

*The third volume of the
Secret Doctrine is an unworthy
companion to the first two*



Boris de Zirkoff on “The Secret Doctrine,” Volumes I & II, published in 1888.

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE SECRET DOCTRINE) X pp. 157-59.
Frontispiece by Stephanie Syjuco, 2017.

It was in October, 1888, that the First Volume of H.P. Blavatsky’s *magnum opus* made its public appearance. We insert the present explanatory Note at this particular point in our chronological series to indicate where *The Secret Doctrine* belongs, as far as its correct time-sequence is concerned.

The First Volume came off the Press on October 20th, 1888. This is evidenced by a set of the original edition now in the Archives of the undersigned. On the fly-leaf of the First Volume, in rather faint blue pencil, appear the following words in the handwriting of Richard Harte:

This is the first copy ever issued. I got it from Printer by special Messenger on the morning of the 20 Oct. '88 as I was leaving the house 17 Lansdowne Road, with Col. Olcott for India (Col. went personally via Naples). The Second Vol. followed me to India.

R.H.

Both volumes have a greyish binding bearing in the usual place the imprint: Theosophical Publishing Co., Ltd., which was [158] of course in London. Both volumes bear the inscriptions: Printed by Allen Scott and Co., 30, Bouverie Street, E.C. — facing the title-page; and facing the dedication: Entered at Stationer’s Hall. All Rights Reserved.

It would appear that sheets of the First Volume, most likely folded, were sent to W.Q. Judge in New York. At first he planned to have the bound volume ready for distribution in the U.S.A. by October 27th, but all sorts of difficulties arose. One of these had to do with the Appraiser at the Custom House. After Judge had taken out 3 cases, he was told that the book was undervalued. On calculation, it appeared that the 1000 copies came to some 30 cents each. This of course was too low, and Judge was faced with the possibility of a penalty and double duty, the law requiring at the time that a duty of 25% of the market price of the goods be paid; in this case the duty was to be determined by the cost of paper and printing. After much persuasion, the Appraiser consented to let the book through, with the caution that on the next invoice the true value would have to be stated. The cases came from the Custom House the 23rd of October, and were sent to the binder, where the book had to be recollated, as Ameri-

can binders would not accept the risk of collating done abroad. This resulted in further delays.¹

Volume I was mailed to subscribers in America on November 3rd, and Volume II was promised at about the same time as the December issue of *The Path* magazine.²

The American edition was published in a dark brown and a dark blue binding, and bears the inscription: “Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1888, by H.P. Blavatsky, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington, D.C.” — facing the dedication.

From a statement in *The Theosophist*³ it would appear that the English edition was one of 500 copies only, and was exhausted before the day of actual publication, due to advance subscribers. This necessitated an immediate second impression, which was later very erroneously called “second edition.” It was only a second printing from the same plates.

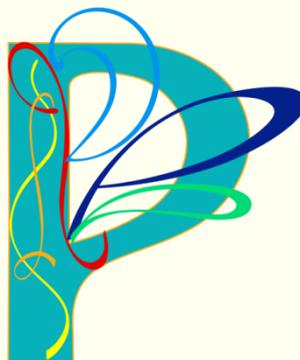
The Theosophist mentions also a “copious Index and a Glossary” in connection with *The Secret Doctrine*. The Index, however, was a very poor one in this first edition, and no Glossary appeared at all. No definite information seems available as to [159] why no Glossary was included, but Judge, writing to C.H. Whitaker, January 11th, 1889, suggests that it probably was found too expensive to do so.⁴ It is quite conceivable that material for such a Glossary was later used both in *The Key to Theosophy* and in *The Theosophical Glossary*.

It is likely that Volume II of *The Secret Doctrine* appeared sometime in December, 1888; *The Path* magazine, revising its earlier promise, stated that it would reach its subscribers before the January, 1889, issue of the journal.

BORIS DE ZIRKOFF

Compiler and Editor of

H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings



¹ Letters of W.Q. Judge to Bertram Keightley, dated October 5th and 26th, 1888, in *Practical Occultism* (Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press, 1951), pp. 127, 133

² *The Path*, Vol. III, p. 298

³ Vol. X, *Supplement* to December 1888, p. xxx-a

⁴ *Practical Occultism*, p. 139

A survey of the contents and authenticity of “The Secret Doctrine,” Volume III, as published in 1897.

Its association with Madame Blavatsky’s magnum opus was imprudent and misguided.

By Boris de Zirkoff,¹ Compiler of *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*. INTRODUCTION to Vol. XIV pp. xxv-xliv.

In the Fall of 1897, a little over six years after the passing of H.P. Blavatsky, there was published by The Theosophical Publishing Society in London a large volume entitled *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. III, with the subtitle: *Occultism*.²

The original edition of this work is at present hard to find, though it turns up every now and then in second-hand bookstores. But the text of it has been incorporated as a separate volume in later impressions of the revised edition of *The Secret Doctrine*,³ published in 1893, and can now be read in the edition of *The Secret Doctrine*, published since 1938 by The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, India.⁴ It forms Book V of this edition, which is divided into six handy books.

