

*The Fourth Gospel is a
theological after-thought
written in the polished style
of Alexandrian Philosophy.*

**It was not written by a Jew, not even a Palestinian,
and has no real historical value.**



Contents and abstract of central ideas

The Fourth Gospel is a theological after-thought written in the polished style of Alexandrian Philosophy.

The Fourth Gospel is the production of an unknown author, probably a Greek Platonist. For well over a century and a half after the death of Jesus there is not one shred of evidence to connect its learned author with the disciple whom Jesus loved, i.e., the author of Revelation. In fact, the Fourth Gospel is revelation in reverse, upside-down. 3

The contrast of thought between the two evangels, as well as the harsh Hebraistic Greek of the Revelation, when confronted with the polished elegance of the Fourth Gospel are too glaring to be denied. 3

The style of Alexandrian Philosophy and the mysticism of Christian Platonists, evident throughout the last gospel, are skilfully interwoven with Pauline Christianity and put into the mouth of Jesus. 4

The beauty of the Fourth Gospel glows bright in the light of Alexandrian Philosophy.

Moreover, the Fourth Gospel can neither establish the veracity of miracles, nor the insanity of Divine Revelation. 7

Suggested reading for students.

She being dead, yet speaketh. 9



The Fourth Gospel is a theological after-thought written in the polished style of Alexandrian Philosophy.

The Fourth Gospel is the production of an unknown author, probably a Greek Platonist. For well over a century and a half after the death of Jesus there is not one shred of evidence to connect its learned author with the disciple whom Jesus loved, i.e., the author of Revelation. In fact, the Fourth Gospel is revelation in reverse, upside-down.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, No. 5 (53), February 1884, pp. 129-30. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE THEOSOPHISTS AND IRENÆUS) VI pp. 148-55.

The Rev. Editor of the *Christian College Magazine* comes down short and heavy upon Col. Olcott. He speaks of somebody's "invincible ignorance" and remarks that

. . . on the same footing may be placed Colonel Olcott's great discovery that Irenæus wrote John's Gospel.

Now the *Magazine* in question is a most excellent periodical, and its editor no doubt a most excellent and estimable gentleman. Why then should he become guilty of such a — begging his pardon — gross *misstatement*? Colonel Olcott has never meant to convey that Irenæus¹ — the hypothetical Bishop of Gaul (whoever he was), whose singularly uncritical and credulous character is noticed and admitted on all hands even by Christian Apologists — could have ever written the ideal composition so full of beauty and poetry that passes current as the fourth gospel; but simply that the too zealous father of that name, caused it to be written and to appear in order to gain his point over the Gnostics and heretics of his day. Again, that these "heretics" rejected the fourth gospel when it appeared, as they had denied before its very existence, is told to us by Irenæus himself.²

The contrast of thought between the two evangels, as well as the harsh Hebraistic Greek of the Revelation, when confronted with the polished elegance of the Fourth Gospel are too glaring to be denied.

It is a dangerous discussion to rush into for theologians. It is too late in the day to deny that which has been so generally admitted by nearly every Bible critic as well as by some Apologists themselves; namely that the fourth gospel *is the production of a totally unknown*, most probably a Greek author, and most undeniably a Platonist. [149] Dr. G. Ewald's attempt to attribute the fact of the gospel bearing no signature to the "incomparable modesty" of its author, the apostle John, has been too ably and too frequently upset and shown frivolous to justify any lengthy controversy upon this

¹ [Irenæus was a singularly uncritical and credulous character, with a reputation for untruth, and a fierce opponent of Gnosis who viewed Eve as a "primitive woman." — ED. PHIL.]

