

HPB on the Gospel According to John

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Introduction

In October 1889, the members of the Blavatsky Lodge devoted at least two of their Thursday meetings to the study of the Gospel According to St. John. H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) took the lead in this discussion, assisted by her secretary, G. R. S. Mead, who was proficient in the Greek language. In 1893, Mead's notes summarizing the teachings by HPB were published in the February and March issues of *Lucifer* journal. This material was republished by Boris de Zirkoff in Volume XI (pp. 482–503) of *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*. As a follow-up to the two Thursday meetings in which John's gospel was discussed, HPB began writing an explanatory article which was never completed. This manuscript was probably written by HPB in the latter part of October 1889 for the ongoing Blavatsky Lodge meetings. This unfinished article, transcribed below, is contained in one of eight notebooks belonging to HPB and now preserved in the Archives of the

Theosophical Society (Adyar, Chennai, India).¹ As far as we can tell, this article has not been previously transcribed or published.

There are several references in this manuscript that may be unfamiliar to modern readers. They all appear to come from HPB's study of J. Ralston Skinner's *Key to the Hebrew-Egyptian Mystery in the Source of Measures*:²

◆ HPB refers to the Hebrew word "Dabvar". This spelling of the Hebrew word usually spelled "Dabar" appears on pages 169 and 312 of Skinner's text although he gives the Hebrew letters and number as DBR = 206. The word "Dabar" means "word", "talk", or "thing" in Hebrew.³ The *Septuagint*, the oldest translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, uses the terms *rhema* and *logos* as equivalents. Both words appear in the New Testament and both are generally translated into English simply as "word".

◆ HPB refers to the relationship between the digits of pi (31415) and the

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Hebrew name “Alhim”. This was discussed by J. Ralston Skinner on page 193 of *The Source of Measures* and was commented upon by HPB in *The Secret Doctrine*. An interesting letter from HPB to Skinner referring to these relationships will soon be published in the journal *Theosophical History* with a historical introduction by the editor, James Santucci.⁴

◆ HPB refers to the relationship of John, Jonah, and the dove, discussed on page 220 of Skinner’s book. The following passage from *Isis Unveiled*⁵ may throw a little additional light on these somewhat obscure correlations:

Jonah is swallowed by a big fish, and is cast out again three days later. This the Christians regard as a premonition of the three days’ sepulture of Jesus which preceded his resurrection . . . “Big Fish” is *Cetus*, the latinized form of *Ketos* . . . and *Ketos* is Dagon, Poseidon, the female gender of it being *Keton Atar-gatis* — the Syrian goddess, and Venus, of Askalon. The figure or bust of *Der-Ketos*, or *Astarte*, was generally represented on the prow

of the ships. Jonah (Hebrew *Yonah*, for *dove*, a bird sacred to Venus) fled to Jaffa, where the god Dagon, the man-fish, was worshipped, and dared not go to Nineveh, *where the dove was revered*. Hence, some commentators believe that when Jonah was thrown overboard and was swallowed by a fish, we must understand that he was picked up by one of these vessels, on the prow of which was the figure of *Ketos*. But the kabalists have another legend, to this effect: They say that Jonah was a runaway priest from the temple of the goddess where the dove was worshipped, and desired to abolish idolatry and institute monotheistic worship. . . . [When he was] caught near Jaffa, he was held prisoner by the devotees of Dagon in one of the prison-cells of the temple, and that it is the strange form of the cell which gave rise to the allegory. . . . Considering the extraordinary tendency of Oriental nations for puns and allegories, is it not barely possible that the “big fish” by which Jonah was swallowed was simply the cell within the belly of Dagon? ✧

Footnotes

1. See HPB’s *Collected Writings*, vol. I, p. 25, for a brief description of these eight notebooks in the Adyar Archives. HPB’s manuscript titled *John’s (Fourth) Gospel* can also be found on Micro-film Reel 29, Records Series 22, in the Boris de Zirkoff Papers preserved in the Theosophical Society in America Archives, Wheaton, Illinois.
2. Skinner, J. Ralston. *Key to the Hebrew-Egyptian Mystery in the Source of Measures*. San Diego: Wizard’s Bookshelf, 1982 edition of 1875 text.
3. <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dabar>.
4. The Christmas 1886 Letter from HPB to J. Ralston Skinner.
5. Blavatsky, H. P. *Isis Unveiled*. Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1960. II:258–259.

