

*Madame Blavatsky defends  
The Key to Theosophy*



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From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (NEO-BUDDHISM) XII pp. 334-49. Frontispiece by Ilene Meyer.

[Some years ago, a Russian MS. in H.P. Blavatsky's handwriting was discovered in the Adyar Archives. A handwritten note appended to it and most likely written by H.P. Blavatsky's sister, Madame Vera P. de Zhelihovsky, states as follows:

"Helena's last article (concerning Neo-Buddhism) which I was unable to have published owing to the enmity of the Russian people to Theosophy in general, and of certain individuals towards her personally. Possibly someday it will be found useful. I also append my draft of a letter to [word illegible] of the London Society for Psychical Research."

A footnote appended to the title of this essay, and written in the handwriting of H.P. Blavatsky's sister, states:

"This article was written three years ago, but has not yet been published owing to circumstances for which the author, H.P.B., was not responsible. In the meantime, the author died in London April 26<sup>th</sup> [May 8<sup>th</sup>], 1891."

In addition to this, Madame de Zhelihovsky wrote the following, below H.P. Blavatsky's signature at the end of the essay:

"N.B. Since the *Russian Review* did not accept this reply for publication, my sister, H.P.B., asked me to have it published in some other Russian periodical or newspaper; owing, however, to many absences from home and to family circumstances, I was unable to carry this out during her lifetime. The time has now come for her to speak for herself, because the opinions of many of our writers (with regard to herself and The Theosophical Society) are based precisely upon this article of Vladimir Sergueyevich Solovyov."

V.S. Solovyov (1853–1900), who reviewed H.P. Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy*, was an outstanding Russian philosopher and writer, most of whose writings have never yet been translated into English. He was the brother of Vsevolod S. Solovyov, the novelist, who, after a brief association with H.P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement, became a bitter enemy.

*Russkoye Obozreniye* (Russian Review) was a rather thick monthly journal published at Moscow from January, 1890, to 1898. For the first three years it was edited by Prince D.N. Tserteleff and published by N. Boborikin. "Radda-Bai" or H.P.B. is mentioned on the back cover as one of those "closely associated" with this journal. However, in spite of a thorough search of its files, no article by H.P. Blavatsky has ever been discovered therein.

*Boris de Zirkoff.*]

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In the section entitled "Criticism and Bibliography," in the *Russian Review* for August, 1890,<sup>1</sup> I find a review of my book, *The Key to Theosophy*, by Vladimir S. Solovyov. This in itself is very flattering, and the author of the *Key*, finding a review of her work by such a well-known person and in such a reputable journal, should in all humility be delighted over this honour. But the truth of the matter is quite different and for this reason: the review by Mr. Solovyov is no review at all, and not even ordinary criticism, but simply a wholesale *distortion of the book from the first paragraph*

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 881-86.

*to the last*, as much of its entirety as of the few and skilfully chosen points which have appeared to the critic as “especially curious.”

One would have thought that a philosopher with so wide a reputation throughout Russia as Mr. Solovyov, ought, at least for the sake of his personal standing, to have honestly delved into the real essence of the book under review, and incidentally learned a little more about Hindu philosophy, before giving expression to such *ex cathedra* conclusions concerning both, drawn, by the way, from his own imagination. After reading his article, however, anyone who is at all acquainted with my book and with the English language, will realize that the critic has not even taken the trouble to read it carefully; or, if he has read it, has not grasped the meaning of the points which he sets out to criticize. This is obvious. It would be difficult indeed to suppose, that in the section “Criticism and Bibliography” Mr. Solovyov was guided not by the actual substance of what he was reviewing, or by the philosophical systems mentioned in the work, but simply by prejudice against the author or against the system itself which he has failed to understand. *Professional jealousy*, it would seem, would be quite unthinkable here.