² *Adversus Hæreses*, Book 3, ch. xi, 9

point. But we may as well remind the learned editor of the *C.C. Magazine*, who so generously bestows epithets of ignorance on his opponents whenever unable to answer their arguments — of a few facts too well known to be easily refuted. Can he deny that for over a century and a half after the death of Jesus there was not one tittle of evidence, to connect the author of the fourth gospel with the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” him who is held identical with the author of *Revelation*? Nay, more: that there was no certain trace even unto the days of Irenæus that such a gospel had ever been written? Both internal and external evidence are against the assumption that the said gospel could have been ever the work of the author of the *Apocalypse*, the hermit of Patmos. The difference of the style of writing, of language, and the great contrast of thought between the two are too glaring to be denied. The harsh Hebraistic Greek of the *Apocalypse* confronted with the polished elegance of the language used by the author of the fourth gospel cannot stand one moment’s serious criticism. Then the details of the latter disagree in most cases with those of the three Synoptics. Shall Canon Westcott be also charged with “invincible ignorance” when saying:

It is impossible to pass from the Synoptic Gospels to that of St. John without feeling that the transition involves the passage from one world of thought to another . . . [Nothing] can destroy the contrast which exists in form and spirit between the earlier and later narratives. The difference between the fourth gospel and the Synoptics, not only as regards the teaching of Jesus but also the facts of the narrative, is so great that it is impossible to harmonize them . . . *both cannot be accepted as correct*. If we believe that the Synoptics give a truthful representation of the life and teaching of Jesus, it follows of necessity that, in whatever category we . . . place the fourth gospel *it must be rejected as a historical work*.¹

The style of Alexandrian Philosophy and the mysticism of Christian Platonists, evident throughout the last gospel, are skilfully interwoven with Pauline Christianity and put into the mouth of Jesus.

In the Synoptics Jesus is crucified on the 15 Nisan, whereas the fourth gospel puts him to death on the 14th — a point with reference to the Paschal lamb having to be gained; and the general inaccuracy of *all* the gospels is shown in that no two of them agree even about so simple a matter as the inscription on the cross. The Synoptics are utterly ignorant of the raising of Lazarus, “a mere imaginary scene,” says the author of *Supernatural Religion*: →

¹ *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, p. 249

. . . illustrative of the dogma: I am the resurrection and the life, upon which it is based . . . The fourth gospel . . . *has no real historical value*. The absolute difference between the teachings becomes intelligible only when we recognize in the last gospel the style of Alexandrian Philosophy, the mysticism of the Christian Platonists artistically interwoven with developed Pauline Christianity, and put into the mouth of Jesus (p. 76).¹ [151]

The beauty of the Fourth Gospel glows bright in the light of Alexandrian Philosophy.

In connection with the subject one cannot do better than give an extract of “an eloquent passage from an unpublished Essay by a distinguished living Greek scholar,” in the words of Mr. Wordsworth, the learned Principal of Elphinstone College (Bombay), who quotes it in a Lecture delivered by him on “The Church of Tibet, and the Historical Analogies of Buddhism and Christianity.”

What more contrasted in style and manner than Paul with John, and both or either with Matthew, Mark, and Luke? and yet the Epistles and the fourth Gospel are as thoroughly permeated with the best spirit of the three first Gospels, as with phrases and forms and associations that pertain to the very core of the Schools, when Mythos new-born in Judea could thus coalesce with the primeval imaginations of the Greek, we need not wonder that philosophical theology from either side soon found itself a common ground. The Stoicism of Seneca repeats St. Paul in every other page, and the Fourth Gospel is only becoming really legible in the light of the Platonism of Alexandria.

¹ [*Supernatural Religion; An inquiry into the Reality of Divine Revelation*, by Walter Richard Cassels (1826-1907), originally published anonymously by Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1875, went through several editions. In the edition we have been able to consult, there are to be found the following two passages:

. . . a mere imaginary scene illustrative of the dogma: “I am the resurrection and the life”, upon which it is based . . . (Vol. II, pp. 459-60), and:

The fourth Gospel, by whomsoever written — even if it could be traced to the Apostle John himself — has no real historical value . . . The absolute difference between the teachings of this Gospel and of the Synoptics becomes perfectly intelligible, when the long discourses are recognized to be the result of Alexandrian Philosophy artistically interwoven with developed Pauline Christianity, and put into the mouth of Jesus. (Vol. II, p. 467)

