted that there was a *sailing* to the land of Punt? It is reasonable to question whether the ‘Punt’ was in Africa because of the need of ships and particularly the trouble Hatshepsut took with her ‘sailing’ arrangements.”

What I actually wrote was:

“It is well known to most scholars of antiquity that much of what authors during the Classical Period, such as Josephus, had to say about Egypt and the Ancient Near East in general, when they covered events not in their own time or their recent past, carries errors, both great and small. Scholars do not ignore these classical



Figure 3. Map of Africa, 1669, by Richard Blome.

sources, but they are studied with considerable caution, and conclusions are primarily based on the more ancient sources. So, the general rule among scholars is that acceptance of any such details from the later classical sources must be deferred unless they are confirmed by the more ancient evidence. Thus Josephus' reference to *the queen of Egypt and Ethiopia* may be considered a reasonable substitution for the biblical 'Queen of Sheba' only when a contemporary record covering this matter supports it. For supporters of the VIC, this is bad news; there is no such record. But there is more. *The region now known as Ethiopia was the probable location for Punt, a land with which Egypt eventually had trading interests. But the VIC needs to have Punt be, instead, Israel—to the north.*"²²

At no time, in any of my papers, do I indicate that the Queen of Sheba sailed anywhere. All evidences point to the Sabaeans using land-based caravan routes from the earliest times. It is Austin and all Velikovskians who think that she

was queen of a state called Ethiopia, and, by extension, Egypt. The reason I agree with Breasted? Like all Egyptologists, it is recognized that *Egyptians* sailed southwards to *Punt* many times throughout Egypt's long history. However, in *PHQS*, I mention 'sailing' just once. It is not my thoughts that were presented, rather those of Velikovsky who cites Breasted:

"Sailing ... to the land of Punt ... according to the command of the Lord of gods, Amon, Lord of Thebes, Presider over Karnak, in order to bring for him the marvels of every country, for he so much loves the King of Upper and Lower Egypt ..."^{24,25}

On the same page (p. 81) in *QSQE* we read:

"All Queen Hatshepsut would have had to do if 'the probable location for Punt' was in Ethiopia was to get from 'somewhere close to Ethiopia' to Ethiopia. *Even if Sheba/Hatshepsut lived in Southern Arabia, and 'Punt' was in Ethiopia, all the queen had to do was cross a narrow channel [emphasis in original].*"

Sounds so simple, and that is the problem. Listen to another ancient hostile witness—Strabo:

“Now the early writers gave the name *Ægypt* to only the part of the country that was inhabited and watered by the Nile, beginning at the region of Syenê [modern Aswan] and extending to the sea; but the later writers down to the present time have added on the eastern side approximately all the parts between the Arabian Gulf [the modern Red Sea] and the Nile (*the Æthiopians do not use the Red Sea at all*) ... [emphasis added].”²⁶

According to a witness of the time, it seems that the Ethiopians, which must include the *QSQE*'s Sheba/Hatshepsut, didn't do sea travel, which makes the *QSQE* claim that ‘*all the queen had to do was cross a narrow channel*’ invalid, and Velikovskiy's Sheba/Hatshepsut journey by sea to Ezion Geber even more so.

It is clear that the author of “‘The Queen of the South’ is ‘the Queen of Egypt’” is mistaken in regard to the location and extent of the region known as *Æthiopia*/Ethiopia. Subsequently, any attempted creation of alter egos between Hatshepsut and the Queen of Sheba fails also. Unfortunately, the author demonstrates substantial lack of competency in this complex subject throughout the remainder of the *QSQE*.

His invocation of the text of the famous Merneptah Stele in support of his thesis also falls embarrassingly flat; for a correct understanding of the text, I refer him to my recent paper *The Stele of Merneptah—assessment of the final ‘Israel’ strophe and its implications for chronology*.²⁷

Audi alteram partem²⁸

If Velikovskians are as secure in their beliefs as they claim to be, they should easily be able to see off counter views such as mine without resorting to the sorts of fallacious and, at times, quite inappropriate tactics that, I have to say, have been rampant within the *QSQE*. That the other side demands a hearing is in itself not the problem, but the debate needs to take place on a fair and scholarly playing field, minus out-of-context citations, strawman fallacies and the like.

The fact that many historians, archaeologists and Egyptologists question Velikovskiy's ideas (including several who, like me, share the goal of a downwards revised chronology) is in itself an interesting fact, which any inquisitive mind ought to be informed about. Yet some Velikovskians still continue to react to my relatively modest challenge (which is ultimately intended to be in the interests of a solid synchronism with the truth of the Bible, as I hope to show through continuing papers), in a manner smacking somewhat of panic.

It might be a good idea if, rather than attacking anyone who appears to denigrate their idol, Velikovskians spend time looking at their chronological model and ask the honest question, ‘Could Velikovskiy in fact have been wrong all along?’

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28. Latin maxim meaning ‘let the other side be heard’.

Patrick Clarke has developed a deep interest in ancient Egypt since early childhood. His speciality is the pharaonic tombs in the Valley of the Kings; their architecture, artwork and afterlife texts. He presently resides with his family in France.