There exist in the minds of many students, both within and outside of the Theosophical Organizations, a variety of misconceptions concerning the nature and contents of the volume, which, as so many other misunderstandings, are very likely due to lack of adequate information, as well as lack of real interest to determine for themselves the known facts concerning this subject. Yet such facts are very [xxvi] numerous and, when carefully considered, should dispose of most of the existing misconceptions.

Although not published until 1897, the preparation of this volume had been going on for some years previous to this date, as appears, for instance, from a statement in the January 1894, issue of *Lucifer*,⁵ to the effect that:

. . . the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* is being typewritten from the MS.

The first pages of this volume went to the printer around June 1895,⁶ and the volume seems to have been completed in September 1896, although its actual publica-

¹ [Boris Mihailovich de Zirkoff (Борис Михайлович Цирков), 1902–1981, Russian-born American Theosophist, editor, and writer. He was born in Saint Petersburg, Russia, March 7th 1902. His father was Mihail Vassilyevich de Zirkoff, a Russian general; his mother, Lydia Dmitriyevna von Hahn, who was a second cousin to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. The Russian Revolution forced his family to flee in 1917 to Stockholm across Finland. De Zirkoff studied in European universities, where he specialized in languages and classics. “At Baden-Baden in Germany, he met a Russian American, Nikolai Romanoff, and learned from him about the existence, at Point Loma, close San Diego in California, of the organization, named Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society. He wrote a letter to Mrs. Katherine Tingley, then head of the Society, and when she visited Europe, they met in Finland. Mrs. Tingley, who had learned that Boris was Blavatsky’s relative, invited him to come to the headquarters at Point Loma and promised him all the necessary help in regard to his travel to America.” — Anton Rozman. Also consult “De Zirkoff recalls his formative years in Russia,” in the same Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² The title-page bears also the imprint of the Theosophical Publishing Society, Benares, India, and of the Theosophical Book Concern, Chicago, Illinois.

³ Vols. I and II

⁴ Reprinted in 1950, by the Theosophical Publishing House, London. [In 1978-79 the T.P.H. Adyar printed a definitive edition of *The Secret Doctrine*, based on the original two volume work. — *Dara Eklund*.]

⁵ Vol. XIII, p. 354

⁶ *Lucifer*, Vol. XVI, June 1895, p. 271

tion had to wait until the American edition, “necessitated by the unfair copyright law,” could be made ready also.¹

A careful analysis of the contents of this volume discloses a number of interesting facts.

Pages 433-594 consist of:

- 1 The text of the *Esoteric Instructions* issued privately by H.P.B. herself to the pledged disciples of the Esoteric School. This text is incomplete, however, and considerably edited.²
- 2 The text of the *Notes* taken by various students at the meetings of H.P.B.’s Inner Group. These *Notes* are heavily edited, and very considerably altered, as comparison with the most complete version of the same *Notes*, that of Mrs. Alice Leighton Cleather, would easily show.³

These *Instructions* and *Notes* were given under a solemn pledge of secrecy which was blatantly violated by their [xxvii] publication. Besides, as [it] appears quite plainly from G.R.S. Mead’s own explanation, their text was added to this volume as mere padding, to increase its size.⁴

We will now dismiss this particular portion of the volume under discussion, as being of no immediate value for our analysis.



When H.P.B. lived at Würzburg, Germany, and was working on *The Secret Doctrine*, she sent a certain batch of MSS. to Adyar, with the intention of having T. Subba Row go over them and make suggestions and emendations, with regard to the text. Being then in a peculiar frame of mind, he [T.S.R.] disliked what H.P.B. had written, and refused point blank to have anything to do with the MSS. This MS. was in the handwriting of Countess Wachtmeister, and must have been copied from H.P.B.’s own MS. It is now in the Archives of the T.S.⁵ at Adyar.

The final product of Vol. I of *The Secret Doctrine* shows a great many changes as compared with this earlier MS. H.P.B. must have done a good deal of additional work on it, after Subba Row’s refusal to collaborate with her. But whatever changes and alterations H.P.B. herself may have made at a later period, at least portions of the original MS. must have remained among her papers; these portions of the original MS. of the First Draft of Vol. I of *The Secret Doctrine* can be found in the “Volume III” we are now considering.

¹ *Lucifer*, Vol. XIX, September 1896, p. 81

² [See *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. XII, pp. 488-511 for the complete unedited text.]

³ An exhaustive discussion of these *Notes* in their historical background may be found in *The Theosophical Forum*, Point Loma, California, Vols. XVI, XVII and XVIII, April to December, 1940, and January to April, 1941, under the title “Leaves of Theosophical History.”

⁴ *The Occult Review*, London, May 1927

⁵ [Theosophical Society]

They account for 68 pages of the work, the text being identical to the corresponding passages of the First Draft.