It would seem, therefore, that the quotations, as they appear in the text of H.P. Blavatsky’s article, are somewhat garbled, due to one or another reason. Special attention is drawn to the page reference, as given in the text, namely “p. 76.” Aside from the omission of the digit 4, *possibly* through careless proof-reading, this reference *might* be a case in which, according to H.P. Blavatsky’s own explanation, some of the references seen by her in the Astral Light became *reversed*, as a result of her being disturbed while working. In her *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky and “The Secret Doctrine”* (p. 33), Countess Constance Wachtmeister relates how she once asked Blavatsky “how it was that she could make mistakes in setting down what was given to her.” Madame Blavatsky answered as follows:

Well, you see, what I do is this. I make what I can only describe as a sort of vacuum in the air before me, and fix my sight and my will upon it, and soon scene after scene passes before me like the successive pictures of a diorama, or, if I need a reference or information from some book, I fix my mind intently, and the astral counterpart of the book appears, and from it I take what I need. The more perfectly my mind is freed from distractions and mortifications, the more energy and intentness it possesses, the more easily I can do this, but today, after all the vexations I have undergone in consequence of the letter from X, I could not concentrate properly, and each time I tried I got the quotations all wrong . . .

Another possible instance of similar circumstances is mentioned on p. 305 *fn.* of the Vth Volume (1883) of the present Series. — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

We invite the reverend editor to read the two volumes written by that king of scholars, the author of *Supernatural Religion*, the anonymous writer being at one time closely connected in London gossip with a certain Bishop. Our critic seems to forget, or never knew, perhaps — that this work passed through twenty-two editions in less than three [152] or four years; and that £40,000 were unsuccessfully offered by the Roman Catholic Church to whosoever could refute its arguments and proofs, the money being still there, we believe. We are quite aware that — as the same learned Prof. Wordsworth expresses it — “a certain precipitancy in negative demonstration has, perhaps, partly compromised the effect which so able a book as *Supernatural Religion* was fitted to produce.” Yet, if Mr. Arnold thinks with his admirers — too prejudiced to be in this case trusted — that he has demonstrated the “authenticity” of the fourth gospel, others more impartial and far more scholarly maintain that he has done nothing of the kind. At any rate, no one can deny that such eminent theological scholars as Bauer, Lücke, Davidson, Hilgenfeld, Schenkel, Volkmar, Nicolas, Bretschneider and a good many others we could name,¹ have proved the following points:

- (a) The fourth Gospel, by whomsoever written — was never written by a Jew, not even a native of Palestine, the numerous geographical, and topographical mistakes, and blunders in names and explanations given precluding entirely such possibility;
- (b) That the gospel could have never been written before the end of the II century, *i.e.*, the date assigned to Irenæus; and
- (c) That it was most probably written at the command of that personage.

The first writer whom we find quoting a passage of this gospel with the mention of his author is Theophilus of Antioch, in *Ad Autolyicum*, II, 22, a work dated by Tischendorf about A.D. 180–190;² and it was [153] precisely about that time that Irenæus became presbyter in Gaul, and had his controversy with the “heretics.” It is, however, useless to devote much time to a personage who, if not altogether himself mythical, presents in his life another blank, as the moot question about his martyrdom is able to show. But that which is known of him and on the strength of his own writings is, that he is the *first* writer who distinctly numbers the four gospels, claiming for their existence and number most interesting if not altogether convincing reasons. He says:

Neither can the gospels be more in number than they are, nor . . . can they be fewer. For, as there are four quarters of the world in which we are, and four general winds, and the gospel is the pillar and prop of the church . . . it is right that she should have four pillars.

¹ See G.C.F. Lücke’s *Versuch einer vollständigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung des Johannes*, ii, p. 504.

² [In the edition entitled *S. Theophili Episcopi Antiocheni ad Autolyicum libri III*, Oxonii, E. Theatro Sheldoniano, 1684, containing both the Greek and Latin texts, the Latin original of the passage referred to is as follows:

Unde nos docent sacræ literæ omnes sancto Spiritu afflati, quorum de numero est Joannes ad hunc modum differens: *In principio erat verbum, & verbum erat apud Deum*, etc. Significans in principio solum fuisse Deum & in eo verbum. Postea insert: *Deus erat verbum. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, & sine eo factum est nihil* . . .

