

The Secret Book of John

Part 2

THE CHRIST Who is thus begotten is called the *Monogene*. This word sounds peculiar, but it is merely a word signifying the “Alone Begotten,” as in the opening of John’s Gospel in the New Testament. In the New Testament, too, if we were to substitute the grecized form of names, our text would be unrecognizable; for example: “I am the Way, the *Gnosis*, and the Life.” Or, “In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God.”

From the Christ come the Four Luminaries, the four chief Lords of Karma, belonging symbolically to the four fixed signs of the zodiac. Some say there are seven Lords of Karma; this refers, of course, to the seven planetary Principles who influence human destiny in the horoscope.

After these celestial Powers, Adam is created, the first man of Earth. This is followed (in this text) by the story of the “fallen Sophia” who wanted to create alone like the Creator and who gave birth to a monster resembling a lion and a serpent, which she hid in a cloud—obviously, the constellations of the zodiac, with special reference to Leo and Scorpio, or other astronomical dragons of the skies. Again we repeat, this apocryphon is nothing but a poem—an involved, complex, allegorical poem—and the scholars are making themselves ridiculous by treating it as if it were a straightforward treatise like the works of the Roman Lucretius.



Die Bibel in Bildern, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1789-1853)

Ezekiel's Vision

The artist gives a simplified version of the seer's vision (Chapter 1). The four zodiacal figures are a macrocosmic representation of the human Spirit's divine attributes, bearing a dim resemblance to the Group Spirits (Elohim or Lords of Form) who guided humanity in an earlier era.

The story of Sophia—who may also be equated with Virgo, which now holds the Sun at its fall at the autumn equinox—is followed by the story of the struggle of the powers of Light with those of Darkness; which survived into the Middle Ages, as we have noted. The point is made that the Darkness can only destroy itself when it pursues the Light, because Light automatically destroys darkness by its shining.

The Being hid in the Cloud becomes the creator—Demiurge—of the lower worlds. This is the “Jehovah”, the Cosmocrator of the Old Testament. He creates Seven Kings to rule the Seven Heavens (the Planets), and Five Kings who rule the abyss—the realms of Chaos, the “Dark Worlds” into which souls go between reincarnations. These five dark worlds with their Five Kings represent the “Chaos” of the Greeks, and the “abyss” in which

the seeds of all life and formation germinate. Further beings are created, 360 or 365 in number—an Angel for each day of the year, obviously. They are symbolized in animal-headed figures, in the Egyptian fashion.

Everyone knew that the Egyptians did not worship animals or animal-demons; they took these figures symbolically. The idea is precisely the same as that found in some of our New Testaments, where an ox is pictured with the Gospel of Luke, a lion with St. Mark, a serpent with St. John, and a man with St. Matthew. It would have been quite in line with Egyptian symbolism to have pictured St. Luke as an ox-headed man holding a book in his hand. We may not like this symbolism, but we can understand it.

All of the Powers have *two* names, in accordance with the magical doctrine of antiquity by which the “Secret” or “God” Name was a Name of Power, and which was never revealed; whereas the common name was the name publicly used. Egyptians always gave their children two names for this reason, the one being the secret name. In the initiatory Schools—as in Christian Baptism—we see a form of the same custom, where the baptized one takes a new name. It would also seem likely that he had a new Secret Name, as an Initiate; for Baptism was an Initiation and a rebirth.

Everything in life has its good and its bad aspect. The planets in the horoscope may give a beneficent fate or the opposite, or both mixed together, which is usually the case. Therefore each Great Angel has two Names, and every demon may be coerced by the use of the Name of the Great Angel which has rule over his activities. The John Apocryphon does not go into this, but the concept is implied in the fact that the Creative Intelligences are said to have Two Names.

When his creation is finished, Ialdebaoth cries out pridefully: “I am a jealous god and there is no other God but me!” And the Apocryphon warns that the story of creation must never be taken in the way that Moses described it, but from an opposite viewpoint.

Sophia, seeing that her son is sinning against God, wanders to and fro like a spirit over the abyss

of space, and she is aided in her distress by other powers. At last, gazing into the waters of the abyss, the Powers, to their amazement, see reflected there the image of God! Ialdebaoth then commands that he and his companions create a being made in the likeness of this pictured Image, whom they call Adam, and the Archons (Powers) set to work. *Archon* is a Greek term.

As to other names of the Powers, the text says, “If thou wouldst know them they are written in the book of Zoroaster”; showing that the Persian influence lies behind the Hebrew, Greek, and Egyptian of this apocryphon.