In other words, not *all* of the First Draft appears in “Volume III,” but a very considerable part of it does.

This material covers [in 1897 ed.] pages: 3-43; 47; 61-63; 67-75; 93-97; 98-104; 105-108; 129-137; 211-13; 270-75; 277-79; 315-24; 332-35.

It may be asked why is it that Volume III, as published [xxviii] in 1897, did not include the *entire* First Draft of Volume I of *The Secret Doctrine*, but merely certain portions of it, as indicated above. The most natural answer to this is that only these portions of the First Draft were found among H.P.B.’s papers in London, and the existence of the complete First Draft in the Adyar Archives was unknown at the time to Annie Besant, and most likely to other officials at Adyar. This is amply shown by the fact that it was not until March 1922, some twenty-five years later, that Annie Besant reported in the pages of *The Theosophist*¹ the discovery of this draft- manuscript by saying that:

Another interesting “find” is the first manuscript of the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine* . . . This evidently is the manuscript which H.P.B. sent from Ostende in 1886 to T. Subba Row . . .

She then goes on to state that certain sections in the First Draft and certain Appendices are included in Volume III of 1897. It seems almost incredible that Colonel Olcott, who knew all about the First Draft when it arrived at Adyar in 1886, would have had nothing to say about Volume III, as published in 1897, and that nobody would have brought up for discussion the contents of Volume III, as far as these particular Sections are concerned.

As a matter of fact, C. Jinarājadāsa started publishing the First Draft, from the Adyar Archives, in the pages of *The Theosophist*,² with the declared intention of issuing it later in book-form. However, the series was discontinued after a while, the given reason for so doing being the “chaotic” nature of the manuscript, in the use of capitals, dashes and quotation marks, and the difficulties encountered in deciphering Hebrew and Greek scripts, which the amanuensis who copied H.P.B.’s original manuscript probably did not know. But even then no [xxix] mention was made of the presence of part of this material in the published Volume III.

Moreover, Sections II and III of “Volume III,” which, as already stated, are an integral portion of the First Draft of *The Secret Doctrine*, had already been published in *Lucifer*,³ as an essay entitled: “The Denials and the Mistakes of the Nineteenth Century.”⁴ It is indeed a curious fact how the editors of “Volume III” did not remember that this material had already appeared in print in their own official magazine, and that

¹ Vol. XLIII, pp. 533-34

² Vol. LII, August 1931; Vol. LIV, October, November, December, 1932; January to September, 1933; Vol. LV, October and November, 1933.

³ Vol. X, June 1892, pp. 273-83

⁴ [Now in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. XIII, pp. 224-42. Full text under the title “Chaldeans, Hierophants of the Aryan Root-Race,” in our Atlantean Realities Series. — ED. PHIL.]

this was done more than a year after H.P.B.'s passing, at a time when "Volume III" was already being considered and perhaps even started.

Moreover, conclusive evidence shows that Sections XXVI and XXVII had been written by H.P.B. in 1885, as part of the First Draft. They were not incorporated into it, however, and were earmarked for *The Theosophist*, but somehow or other were not published in it either.¹

We have been considering thus far pages 1-432 of this volume. Of these, 102 pages have now been identified; they form about one-quarter of the total amount. What of the remaining three-quarters then?

The first thing that presents itself for consideration is a rather large portion of Volume III, covering pages 376-432, and consisting of Sections XLIII-LI, a total of 56 pages, or about 1/8th of the amount. The material in these Sections hangs together better than anything else within this volume, and it is evident that a unitary thread runs through it. The title given to Section XLIII, "The Mystery of the Buddha,"² could have been chosen equally well as a title for this entire portion of the volume, as this is the main subject of which it treats. [xxx]

There is excellent evidence available of the fact that either this entire material, or at least a portion of it, had been written prior to 1888, as H.P.B. speaks in *The Secret Doctrine*³ of a section or chapter entitled "A Mystery About Buddha," and "The Mystery About Buddha," and refers the student thereto: she points out, however, that this is to be found in "a subsequent volume."

The highly metaphysical nature of the teachings contained in these sections, and the fact that some of them outline certain aspects of the Occult Tradition not even touched upon by H.P.B. in any other of her writings, including the two original volumes of *The Secret Doctrine*, would logically make the student feel that here indeed is a portion of the text originally intended for a Third Volume of this work.

We find a seeming confirmation of this in the Preface to Volume III, as published in 1897, signed by Annie Besant, wherein she says:

. . . the papers given to me [Annie Besant] by H.P.B. were quite unarranged, and had no obvious order: I have therefore taken each paper as a separate Section, and have arranged them as sequentially as possible;⁴

She then goes on to say, in regard to "The Mystery of Buddha" Sections, that these:

. . . were given into [xxxi] my [Annie Besant's] hands to publish, as part of the Third Volume of *The Secret Doctrine* . . .

¹ [However, these may now be found as two articles in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VII, pp. 105-34 and pp. 230-40]

² [Consult suggested reading for students at the end of this document. — ED. PHIL.]