— Boris de Zirkoff.]

Having delivered himself of this highly logical and quite unanswerable argument, Irenæus adds that:

. . . as the cherubim also are four-faced [and] quadriform are the living creatures, quadriform is the gospel, and quadriform the course of the Lord; therefore — vain and ignorant, and moreover, audacious are those who set aside the form of the gospel and declare its aspects as either more or less than has been said.^{1, 2}

We love to think that it is not to [154] follow in the steps of this intellectual and logical Father, that the editor of the *C.C. Magazine* thought it his sacred duty to bestow upon Col. Olcott and all who believe that the fourth gospel is simply a theological after-thought — the epithet of “ignorant”? We are perfectly alive to the dire necessity of clinging to the fourth gospel for all those who would prolong the agony of Christian ecclesiasticism. There are several important reasons for this.

Moreover, the Fourth Gospel can neither establish the veracity of miracles, nor the insanity of Divine Revelation.

For example: The authors of the three Synoptics are pure Jews with no prejudice toward their unbelieving race, and they know not of Jesus, “the son of David”; while the fourth gospel shows decided contempt for the non-Christian Jews, and its Jesus is no longer of the race of David *but the son of God and the very God himself*. The first three teach pure morality and no theology; on the contrary, priesthood and pharisaism are strongly denounced in them. The fourth gospel teaches a distinct theology and quite another religion. Hence the just suspicion created in the minds of most Biblical scholars that the so-called “Gospel according to St. John,” was simply written to meet the *logical* conclusions of Irenæus — as quoted above.

But whether due to him or born independently — it is as artificial as any other work of art, howsoever great the intrinsic value of its outward form. Realism may be less attractive than Idealism; for all that, the first is sober fact and as such preferable to pure fiction — however beautiful. And this statement is amply corroborated by the

¹ *Con. Hær.*, III, II, 55, 89

² [This quotation differs considerably from the original. The correct reference is to Book III, Chap. ii, § 8 & 9, of Irenæus’ *Adversus Hæreses*. The passage runs as follows:

8 . . . It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones on the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the “pillar and ground” of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life; it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh . . . For the cherubim, too, were four-faced, and their faces were images of the dispensation of the Son of God . . . and therefore the Gospels are in accord with these things, among which Christ Jesus is seated . . . Such, then, as was the course followed by the Son of God, so was also the form of the living creatures; and such as was the form of the living creatures, so was also the character of the Gospel. For the living creatures are quadriform, and the Gospel is quadriform, as is also the course followed by the Lord . . .

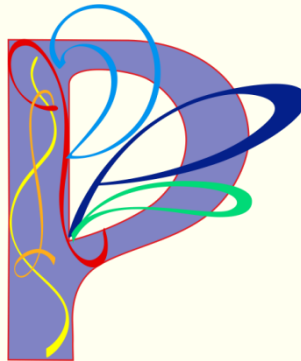
9. These things being so, all who destroy the form of the Gospel are vain, unlearned, and also audacious; those [I mean] who represent the aspects of the Gospel as being either more in number than as aforesaid, or, on the other hand, fewer . . .

The above text is taken from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, translation of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D., Editors, American reprint of the Edinburgh edition, New York, Chas. Scribner’s Sons, 1913, Vol. I, pp. 428-29. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

author of *Supernatural Religion*, who has devoted [155] one-fourth of his two volumes to the discussion of this subject. In the concluding words of his chapter 2, Vol. II:

Enough has been said to show that the testimony of the fourth Gospel *is of no value towards establishing the truth of miracles and the reality of Divine Revelation.*¹

This, we believe, added to the damaging testimony of Canon Westcott — settles the matter at rest.²



¹ [Originally published anonymously by Walter Richard Cassels (1826–1907); 2-vols. London 1874. Its subtitle was: *An Inquiry into the Reality of Divine Revelation*. By 1875, six editions had appeared. In 1877, a 3rd volume was added by the author; 5th ed., London: Longmans, Green & Co.; Boston: Roberts Bros., 1875-77; 3-vols. Popular editions in one volume appeared in 1902 and 1905. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² [The original text has no italics. The quotation is from Vol. II, Part iii, ch. 2, p. 476. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

Suggested reading for students.