Adam was created, but could not stand upright, and five Messengers sent from the true God advised Ialdebaoth to breathe the breath of life into Adam’s mouth. He did this, and Adam not only stood upright but became resplendent, and Ialdabaoth immediately feared that he would steal his power away from him.

The Powers therefore cast Adam out into nether darkness. But the Mother takes pity on Adam, and sends to him a Spark or Thought of Light, called *Zoe*, another Greek word. Then the Archons build still another body, denser and more material, in which to imprison Adam. They create Paradise in the low world, and put him there, but the joys of his Paradise are illusory and full of bitterness. The Tree of Life belongs to Ialdebaoth, and its fruit is bitter; the Tree of Knowledge holds the Spark, or Seed, of Light from the Divine Mother.

“Was it the Serpent who taught Man to eat of that Tree?” John asks. The Savior replies: “The Serpent taught him the seed of desire, to enslave Adam; but he saw that Adam was not obeying him because of the Seed of Light that was in him.” The Serpent is, as shown above, Jehovah-Ialdebaoth. It is he who rules the Tree of “Life,” of desire, of begetting bodies.

The Demiurge then creates Eve, who is part of the Adamic Light, but when he opens Adam’s side, part of the Light escapes, so he makes Eve of what remained. The apocryphon says that Christ Himself manifested Himself in the form of an eagle and sat in the Tree of Knowledge, to induce Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of Knowledge, in which was the Seed of Light belonging to the

Divine Mother, by which they might be redeemed from the darkness of matter and the power of Jehovah-Ialdebaoth, the Serpent of Darkness. The seed of the Demiurge is in both Adam and Eve, who bring forth Cain and Abel; but Seth escapes. Seth is The Man Full of Light, who later is reborn as Jesus the Christ, the true Son of Sophia, Wisdom.

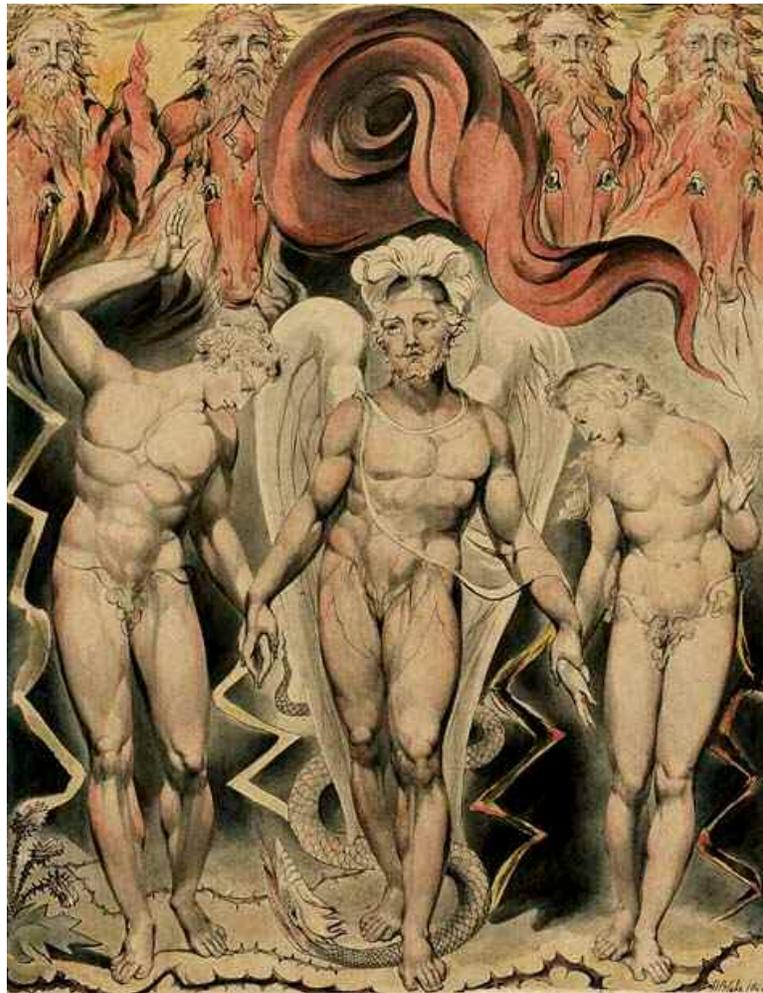
St. Paul says, speaking of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar: “which things are an allegory;” and it is obvious that these Gnostics wrote allegories. They cannot be understood in any other way.