³ Vol. I, p. 52, footnote; and top of page 118.

⁴ In blunt contradiction of this statement, we are told by Mrs. Besant in 1922 (*The Theosophist* for March) that in revising *The Secret Doctrine* for the 1893 edition, "the trustees . . . made only such changes as she [H.P.B.] had herself directed, which consist mainly in the correction of verbal and grammatical errors, and the arrangement of the material of Vol. III." If H.P.B. herself left directions how Volume III, as published in 1897, should be arranged, what becomes of their allegedly "chaotic" condition?

This, we must remember, was written in 1897.¹

In the light of this statement, it is therefore rather curious to find that when, in 1893, the revised edition of *The Secret Doctrine* appeared in print, every one of H.P.B.'s direct references to Volumes III and IV had been eliminated by the Editor; they are not to be found in any of the subsequent impressions of this edition.²

If these references were eliminated because, in the view of the editor, no such Volumes ever existed, how is it that anything could have been handed over to Mrs. Besant by H.P.B. specifically as part of a Third Volume?

Our perplexities are further increased by the interesting fact that on October 6th 1926, Mr. William Mulliss, Managing Editor of the *Hamilton Spectator*,³ a competent reporter and for ten years an earnest student of *The Secret Doctrine*, interviewed Annie Besant in Los Angeles, California, on behalf of several newspapers. His inquiries related in part to the question of a Third Volume presumed to have existed at one time or another. We quote from the complete *verbatim* report of the interview:

Mr. Mulliss: Your critics have insisted that somebody or other has deliberately suppressed the Third and Fourth Volumes of *The Secret Doctrine*, to which H.P.B. makes reference in the First Volume of *The Secret Doctrine*. What have you to say of this? Do you regard the Third Volume of your edition of *The Secret Doctrine* entitled "Occultism" as containing any of the matter intended for the Third and the Fourth Volumes? [xxxii]

Mrs. Annie Besant: I was appointed H.P.B.'s literary executor, and the matter from which I compiled the Third Volume of "Occultism" in *The Secret Doctrine*, published under my direction, was compiled from a mass of miscellaneous writings found in her desk after her death. These I took under my own charge.

Mr. Mulliss: Did Mead help you in the compilation of these articles?

Mrs. A. Besant: No. The papers came absolutely under my own hand and Mead had nothing to do with them.

Mr. Mulliss: Well, what about the material for the Third and Fourth Volumes?

Mrs. A. Besant: I never saw them and do not know what has become of them.

Not only do we run here into a flat contradiction of the statement made in the Preface of the published volume concerning the nature of "The Mystery of Buddha" Sections, but we are also told that the mass of miscellaneous writings under discussion was found in H.P.B.'s desk after her death, and that Mrs. Besant took these under her own charge, although we had just been made to believe that H.P.B. herself had given these papers to Mrs. Besant.

¹ Two years earlier, namely, in May 1895, writing on other subjects, Mrs. Besant had already referred to "the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, which was placed into my [her] hands by H.P.B." (*Lucifer*, Vol. XVI, p. 188)

² These references may be found in Vol. I, pp. vii and xxxix-xl of the Introductory, and in Vol. II, pp. 106, 437, 455, and 797-98.

³ Ontario, Canada

Under these curious contradictions, we ask ourselves: Is there any further clue to this material concerning the Buddha, and its possible origin? We think there is such a clue.

In an article entitled “Esoteric Axioms and Spiritual Speculations,”¹ H.P.B. made some pertinent comments upon a review of Arthur Lillie’s book, *Buddha and Early Buddhism*, written by “M.A. (Oxon),” the pseudonym of The Rev. Stainton Moses, the famous Spiritualist. H.P.B. took exception to certain statements of the reviewer contradicting the assertions made by the Theosophists, and disagreed with views expressed with regard to the character [xxxiii] and teachings of the Buddha, as allegedly permeated with what the reviewer called “uncompromising Spiritualism.” She wrote in part:

We will not try to personally argue out the vexed question with our friend . . . but we will tell him what we have done. As soon as his able review reached us, we marked it throughout, and sent both the numbers of the magazine containing it, to be, in their turn, reviewed and corrected by two authorities . . . for these two are:

- 1 H. Sumangala Unnanse, Buddhist High Priest of Adam’s Peak, Ceylon . . . the most learned expounder of Southern Buddhism; and
- 2 The Chohan-Lama of Rinch-cha-tze (Tibet) the Chief of the Archive registrars of the secret Libraries of the Dalai and Tashi-Lhünpo Lamas-Rimpoche . . . the latter, moreover, is a “Panchen,” or great teacher, one of the most learned theologians of Northern Buddhism and esoteric Lamaism . . .

The Chohan-Lama promised to write a reply in due course of time.

