

## SELECTIONS FROM THE FOURTH GOSPEL

NOTE.—*The Gospel according to John*, in its present form, can only be regarded as a mystical romance. It may have been written originally by a Neo-Platonist who was more or less versed in the true Mysteries; but it has been “overworked” and “historicized” into a crude harmony with the *Synoptic Gospels*. In details, however, it often conflicts with the *Synoptics*, though no more so than they conflict one with another; and whenever it speaks of Jewish customs or Palestinian geography it is almost invariably incorrect. As in the case of the *Synoptics*, the forger, or forgers, who overworked it had but little information relating to the Jews and no knowledge of the Hebrew tongue. As a pseudo-version of the Iêsous-mythos, it is distinctly inferior to the fuller text of the *Synoptics*, and a translation of the whole of it would therefore serve no useful purpose here. But it contains passages of great power and beauty, which in their profound meaning are complementary to the teachings found in the Synoptic allegory, though expressed in a different form and evidently drawn from another source. A few of these characteristic passages are here presented, freely paraphrased: a close translation would be almost unintelligible to the reader who is unacquainted with the Neo-Platonic philosophy, and even misleading if the translator were to follow slavishly the Greek text as it now reads after passing through the hands of the ignorant Christian priests who mutilated it.

### CHAPTER I. 1-14, 16, 18

The divine Thought inhered in the primordial Element,  
And proximate to the Unmanifested God was this divine Thought;  
And verily the divine Thought was the secondary God:

In the primordial Element, proximate to the Unmanifested, was  
this manifested God.

Through him was emanated the vast Universe,  
And not one single thing was emanated save through him.  
That which has been emanated in him was Life as pure quint-  
essence,  
And the Life was the Light of the eternal Men.

The Light shines forth in the chaotic Darkness,  
And the Darkness can not grasp or hold it back.  
There appeared a Seer—Iōannēs was his name—  
Who was the Messenger of the Manifested God:  
For witness he came, to bear witness about the Light,  
That through him all might walk the shining path.  
He himself was not the Light of the divine Thought,  
But he was sent to bear witness of the Light.

That was the true Light which lights every man coming into the  
world.

He was in the world; and the world was emanated through him,  
And yet the world of mortals had no knowledge of him:  
To abodes that are his own he came, but they who are his own  
received him not.

But as many as received him he empowered to become Sons of God,  
Sons who are not born, as mortals are, of human parents,  
Neither from woman's body nor from man's desire,  
But of the Manifested God's all-potent will.

Thus in the Seer the divine Thought incarnates as the indwelling  
Self;

And Seers behold his haloed form, Beauty and Truth embodied—  
The effulgence of the Self-born, whose Father is himself.  
Of his effulgence every Seer receives, beauty ever imaging beauty.  
Forever invisible remains the Unmanifested God;  
The Son, self-born from the World-Mother's womb,  
Alone can make Him known to mortal man;  
And to this Manifested God Iōannēs bears witness.

#### COMMENTARY

The cosmogony briefly outlined in the prologue is the same as that which underlies every ancient religious system worthy of consideration. The universe emanates from the primordial substance through the power of divine ideation. The common rendering, "in the beginning," is erroneous and really meaningless: for *archē* here signifies, not "beginning," but "origin," the Archeus, or first element from which the universe is evolved; and as the universe is ever evolving as an expression of divine ideation, it has no beginning or ending, in an absolute sense. True, the English word "beginning" may be taken in the sense of "coming into existence," but it can not well be given that meaning here; the "authorized" version in this, as in the first sentence of *Genesis*, conforms to the crude theological notion that a personal God made the universe, a notion originating in the dark ages of Christianity, before modern thinkers had rediscovered the evolutionary principle in nature. The theory of evolution is basic in ancient religion. As set forth in the prologue to the *Fourth Gospel*, the Logos is the abstract Thought, which becomes formulated as the Idea, or mental image, and then as the Word, or externalized expression of the Idea: figuratively, the Universe is spoken into existence. Similarly, the Life within the Logos, that is, the vivifying power of the Thought, becomes objectivized as Light, the illuminating principle of the uttered Idea. This Light is identical with the Pneuma, and being regarded as a female principle it was also called the "Daughter of the Logos." As manifested in man, it is the potency (*dynamis*) conferring the faculty of seership. The chaos, dark and turbid, is the residuum of preceding world-periods. The common version, "The darkness comprehended it not," is a mistranslation; the figure is that of the Dragon of Darkness pursuing the Sun to devour it.

Iōannēs, a variant of Ōannēs, the Fish-god, personifies the psychic consciousness as the forerunner of the noetic. Ōannēs, who was represented as having the head and arms of a man with the body and tail of a fish, was fabled to spend his days on the earth and to withdraw at night into the great sea. The sea, or "great deep," is

mystically the psychic world. In sleep the consciousness passes from the objective to the psychic plane. A man who has correlated the waking consciousness with that of the subjective states never "sleeps," in the ordinary sense of the word, when his physical body is taking its rest, since there is no suspension of consciousness; neither does he have chaotic and meaningless dreams or useless visions. *Ōannēs* is thus the type of the psychic stage of development. *Dionysos*, however, represents the spiritual degree of initiation, that of the true Seer who has been "born from above."