We see from this why Catholics believed that the Manicheans worshiped Satan, since to the Manicheans Jehovah was the Satan, and the Spirit of the Tree of Knowledge was the Christ. But they did not worship Satan, they worshiped Christ, as the Spirit who gave Wisdom and Knowledge to mankind. Jehovah’s Tree of Life was not immortality but “generation”, a genealogical tree.

There is reason to believe that the text of the Hebrew Genesis, written from an opposite point of view, as Max Heindel once commented, has, in fact, given the same interpretation when it says that “Adam knew Eve, and she bore Cain”; “Adam knew Eve, and she bore Seth”; thus plainly identifying generation with the Tree of Knowledge, whereas the Gnostics and Manicheans gave this meaning to the Tree of Life.

As in *Pistis-Sophia*, a long dialogue between John and the Christ is given, covering many topics of spiritual interest. The apocryphon shows that there is a True Spirit, which is Above, and a Counterfeiting Spirit (which apes the True One) which is below, in lower space. Salvation is release from “the cavern of perversity” in which man is imprisoned, and where he spends all his days watching shadows. (Compare with the Platonic Myth of the Cave in the *Republic*, Book VII.)

There is a constant warfare between the True Spirit and the Counterfeit Spirit contending for the souls of mankind. It is the Demiurge who sends his



From *Illustrations for Paradise Lost*, William Blake (1757-1827), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The Expulsion

Accompanied by the “grounding” of ragged lightning, an apt visual metaphor for “ignorant indulgence in the creative act,” Adam and Eve are escorted (awaken) to the material world, where desire (the serpent) continues to insinuate the ideality of physical sensation and possession.

angels down to seduce the daughters of men whenever they show any inclination to rise out of the caverns of perversity, teaching them the so-called good things of the earth, giving them material wealth, happiness, and power; teaching them the arts, crafts, and sciences of the physical world.

But the Great Mother never forgets, and she is still flying back and forth over the abyss of time and space seeking to rescue Her children. She goes to Adam to awaken him from his sleep in the darkness, calling to him:

I am the riches of the Light, I am the memory of the Fullness [of Spirit]. I walked in the depth

of the Darkness, and I persevered until I attained to the middle of the prison, to the foundations of Chaos....I penetrated to the midst of the prison, that is, of the prison of the body, and I said 'Let him who hears wake up from heavy slumber!'

And Adam wept...saying, 'Who called my name?'

And the Spirit replies: 'I am the Thought of the Virginal Spirit who re-establishes thee in the realms of glory. Stand up, and remember that *IT IS THYSELF THOU HAST HEARD*, and return to thy root! For I am the Merciful. Take refuge from the angels of destruction, from the demons of Chaos, and from all who hinder thee, and rouse thyself out of the heavy sleep of the infernal dwelling.'

French Gnostic scholar Jean Doresse says that it is not always clear who is speaking, whether it is the Savior, Christ Himself, or the Virgin Queen of the Angels; and he says that doubtless this points to the Christ story having been blended with an ancient myth of a Mother Goddess. The resemblance to the Babylonian myth of the Descent of Ishtar and to the Greek myth of Demeter seeking for Persephone is obvious; not to mention the Egyptian Isis seeking for Osiris. The poet has made an effort, apparently, to build one myth out of many, an eclectic, universalist allegory acceptable to all ancient peoples, including the Jews.

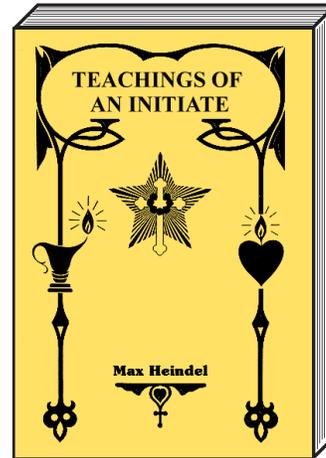
The text used by the medieval Manicheans in Europe may have been a version edited by Mani or his followers.

Since Doresse is not a mystic or occultist, and since he interprets these texts with a literalism which is deplorable, we cannot take his word for the real substance of the Apocryphon of John. He is not really interested, except as a vivisector is interested in cutting up a living animal in the laboratory; and it is only as we take these ancient books in full sympathy into our consciousness, in meditation and contemplation, using the poetic imagination, that we can enter into the spirit in which they were written and so come to some sort of understanding of them. □

—Ann Barkhurst

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