For some unknown reason, this reply was not published in *The Theosophist* at the time. It must have remained for some years among H.P.B.’s manuscripts, unused, and did not appear in print until after her death, namely in the September and October 1894, issues of *Lucifer*, under the title of “Tibetan Teachings.”² As [it] appears from the editorial note appended at the end of this essay,³

. . . this study of “Tibetan Teachings” is taken from a series of articles originally prepared for *The Theosophist*, but for some reason or other, set aside, and never published.

The Editors of *Lucifer*, moreover, express the hope “to be able to continue the series for some months.”

So it appears that the Editors had a considerable amount of similar material on their hands, and that they planned to publish it. Could this have been the material now contained in Volume III, and dealing with “The Mystery of the Buddha” and other related subjects? There is at least a fair possibility of just that. [xxxiv]

¹ *The Theosophist*, Vol. III, No. 4, January 1882, pp. 92-93. [Full text under the title “Brahmanism is the elder sister of Buddhism,” in our Living the Life Series — ED. PHIL.]

² [Full text under the title “Tibetan teachings on after-death states,” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ See H.P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. VI, pp. 94-112.

It so happens that Sections XLVII and XLIX of Volume III contain a number of paragraphs which are identical with portions of the text of “Tibetan Teachings.” Would it be too rash to imagine that “The Mystery of Buddha” material in Volume III contains, at least in part, text which stands in close relationship to the “Tibetan Teachings” series, and which it had been at one time decided to run in the pages of *Lucifer*, as a continuation of the two instalments of “Tibetan Teachings”?

We cannot definitely assert it, but one thing is certain, namely, that no trace has ever been found of the material which the *Lucifer* Editors had evidently in mind when promising to their readers further instalments of the “Tibetan Teachings” series.

We have now to deal with the Introductory and Sections: I; portions of IV and V; VII, VIII, XII-XVI inclusive; XVIII-XXII inclusive; XXIV, XXV; XXVIII; XXXI-XXXIV; XXXVI; XXXVIII-XLII inclusive. These constitute some 238 pages or close to one half of the material.

They cover a great variety of subjects; some of them hang together better than others; some are definitely kabbalistic; others are dealing with the origins of Christianity; still others go into subjects treated of in a somewhat different manner in Vols. I and II of *The Secret Doctrine*.

A careful perusal of the words of Bertram Keightley, who had such an immediate and prolonged contact with the original MSS. of H.P.B.’s great work, throws much light upon the nature and origin of these sections. He says:

Our next step — Arch’s [Archibald Keightley’s] and mine — was to get the whole of the MS., every line of it, typed out on ordinary quarto typing paper — professionally — for we fully realized that the actual work of re-arrangement and fitting *must not* be done upon H.P.B.’s own MS., which ought to be preserved intact for reference, but upon a copy. Hence we had it all typed out . . .

When we had got all the MS. typed out, we tied up the [xxxxv] original MS. complete *as it was* and made a strong sealed parcel of it all, which was given back to H.P.B., and was subsequently removed to No. 19 Avenue Road, St. John’s Wood, N.W. (Mrs. Besant’s house), when H.P.B. moved there. I clearly remember seeing the parcel there intact shortly before I left for India a few months before H.P.B.’s death.

To resume, Arch and I again went very carefully through the now typewritten MS. and devised the plan finally approved and adopted by H.P.B. This was to divide the whole work into two volumes: Vol. I, Cosmogogenesis, and Vol. II, Anthropogenesis. Each volume was to be based upon a set of the *Stanzas of Dzyan* and each was to consist of three parts; first, the Stanzas with Commentary and explanations; second, Symbolism; and third, Addenda and Appendices.

As soon as the first section of Volume I was roughly put together, we handed it over to H.P.B. with detailed notes of gaps, omissions, queries, and points for her to consider. She went to work on the typescript with pen, scissors, and paste, till *she* said she had done all she could. The final result was a regular mosaic pattern of typescript, pasted bits, and matter added and written in by H.P.B. or sometimes transferred from other places in the second and third sec-

tions. In the end it got such a complicated mosaic, that Arch and I ourselves typed out afresh the whole of the matter in the first section of the two volumes and much also of the second and third sections, thus completing the matter which went to the printers as Volumes I and II of the first edition of *The Secret Doctrine*. After this was done, there still remained a certain amount of matter left over; mostly unfinished fragments or “Appendices” or bits about symbolism, which could find no suitable place in the selected matter or — more frequently — were not in a condition or state for publication. Of course we asked H.P.B. about this matter, as it was she herself — not Arch nor myself — who had set it aside for the time being. She put this left-over matter in one of the drawers of her desk and said that “some day” she would make a Third Volume out of [xxxvii] it. But this she never did, and after H.P.B.’s death, Mrs. Besant and Mr. Mead published *all* that could possibly be printed without complete and extensive revision and rewriting — as part of Volume III in the revised edition. . . .¹

At an earlier date, prior to H.P.B.’s passing, namely in December 1890, Bertram Keightley, addressing the Convention at Adyar, on the subject of “Theosophy in the West,” is reported to have stated that:

. . . what would now be the 3rd volume of the history of Occultism was to have been the first volume, while the treatises on Cosmogony and the Genesis of Man were to form a later series . . .