The *Logos* comprises the collective host of the eternal "Men," the spiritual Selves of humanity. The man who receives his true Self becomes, when perfected, a self-born Initiate; hence the Initiates were termed "Men," as distinguished from the profane, the living-dead, who have not yet reached the true human stage. The term *monogenēs*, in the vocabulary of the solar cult, did not mean "only-begotten," but signified "born from one parent only." Here it is descriptive of men reborn in the solar body, which is mystically said to be formed of the flesh of the *Logos*, who is symbolized by the Sun: the soul of the perfected man is vested, not in the gross elements of this earth, but in the finer elements pertaining to the Sun. It is in this sense that *Iēsous* is represented as saying (vi. 56), "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." The symbolic apportioning of his flesh and blood among his disciples at the "Last Supper" holds the same meaning.

The statement in verse 14 that "we beheld his glory" would be untrue if "we" did not refer to those only who have the faculty of seership. The text has evidently been "historicized" to make out that all the disciples beheld the "glory" of *Iēsous*. Verses 15 and 17 are clearly interpolations, breaking in on the sense and dragging in the pseudo-Jewish "historical" fraud. In verse 18 the Son is said to be "in the bosom of the Father"; but this appears to be a theological emendation: for *κόλπος* is used for "womb" as well as "lap" or "bosom," and the solar body is formed in the matrix of the "World-Mother." The early Christians had a fanatical prejudice against women: they converted the *Pneuma* into a masculine principle, and though the "Virgin Mary" was at first held to be a

sort of Goddess, the reformers dethroned her and made her out to be quite an ordinary mortal. But in the *Fourth Gospel* women figure more prominently than they do in the *Synoptics*, and its characteristic features seem to have been borrowed from the Mysteries of Dēmētēr, "the Mother of the Beautiful Child," as she was called in the Thesmophoria, or mystic cult of the women of Athens.

#### CHAPTER II. I-10

On the third day of the Mysteries of the Mother of the Glorious Child, the rite of the mystic Marriage was celebrated. And Iēsous, the worthy candidate, was there with his disciples. . . . And when the wine had failed, the Mother said to him:

"They have now no wine."

Iēsous said to her:

"Revered one, what would you have me do? My hour to be re-born has not yet come." . . .

Said the Mother to the servers:

"Do whatever he may tell you."

Now, there were six water-jugs of stone in place there. Iēsous said to the servers:

"Fill the jugs with water."

And they filled them to the brim. Again he said to them:

"Draw out now from the sixth jug and fill the wine-cup, and bring it to the director of the banquet."

They did so, and brought the cup. And the director of the banquet tasted the contents of the cup, and perceived that the water had been changed into wine. Then said he:

"Men usually serve the good wine first, following it with the weaker sort if the guests have drunk too freely; but you have kept the strong wine till the last."

#### COMMENTARY

The Thesmophoria, or Mysteries of Dēmētēr and Persephonē, celebrated by matrons, assisted by a priest and a band of virgins, lasted three days; one of the ceremonies was the dramatic performance of a symbolic marriage. The festival on the third day

was called *καλλιγένεια*, for Dēmētēr, “the Mother of the Glorious Child.” The account of the proceedings on “the third day,” as given in the *Gospel*, is obviously incomplete: the marriage itself is



Dēmētēr

barely mentioned, the bride and the bridegroom are not named, the conversation between Iēsous and the Mother is disconnected and obscure, and in the text the wine-cup is only indirectly referred to. It is clear that the story has been much curtailed in the interest of “history,” practically nothing but the “miracle” having been preserved, and even that not escaping mutilation. Although Iēsous is brought in merely as one of the invited guests, his feat of turning the water into wine shows that he is in fact the candidate for initiation, and that he is,

therefore, the “bridegroom” of the mystic union. The director of the banquet is the Hierophant, or Initiator, personifying the Self. The six water-jugs stand for six of the *chakras*, and the wine-cup for the seventh. This cup is the sacred wine-cup of the Sun-God. The changing of the water into wine signifies the transition from the psychic to the spiritual state of consciousness.

So closely were the secrets of the Thesmophoria guarded that nothing is known with certainty concerning the rites on the third day. Some modern authorities doubt that the "sacred marriage" was performed in these Mysteries, and question whether any but women were allowed to take part in, or even be present at, the rites at any stage of the proceedings. But there is evidence that men did participate in the ceremonies; and images of Dionysos, Dēmētēr and Persephonē were kept in the temple at Athens where the rites were celebrated. With the Greeks the mystic union was so inseparably associated with the sacred Mysteries that ordinary marriage came to be regarded as a sort of initiation. In the Greek and the Roman Catholic church marriage is still regarded as a sacrament, the Greek church including it among the "seven sacraments." Christianity thus perpetuates a mere popular superstition; whereas with the wise "pagans" of old the "sacred marriage" symbolized the union of the initiate's purified lower nature with his immortal Self.

