



# **The Opening Heavens: An early Advent believer's study into astronomy and the opening in Orion**

*Joseph Bates*

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Joseph Bates was an avid student of the stars. As a well-traveled sea captain, he had gazed at them from many remote places in the world. After becoming a Christian, Bates studied astronomy in conjunction with the Bible, eventually publishing "The Opening Heavens." In this tract, Bates reasoned that the biblical references to heaven being opened (John 1:51, Rev. 19:11) and to the New Jerusalem descending were referring to events that would occur in one location in the sky, the middle star of Orion's sword. Bates quoted astronomer Christiaan Huygens, who in 1656 had described the "opening in the sky through which a brighter region was visible." For Bates, the region beyond must be the "heaven of heavens" streaming forth God's glory. Bates had read astronomer James Ferguson's descriptions of "cloudy stars" and how the "most remarkable of all the cloudy stars" is in Orion's sword, containing an opening into deeper space. He was convinced Huygens' "opening" was the gateway to heaven. Later, Bates watched Ellen White in vision traveling to other planets and beyond. At this time, Bates was not sure that the visions of Mrs. White were from God, though he was sure she was a good and faithful Christian who believed what she told. But as he listened to her describe a "gap in the sky" of great beauty, framed by four stars appearing like gates with bright glory shining through, Bates became very excited. "She is giving a more wonderful description than any astronomer ever dreamed of," he exclaimed. Hearing Ellen's glorious description of the gap, Bates was convinced that her visions were from God. Ellen's vision of the opening was decisive in bringing Bates firmly into the Advent movement.

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