This statement, in the light of the longer excerpt just quoted, goes a long way in supporting the conclusion that a great deal of the published Volume III is made up of material set aside *after* the Keightleys had done their work upon the MSS. of *The Secret Doctrine*; further light can be thrown upon this material by considering the actual subjects of which it treats.

There is something in connection with the subject-matter of this portion of Volume III, which must not be overlooked by anyone who is attempting to identify the origin of this material. The words of Bertram Keightley should be taken together with another fact of considerable importance, namely, that there exist two distinct essays from the pen of H.P.B., both published in *Lucifer*, and both unfinished. Their continuation is promised, but no further instalments ever appeared. They are: “The Esoteric Character of the Gospels,” and “Roots of Ritualism in Church and Masonry.”²³

A very considerable amount of material on pages 287-374 of Volume III, treating as it does on the origins of Christianity, the Mystery-Schools, occultism and magic in their relation to the symbolism of the day, initiatory rites [xxxviii] and ceremonies, etc., etc., bears a very close resemblance with the subject-matter of the two unfinished essays mentioned above.

¹ “Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky,” *The Theosophist*, Vol. LII, September 1931. Reprinted in booklet-form by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1931, pp. 8-9; and pp. 13-15.

[Look up “Three Eminent Theosophists” — Archibald Keightley, Julia Wharton Keightley, and Bertram Keightley, in the same Series.— ED. PHIL.]

² [Consult “The real Christ is Buddhi-Manas, the glorified Divine Ego,” in our Buddhas and Initiates Series, and “Blavatsky on Ritualism in Church and Masonry,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ *Lucifer*, Vol. I, November and December, 1887; February 1888; and Vol. IV, March and May, 1889. [See *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vols. VIII and XI.]

The question suggests itself whether some of this material, if not the whole of it, may not have been intended for the continuation of these articles in *Lucifer*. This surmise is strengthened by the curious fact that pages 167-68 of Volume III have in them identical passages to the text of “The Esoteric Character of the Gospels” series. The link between the two is thus established.

Writing in “On the Watch-Tower,” in *Lucifer*,¹ after the appearance of Volume III, G.R.S. Mead gives the following apology concerning the matter contained in it. He writes:

It is somewhat a novel experience for the present writer, who has edited, in one form or another, almost all that H.P.B. has written in English, with the exception of *Isis Unveiled*, to find himself turning over the leaves of Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* as one of the general public, for with the exception of pp. 433-594, he has seen no word of it before. But other work has prevented his sharing in the labour of editing the MS., and the burden has fallen on the shoulders of Mrs. Besant.

What, then, is the first impression of one who has minutely studied every turn and twist of H.P.B.’s phraseology and literary methods, and read everything she has written on theosophical subjects?

We cannot disguise the fact that the first feeling is one of disappointment. The spirit of the stanzas and commentaries, which for the theosophist make the two first volumes stand out a head and shoulders beyond all other theosophical literature, is entirely absent. The pages are eagerly scanned for the discovery of a new gold-mine of the nature of stanza or commentary, but with the exception of one or two paragraphs none is to be found. In fact, until we come to p. 359 and “The Mystery of Buddha,” the sections on which fill pp. 359-432, we find but *dissecta membra*² sections, [xxxviii] the majority of which were evidently excluded from Volumes I and II because of their inferiority to the rest of the work. The editor was bound to publish these, but we entirely share her private opinion, that it would have been better to have printed them as separate articles in *Lucifer*, than to have included them as part of *The Secret Doctrine*. One thing is almost certain, that had Mme. Blavatsky lived, these sections in their present form would not have formed part of her great work. They represent her in her least important capacity.

It is important to bear in mind that Mead agrees with Annie Besant on the general evaluation of this material, as told to Mr. Mulliss, that he supports her in saying that he had nothing to do with the preparation of the MSS., and that he had been told by Annie Besant that this material would have been better suited as articles for *Lucifer* than as part of *The Secret Doctrine*.

In view of his positive statement, which very adroitly shifts the responsibility upon the shoulders of Mrs. Besant, we are at a loss to account for Mrs. Alice Leighton Cleather’s words in connection with Volume III. She says:

¹ Vol. XX, July 1897, pp. 353-54

² [scattered fragments, especially of written work]

It so happens that while it was being set up, I was able actually to peruse one or two of the familiar long foolscap sheets which H.P.B. always covered with her small fine handwriting. They were mutilated almost beyond recognition, few of her sentences remaining intact; and there were “corrections” not only in the handwritings of the editors, Mrs. Besant and Mr. Mead, but also in that of others which I was able to identify. . . .¹

One fact, however, makes it very improbable that Mead would have had much to do with the MS. of Volume III, and it is the deplorable Greek which is encountered every now and then in its pages. Being a competent Greek scholar, he would have seen to the correct spelling of words in the original Greek script. [xxxix]