"Cana of Galilee," where this miracle is said to have been performed, belongs exclusively to the geography of the *Fourth Gospel*, and is as unhistorical as the miracle itself.

#### CHAPTER III. I-12; XII. 36

An exoteric priest, Nikodēmos by name, one of the class who rule the people in matters of religious belief, came to Iēsous by night and said to him:

"Master of Wisdom, how can a man gain entrance to the divine Realm?"

Iēsous answered him:

"Truly I say to you, A man can not enter into the divine Realm until he has been born from above."

Said the religious ruler to him:

"How can a man be born when he is old? Can he return to his mother's womb and be born anew?"

Iēsous answered:

"A man can not enter into the divine Realm until he has been born of Water and of Air. He who is born of woman's womb is clothed in mortality; but he who is born of the World-Mother, the

supernal Air, is robed in immortality. The air blows where it wills, and you hear its voice, but you know not whence it comes nor where it goes. So, likewise, you know not the divine origin or the future destiny of the Immortals who have been born of the supernal Air.”

Said to him the priest:

“How, then, can this second birth be attained?”

Iēsous said to him:

“Are you a religious teacher of the people, and have no knowledge of the sacred Mysteries? What we, the Initiates, know, we are willing to impart, and to bear witness to glories that only Seers behold; but you, in the false pride of lifeless learning, accept not our testimony. Ever from times remote we have handed down to you the noble truths of philosophy, but you have misinterpreted and misapplied them: how, then, were I to reveal to you the mystery of the new birth, would you understand the teaching, and strive rightly to become a Son of the Light?”

#### COMMENTARY

Nikodēmos, a common Greek name, signifies “Conqueror of the People”; and this little story satirizes the ignorance of the priests (the “Pharisees” of the falsified text) who domineer over the common people and dictate to them in everything that relates to religion. The priestly Nikodēmos could not have been more densely ignorant of spiritual truths if he had lived in modern days and had received the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Iēsous uses the word *anōthen* in its proper sense, “from above,” that is, “from a divine source,” but Nikodēmos ignorantly takes it to mean “over again.” In verse 11 Iēsous speaks in the plural as “we,” thus including himself with the Initiates, the Twice-born.

The initiates were said to descend into the earth and to be reborn therefrom. Hesiod bids the Muses “Sing the holy race of Immortals, ever existing, who from Earth were born and born from Starry Heaven.” The Muses, the daughters of Zeus and Mnēmosynē, Goddess of Memory, were supposed to inspire men to the “fine frenzy” of genius and of seership. In the Mysteries the soul of the candidate had to descend into the underworld before it could attain the

new birth : mystically, the candidate died and was then reborn. In the Eleuthernæ tablet the soul is represented as saying, on its arrival at the other world : "I am parched with thirst and I perish." It is answered : "Nay, drink of me, the well-spring flowing forever at the right, where the Cypress is. Who art thou? Whence art thou?" The soul replies : "I am a son of Earth and of Starry Heaven." In the Petelia tablet, recently discovered, the soul says to the warders : "I am a child of Earth and of Starry Heaven. But my race is of Heaven alone. This ye know yourselves. And lo, I am parched with thirst and I perish. Give me quickly the cold water flowing forth from the Lake of Memory."

The statement in verse 51 that any one who shall observe the secret doctrine will be free from death during the generative cycle (literally, "shall not see death throughout the æon") is true in the sense that one who by self-purification becomes able to retain an unbroken memory between incarnations (drinking from the well-spring of Mnēmosynē and not from that of Lēthē) is really immortal even while his soul is still under the necessity of migrating from one mortal body to another.

#### CHAPTER VIII. 12-15, 23, 24, 51

Said Iēsous to the orthodox religionists :

"The Light of the World am I; he who goes with me shall never walk in the darkness, but shall have the Light of Life."

They said to him :

"You are bearing witness about yourself; your witness is not credible."

Iēsous answered :

"Even if I am bearing witness about myself, my witness is credible, because I know my divine source and destination; whereas you know not whence man comes or where he goes. You perceive only the external manifestations of life; and these are naught to me. For you are of this material world, and I am not of this material world. You are of the mortals; I am of the Immortals. Because of your sins you are born but to die, and die but to be born; and unless you believe that I Am, your sins will bind you forever to the

wheel of birth and death. But of a truth I say to you, He who observes my arcane doctrine shall become free from death even while the generative cycle endures.”

#### COMMENTARY

Iêsous, personifying the Sun-God (the Logos or Nous), declares himself to be the Light of the World. Light here signifies spiritual wisdom, while darkness implies the lack of it. By basing their religious system upon faith—not the enlightened faith which springs from intuition, but the unreasoning credulity which ignorant dogmatists demand—the real founders of Christianity, the exoteric priests, caused their followers to “walk in the darkness” and were mainly responsible for the period known in European history as the dark ages.

In verse 23 “those below” (οἱ κάτω) are the earthly men, the mortals, and “those above” (οἱ ἄνω) are the divine men, the Immortals. The mortals are passing through the cycle of reincarnation in the illusion of Time; the Immortals are free, dwelling in the Eternal, the “I Am,” that ever-present which knows neither past nor future.