What is at stake here, incidentally, is not so much me as a person, but rather the distortion of the teachings which are ascribed to me; it is not a question of my pride as an author, which, by the way, I have not, but rather of the mistakes, and the deliberate as well as involuntary errors of the critic himself. This negligence often becomes phenomenal with him. Distorting both Theosophy and Hindu philosophy, he makes an error on every line. In consequence, I consider it my moral duty, as much on behalf of the Society entrusted to my care, as for the sake of the Russian readers, to correct them. Besides, having the love of my country at heart — as I would wish all Russians *outside* of Russia would have — and therefore cherishing the opinion of all orthodox Russian people, I cannot allow the strange conclusions of Mr. Solovyov to remain without protest. In Russia there are very few who ever heard of the Theosophical Society, or who are acquainted with its ideas, and have read Theosophical books — which are rarely to be found in Russian bookstores. And yet, to the readers who hear about us for the first time, we — these little known Theosophists — are being presented by the very well-known Mr. Solovyov as “Neo-Buddhists,” “Atheists,” and at the same time, as ignoramuses, if not just ordinary fools, playing at philosophy. To put it plainly: it is dishonest to cheat the readers by this kind of *review*; and it is still more dishonest to distort in this way the thoughts of the author, choosing at random some phrases from a foreign book unavailable to the readers — single phrases which for that very reason are easily subject to a false interpretation — and, distorting the main ideas in the book, to write a few pages about them in a sort of nonchalant and satirical spirit, presenting all this to the reading public as the last word of “Theosophy”!

I will not dwell on such insignificant trifles as, for instance, the distortion of my name which, though he refers to me as “a very well-known author,” is given by the critic as Blavazky instead of Blavatsky; nor will I emphasize such errors in translation as for instance the rendering of *Isis Unveiled* as “Isis Without Veil,” even though

this shows a lack of knowledge of the English language.<sup>1</sup> I will devote but a word or two to the fact that our critic assures the public, as if *in defence* of “Mrs. Blavazky,” that she could not have “invented the Tibetan brotherhood or the *spiritual order of the Khe-langs*,” (!?) as the missionary Huc furnishes “positive and reliable information” about them in a book written by him “more than thirty years before the formation of the Theosophical Society.” In answer to this, I will take the liberty to ask our critic where he has read or heard that Mongolian *Khe-langs*, Lamaist-Buddhists, have ever been referred to as “Mahātman” by proud Brāhmanas? Have I not stated in my letters, *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan*, that the one whom we recognize as our chief teacher (and whom Hindus recognize as a *Mahātman*) is a Rājput by birth, and therefore belongs to the caste of Kshatriyas or warriors? There are other Rāja-Yogīns known to us, Brāhmanas and Himālayan ascetics, mystics of various nations, among whom are some Mongolians, but of course they are *not* Khe-langs. How could, not only Khe-langs, but even *Hutuktus* and *Hubilkhans* (the incarnations of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas) teach us anything else but Lamaist-Buddhism? This is no place to speak of our teachers; for one reason, because of the only truth expressed by Mr. Solovyov, namely that, though the relations between us and our “hidden inspirers in the distant Orient cover nothing prejudicial,” yet it would be better “if this mysterious relationship remained secret.” Very true, especially as this relationship is apt to incite personal ambition in the West, and give rise to selfish intrigues (even in Russia) among *pseudo-Theosophists* who have turned into unscrupulously lying and confirmed enemies of the Theosophical Society and especially of me, its “scapegoat,” because of their failure and the refusal of the Mahātmas to provide them with money for various ventures.

Then again, why should Mr. Solovyov be so surprised (or is it delighted?) at my declaration in the *Key* that our Society is sometimes “a very sorry example of universal brotherhood”? Maybe as the result of the daily *Cain-ship*, if I may coin such a term, which goes on all around us, I have shown myself too severe in regard to our members. Where on earth, in what circles, is there no “envy, strife and all sorts of pettiness”? Indeed, if in private families there are often feuds which prevent blood brothers from shaking hands with each other, how then can we hope to escape dissension in a “spiritual” brotherhood of many thousands, composed of all races, creeds and characteristics? What would be more natural than such occurrences in an enormous society? In joining it, a Fellow merely declares his sympathy with one of its three fundamental objects. But if he is no Theosophist by nature, he will remain the same old Adam, “bone of its bone.” It does not follow, however, that, because of a few unworthy Fellows, a shadow should be cast on the entire Society.



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<sup>1</sup> Indeed. Even the dictionary makes a clear distinction between *unveiled* and *veilled*.

And this is exactly what Mr. Solovyov does when he asserts, contrary to all truth, that “Mrs. Blavazky does not have a very high opinion of most of the remaining members,” while I declare precisely the opposite of this in my book!<sup>1</sup>

But enough about these petty errors which concern me alone. Let us pass on to some of the more important ones.