She being dead, yet speaketh.

- BLAVATSKY ABOUT TO UNVEIL ISIS
- BLAVATSKY AGAINST ECCLESIASTICAL CHRISTIANITY
- BLAVATSKY AGAINST SPIRITUALISM
- BLAVATSKY CUTS DOWN TO SIZE A CARPING CRITIC OF HETERODOXY
- BLAVATSKY CUTS DOWN TO SIZE THE VENERABLE SWAMI OF ALMORA
- BLAVATSKY DEFENDS BUDDHISM IN CEYLON
- BLAVATSKY DEFENDS ISIS UNVEILED
- BLAVATSKY ENLIGHTENS HER READERS
- BLAVATSKY ENLIGHTENS THE SCEPTICS OF HER MOTHERLAND
- BLAVATSKY EXPELS A FRIEND OF COMMUNISTS
- BLAVATSKY HATED BALLS
- BLAVATSKY ON A CASE OF OBSESSION
- BLAVATSKY ON A HEAVY CURSE
- BLAVATSKY ON ANIMAL SOULS
- BLAVATSKY ON BULGARIAN SUN WORSHIP
- BLAVATSKY ON CHRISTMAS AND THE CHRISTMAS TREE
- BLAVATSKY ON ELEMENTALS AND ELEMENTARIES
- BLAVATSKY ON FOETICIDE BEING A CRIME AGAINST NATURE
- BLAVATSKY ON HINDU WIDOW-BURNING
- BLAVATSKY ON IRISH TALISMANS
- BLAVATSKY ON JESUITRY IN MASONRY
- BLAVATSKY ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND CELIBACY
- BLAVATSKY ON NEBO OF BIRS-NIMRUD
- BLAVATSKY ON OCCULT ALPHABETS AND NUMERALS
- BLAVATSKY ON OCCULT VIBRATIONS
- BLAVATSKY ON OLD AGE

BLAVATSKY SPEAKS SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- BLAVATSKY ON OLD DOCTRINES VINDICATED BY NEW PROPHETS
- BLAVATSKY ON PLATO'S TIMÆUS
- BLAVATSKY ON PROGRESS AND CULTURE
- BLAVATSKY ON RELIGIOUS DEFORMITIES
- BLAVATSKY ON RITUALISM IN CHURCH AND MASONRY
- BLAVATSKY ON SHAMBHALA, THE HAPPY LAND
- BLAVATSKY ON SPINOZA AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHERS
- BLAVATSKY ON SUNDAY DEVOTION TO PLEASURE
- BLAVATSKY ON TEACHINGS OF ELIPHAS LEVI
- BLAVATSKY ON THE BOOGEYMEN OF SCIENCE
- BLAVATSKY ON THE BOOK OF ENOCH
- BLAVATSKY ON THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN INDIA
- BLAVATSKY ON THE DOOMED DESTINY OF THE ROMANOVS
- BLAVATSKY ON THE ELUCIDATION OF LONG-STANDING ENIGMAS
- BLAVATSKY ON THE HARMONICS OF SMELL
- BLAVATSKY ON THE HIDDEN ESOTERICISM OF THE BIBLE
- BLAVATSKY ON THE HISTORY AND TRIBULATIONS OF THE ZOHAR
- BLAVATSKY ON THE INTROVERSION OF MENTAL VISION
- BLAVATSKY ON THE KEY TO SPIRITUAL PROGRESS
- BLAVATSKY ON THE KNIGHTED OXFORD SANSKRITIST WHO COULD SPEAK NO SANSKRIT
- BLAVATSKY ON THE LETTERS OF LAVATER
- BLAVATSKY ON THE LUMINOUS CIRCLE
- BLAVATSKY ON THE MODERN NEGATORS OF ANCIENT SCIENCE
- BLAVATSKY ON THE MONSOON
- BLAVATSKY ON THE NEW YEAR AND FALSE NOSES
- BLAVATSKY ON THE NEW YEAR'S MORROW
- BLAVATSKY ON THE QABBALAH BY ISAAC MYER
- BLAVATSKY ON THE QUENCHLESS LAMPS OF ALCHEMY
- BLAVATSKY ON THE RATIONALE OF FASTS
- BLAVATSKY ON THE ROOTS OF ZOROASTRIANISM
- BLAVATSKY ON THE SECRET DOCTRINE
- BLAVATSKY ON THE TEACHINGS OF ELIPHAS LEVI
- BLAVATSKY ON THE VISHISHTADVAITA PHILOSOPHY