It should, however, be noted that Mead indulges in the passage above quoted in a totally unwarranted generalization which is apt to produce a wrong impression, unless facts are known. From his words, the reader would conclude that Mead has edited almost everything that H.P.B. had ever written in English, with the exception of *Isis Unveiled*. Mr. Mead probably forgot, when he wrote this sentence, that H.P.B. had been writing in English since 1874, and in so doing had the editorial help of a number of people, from Col. Olcott himself down to the Keightleys. It is the latter who edited the entire MS. of *The Secret Doctrine*, and not Mr. Mead either. However, Mr. Mead revised the 1893 edition of this work, and is almost wholly responsible for whatever changes and alterations occur in this edition. Unless these various angles are borne in mind, confusion will result, and the picture of events will be blurred.

The unsigned reviewer of Volume III in the pages of *The Theosophist*² seems to agree with Mead’s apology when saying that:

. . . the eager student . . . will look in vain . . . for equal evidences of that might sweep of mind which could delve into the mysteries of cosmogony and cosmology with such apparent familiarity . . . The fact is that a large share of the matter . . . is on a par with the magazine articles and critical essays which H.P.B. used to write, and is quite a miscellany, though, bearing the stamp of her peculiar individuality, they are, as a whole, deep, rich, rare, and profoundly suggestive.

Thirty years later, G.R.S. Mead, writing in *The Occult Review*, May 1927, upheld this earlier estimate, even though his view concerning Annie Besant’s attitude thirty years earlier differs from the first one stated.

He says:

Next, I come to Vol. III. With this I refused to have anything to do whatever. I judged the *disjecta* or *rejecta membra* from the manuscript or typescript of Vols. I and II [xi] not up to standard, and that it would in no way improve the work. They could, I thought, be printed preferably as fugitive articles in *Lucifer* but they could not possibly be made into a consistent whole. Mrs. Besant, who put a far higher value on everything H.P.B. had written than I did, persisted in her view and by herself edited the matter for publication, but even when every scrap that remained had been utilized, it made a very thin volume. I therefore

¹ H.P. Blavatsky: *A Great Betrayal*, Calcutta, 1922, p. 75

² Vol. XVIII, September 1897, pp. 760-61

persuaded her to add the so-called Instructions of what is known as the “Esoteric Section” or Eastern School, which had hitherto been secret documents. My argument was that the “occult teachings” as they were deemed by the faithful, were now in the hands of hundreds, scattered all over the world, some of whom were by no means trustworthy, and that it was highly probable that we should some day find them printed publicly by some unscrupulous individual or privately circulated illegitimately. Fortunately, Mrs. Besant agreed, and they were included in Vol. III, save certain matter dealing with sex questions. A load of anxiety was lifted off my mind. I thought that the making of these “Instructions” accessible to the general public might possibly put an end to this unhealthy inner secret school. But this hope, alas, was not to be fulfilled.

We may not share Mead’s views about the “unhealthy inner secret school,” nor endorse an attitude that suggests the carrying out of a morally oblique action *because* someone else might do so likewise, and “beat you to the punch.” We may not share with Mead his rather sarcastic spirit, nor his slurring remarks concerning the “occult teachings.” But what we will have to acknowledge, on the basis of this excerpt, is that Mead evidently had seen, and most likely read through, the “disjecta membra,” before Mrs. Besant proceeded to edit them: and if so, it is incorrect to say that he, Mead, had nothing to do with this Volume III, and “saw no word of it before” the volume appeared in print — which is precisely what he said in 1897! Indeed, as the Frenchman would say: *Lequel de nous trompe-t-on ici?*¹

Confirming testimony is found in Josephine Ransom’s *A Short History of The Theosophical Society*, p. 325, where, [xli] speaking of the appearance in print of Volume III, she says that:

. . . it consisted of all that remained of the manuscripts left by H.P.B. Part of the original MS. composing this volume is still in The Society’s archives at Adyar, and forms a valuable witness to the authenticity of what was already prepared by H.P.B. in 1886, and intended to form part of the first volume of her great work . . .

She is nevertheless mistaken in thinking that the MS. of the First Draft now at Adyar is part of the original MS. of Volume III. Only portions of this Adyar MS. can be found in Volume III, and they are taken from H.P.B.’s own manuscript in London, and not from the manuscript at Adyar, the existence of which was unknown at the time Volume III was published.

It is seen, therefore, that Ransom acknowledges that the MS. at Adyar contains matter published in Volume III, that she agrees with Bertram Keightley about left-over portions of MSS., which would not fit anywhere sequentially, and commits herself about the fact that this material had been written as early as 1886.²

¹ [Which one of us is being fooled here?]

² However, her statement in *The Canadian Theosophist*, Vol. XIX, May 15th 1938, pp. 75-76, to the effect that “the first 241 large pages of this MS. [the original draft of the S.D. in the Adyar Archives] are substantially what was published by Mrs. Besant in 1897 as the Third Volume,” is incorrect, as it is only certain portions of this draft that were included in Volume III.