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Transcription

John's (Fourth) Gospel

Reading esoterically the biblical narratives, we have to bear in mind that unless one has read them in the Hebrew and Greek texts he will find himself forthwith perplexed and lost in the English and other translations. Yet in the English translations he will find an Ariadne thread in the use of and difference in the words “God” and “Lord”, which do not denote one and the same thing. “God” is a translation of the Hebrew Elohim and the Greek Theos while “Lord” stands invariably for the Hebrew Jehovah and the Greek Kurios.

On the other hand the term Logos, or Word, which plays such a prominent part in all Cosmogonies, means esoterically the same as Śakti in Indian philosophy — creative Power. While with the Hindus the manifested gods (such as Brahma, Vishnu, and others) being all male Logoi, their Śakti is their female counterpart. In the Western scheme, the Logos has become by usage exclusively male, Jesus being one with the Father, and his Śakti has now vanished from the dogmatic exoteric plane — yet it is there in the person of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, on the terrestrial plane and in that of the Holy Ghost (female always in early and Gnostic Christianity) on the plane of primordial differentiation.

Thus the Word or Logos is in truth that formative power through which the subjective primordial matter is formed and made manifest as an objective universe. This Logos is male-female — as everything differentiated is, in its essence. It is the Brahma-Vach out of which the se-

cond logos, Viraj, is emitted in the Indian cosmology. It is the Hebrew Kabalistic Dabvar, or the Word, whose male aspect is Adam Kadmon, and whose female aspect is Sephira.

Therefore the first verse of John “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”, must read esoterically: “In the beginning of the precosmic period was the potential creative power, (the divine Principle) and that Power was with the Elohim (or Theos); and the Power was the Elohim themselves”, i.e., the seven creative male/female Forces of Nature.

Now those who read the Secret Doctrine know that according to the total of the numerals giving each the corresponding values of each letter of the word Alhim (Elohim) it represents the sum of 31415 which is that of the astronomical pi. The term “Elohim” stands for the ratio of the circumference of a circle to the diameter, or 3.1415 to unity. See *S. D.*, Vol 1, p. 91. This verse contains a reference to the first immaculate conception in Kosmos, to the Logos or Adi Buddha, Anupadaka . . . the “Parentless” as the Logos is one with the Father who is not born according to the Christians.

John is identical with Jonah and the Dove (in Hebrew the Dove is Jonah and female) and the name of Jonah is connected with the fish (the whale who swallowed him), the symbolical allegory of the last initiation — the three-days long sleep or trance (exoterically) in the womb of the Earth; esoterically in the womb of Space. The narratives of the NT [New Testament] are but another allegorical

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form for the narratives bearing on the mysteries in the Old Testament. When you remember that in the OT [Old Testament] Joshua (whose name is phonetically the same as that of Jesus and identical with it) is the son of Nun or the Fish, you will see easily the connection. In the Gnostic system, Space, or Pleroma, the waters, the abode of fish, swallows the “Word” or the divine creative Potency, which descends into the womb of Nature and after three eons gives birth to the universe. Jesus passes three days in the realm of the dead, the womb of the earth, and when he returns to earth is resurrected, or born, that is to say, the anthropomorphized Logos is born. Jonah is swallowed by the fish and three days later is cast out etc. All these are allegories and variations of the same theme: the birth of the universe, macrocosmos, the birth of divine man, microcosmos, and the birth of terrestrial man; all of these being typified in the Mysteries

wherein were taught Cosmogony, Anthropogenesis and all other sciences, headed by that of the successive births of the Ego, on earth, in the psychic and finally, in the Spiritual Realm.

The above will explain more clearly the esoteric reading of the 1st and 2nd chapters of John, on the two past Thursdays.

Let us read now the 3rd chapter of the same. It begins by the narrative of Nicodemus who comes at night to Jesus who meets him with the Sphinx-like riddle “Verily — except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God”, which translated, reads: “Except a man receives a new birth thro[ugh] initiation, he cannot know of the mysteries of the Elohim.” And in reply to Nicodemus’ wonderment, Jesus adds — “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” (v. 5) which translated again means “except . . . [Manuscript ends here.]

**24 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."
25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one.**

The Gospel of John