BLAVATSKY SPEAKS SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- BLAVATSKY ON THEOSOPHY AND ASCETICISM
- BLAVATSKY ON WHETHER THE RISHIS EXIST TODAY
- BLAVATSKY REBUFFS THE ACCUSATIONS OF ARTHUR LILLIE
- BLAVATSKY REBUTS UNSPIRITUAL CONCEPTIONS ABOUT GOD
- BLAVATSKY UNMASKS THE TRINITY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
- BLAVATSKY'S LAST WORDS
- BLAVATSKY'S OPEN LETTER TO HER CORRESPONDENTS
- GEMS FROM THE EAST
- INDUCTIVE REASONING LEADS TO FAKE DEDUCTIONS
- MADAME BLAVATSKY ENLIGHTENS THE SCEPTICS OF HER MOTHERLAND
- MADAME BLAVATSKY ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL MIND OF THE CHINESE
- OBITUARY TO MIKHAIL NIKIFOROVICH KATKOV
- OBITUARY TO PUNDIT DAYANAND SARASWATI
- OCCULT PHILOSOPHY IS ANCIENT SPIRITUALISM
- OPEN LETTER TO THE AMERICAN SECTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
- OPEN LETTER TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
- OPEN LETTERS TO THE AMERICAN CONVENTION
- PAGES FROM ISIS UNVEILED
- PAGES FROM THE CAVES AND JUNGLES OF HINDOSTAN
- PAGES FROM THE SECRET DOCTRINE 1 - ABRIDGED
- PAGES FROM THE SECRET DOCTRINE 2 - FULL TEXT
- PANTHEISTIC THEOSOPHY IS IRRECONCILABLE WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM
- ROSICRUCIANISM WAS AN OFFSHOOT OF ORIENTAL OCCULTISM
- ROSICRUCIANS EMERGED AS AN ANTIDOTE TO THE MATERIAL SIDE OF ALCHEMY
- THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS FAR MORE DREADED BY THE DEVIL THAN BY GOD HIMSELF
- THE HERMETIC FIRE OF THE MIND IS THE KEY TO THE OCCULT SCIENCES
- THE REAL MEANING OF THE FIRST LINE OF GENESIS
- THE SECRET DOCTRINE (1888) VOL. 1 OF 2 ON COSMOGENESIS
- THE SECRET DOCTRINE (1888) VOL. 2 OF 2 ON ANTHROPOGENESIS
- THOTH IS THE EQUIVALENT OF HERMES AND MOSES
- UNPOPULAR PHILOSOPHER ON CRITICISM AND AUTHORITIES
- UNPOPULAR PHILOSOPHER ON THE EIGHTH WONDER
- UNPOPULAR PHILOSOPHER ON THE MORNING STAR

BLAVATSKY SPEAKS SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- WE ARE MORE OFTEN VICTIMS OF WORDS RATHER THAN OF FACTS
- WITHOUT THE REVIVAL OF ARYAN PHILOSOPHY, THE WEST WILL FALL TO EVEN GROSSER MATERIALISM



- BLAVATSKY AND MEAD ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

— *in our Secret Doctrine's First Proposition Series.*