In view of the evidence brought forth in the foregoing pages, and on the basis of the actual nature of the material contained in the volume under discussion, it seems unjust and contrary to common sense to have entitled it Volume III of H.P.B.'s monumental work, *The Secret Doctrine*.

Even if the argument is raised to the effect that the Sections on "The Mystery of Buddha" do contain certain teachings not to be found anywhere else in H.P.B.'s literary heritage, it is nevertheless possible only to speculate on the likelihood of her having intended these pages for a future Third Volume of her great work. We have no definite [xlii] proof of this, and might just as well consider this material as having been laid aside for future use, or maybe because she considered it premature at the time.

To make of this material an integral portion of *The Secret Doctrine* and without any explanation whatsoever as to its nature, origin or source, is unfair to the memory of H.P.B., misleading to the student, and therefore unwarranted.



In preparing this material for the *Collected Writings*, we have guided ourselves by the above considerations, and have therefore taken the following steps:

- 1 Sections XXVI and XXVII¹ have been included as integral parts of Vol. VII,² owing to facts outlined therein in the appended Compiler's Note.
- 2 Sections II and III were originally published in *Lucifer*, Vol. X, June 1892, namely, as a posthumous article from the pen of H.P.B., entitled "The Denials and the Mistakes of the Nineteenth Century."³
- 3 All portions of the volume entitled "The Secret Doctrine, Volume III" which were identical, or nearly so, with the text of the First Draft (1886) of Vol. I of *The Secret Doctrine*, have been kept in the same sequence as in "Volume III"; to them have been added a few passages occurring in the First Draft MS., and which do not occur in "Volume III." This was done for the sake of completion.
- 4 As indicated above, the scope of this material necessitated that it be divided between several volumes of the *Collected Writings*. The *Esoteric Instructions* have been restored to their original wording and now exist in their complete form in Volume XII of this series.

When the volume entitled "The Secret Doctrine, Vol. III" was published in 1897, a Preface appeared in it signed [xliii] by Annie Besant. According to that Preface, the various papers which became part of this volume were originally unarranged and had no obvious order, and Annie Besant arranged them as sequentially as possible. She says she corrected grammatical errors and eliminated obviously non-English idioms, which was an unfortunate and quite unnecessary thing to do, as H.P.B.'s for-

¹ *The Idols and the Teraphim* and *Egyptian Magic* [Consult "Animated statues, trophies of the Black Art" and "Teraphim are the elemental spirits of ancient divination," in our Black versus White Magic Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² *op. cit.*, beginning on p. 230 and p. 105, respectively.

³ [The latter is now in Vol. XIII of the *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, pp. 224-41.]

eign-sounding phrases and peculiarities of expression are *sui generis* and are rather an asset than a liability. Nothing of that nature has been done throughout the volumes of the *Collected Writings* wherein H.P.B.'s own language has been followed in every case. Whether any other liberties were taken with H.P.B.'s original text is impossible to say, although Annie Besant specifically states that:

. . . in a few cases [she] filled in a gap, but any such addition is enclosed within square brackets, so as to be distinguished from the text.

She says in regard to the Sections under the general title of "The Mystery of the Buddha" that she included them with "some hesitation," because:

. . . together with some most suggestive thought, they contain very numerous errors of fact, and many statements based on esoteric writings, not on esoteric knowledge.

This general trend of ideas is repeated several times and enlarged upon. It is curious, to say the least, that anybody from among the then recently acquired followers of H.P.B. would have had the temerity of pointing out the alleged errors of H.P.B.'s statements and of comparing them with an *implied*, even if not actually expressed, correct knowledge on his or her part of what the true esoteric doctrine was on any subject under consideration.

Considering that the Sections entitled "The Mystery of the Buddha" contain some of the most recondite teachings of the Esoteric Philosophy, including certain tenets merely hinted, at and which do not occur anywhere else in the entire literary output of H.P.B., not even in *The Secret Doctrine*, any statement implying greater knowledge concerning these mystical tenets is both ridiculous and unfair. [xliv]

The Preface also states that:

. . . this volume completes the papers left by H.P.B., with the exception of a few scattered articles that yet remain and that will be published in her own magazine *Lucifer*.

Of course we do not know just exactly when this Preface was written, but it is fair to assume that it dates from approximately the same period as the year in which the volume was published, namely 1897. It may have been written somewhat earlier than the actual year of publication. If the pages of *Lucifer* are scanned for any such articles as are hinted at in the Preface, nothing from the pen of H.P.B. can be detected therein. Everything from her pen published posthumously was printed in *Lucifer* prior to 1897; and so we are left wondering whether there existed at one time some articles written by H.P.B. which were intended to be published in *Lucifer* but actually were never used. This question may never be answered one way or another.

BORIS DE ZIRKOFF

Compiler and Editor of

H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings



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