For instance, why did Mr. Solovyov find it necessary to describe *The Key to Theosophy* as a “*Catechism of Neo-Buddhism*,” when such a term is not to be found either in the book under review or, generally speaking, in Theosophical literature? Is it in order to prejudice, from the outset, readers, who are not aware of the difference between Buddhism with one *d*, and Buddhism with two *d*’s, against the Russian author and her “Society”?<sup>2</sup> It would have been understandable, however, if *I*, reviewing in an English journal some of Mr. Solovyov’s lectures or works, had described them as “*Neo-Papism*,” as the whole of orthodox Russia has understood them in that light. But where has he found *Neo-Buddhism* in our teachings? There is none, but simply a considerable amount of old Christian *Gnōsis*. Besides, the whole of our literature proves that *real* Theosophists, worshipping universal wisdom, worship in reality the same wisdom which has been proclaimed by St. James in the third chapter of his *Epistle*,<sup>3</sup> *i.e.*,

. . . the wisdom that is from above (σοφία ανωθεν [which] is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy,

avoiding, on the advice of the same Apostle,<sup>4</sup> wisdom that

is earthly, sensual, devilish (ψυχικη, δαιμονιώδης).

Therefore, if trying to follow to the extent of our strength the higher wisdom, we use the word *Bodhi*, instead of *Sophia*, it is first because both words, the Sanskrit and the Greek, are *synonymous*, and second because for every European Fellow we have some fifty Asiatic Fellows — Brāhmanas and Buddhists. Why should there be in this connection the prefix “new,” when *Bodhi* or *Sophia*, *i.e.*, “wisdom from on high,” is older than the creation of the world? Surely philosophy did not originate with Mr. Solovyov, and wisdom will not die with him! Had he said that, preferring the spirit to the dead letter, we seek this eternal wisdom and truth in the basic principles and the prototype of the *pre-Christian* religions, now distorted by the “earthly, devilish wis-

<sup>1</sup> This is what I actually wrote on page 257 of the *Key*:

“ . . . don’t you think that there must be something very noble, very exalted, very true, behind the Society and its philosophy, when the leaders and the founders of the movement still continue [in spite of all persecution] to work for it with all their strength? They sacrifice to it all comfort, all worldly prosperity, and success, even to their good name and reputation — aye, even to their honour — to receive in return incessant and ceaseless obloquy, relentless persecution, untiring slander, constant ingratitude, and misunderstanding of their best efforts, blows, and buffets from all sides — when by simply dropping their work they [the Fellows] would find themselves immediately released from every responsibility, shielded from every further attack.”

Mr. Solovyov mentions in his review the “touching *straightforwardness* of the author of the *Key*. I sincerely regret that in view of his criticism I am deprived of the pleasure of returning the same compliment to him.

<sup>2</sup> [See “Buddhism is Inner Wisdom,” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>3</sup> [Verse 17: ἡ δὲ ἄνωθεν σοφία πρῶτον μὲν ἀγνή ἐστίν, ἔπειτα εἰρηνικὴ, ἐπιεικὴς, εὐπειθής, μεστή ἐλέους καὶ καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν, ἀδιάκριτος, ἀνυπόκριτος. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>4</sup> [Verse 15: οὐκ ἐστὶν αὕτη ἡ σοφία ἄνωθεν κατερχομένη, ἀλλὰ ἐπίγειος, ψυχικὴ, δαιμονιώδης. — ED. PHIL.]

dom” of the dead letter, and in so doing give the opportunity to those short-sighted and ignorant to see in us either heathens or *Buddhists* — he would not have stepped outside the limits of facts, and thus would have acquired the right to criticize our system from his own point of view and in all possible ways. But not only does he not do that, but constantly ascribes to *The Key to Theosophy* that *which has never existed in it*. For instance, according to the words of Mr. Solovyov, on page 882, “It is curious that from the religions based on Theosophical truth, the Judaic religion be excluded, *as it does not express any truth, according to the author,*” *i.e., me* (italics are mine).

This is entirely wrong. One of two things: either Mr. Solovyov understands so little English that, confusing the interrelation of words, he has mistaken the part for the whole; or he desires to slander the author of the *Key*. Here, word for word is the passage from page 45 of the *Key*, which he refers to. Quoting a sentence from the Declaration of Principles of the American Nationalist Clubs which states that “the principle of the Brotherhood of Humanity is one of the *eternal* truths that govern the world’s progress on lines which distinguish human nature from brute nature,” and having remarked, “What can be more Theosophical than this?” I continue as follows:

. . . But it is not enough. What is also needed is to impress men with the idea that, if the root of mankind is *one*, then there must also be one truth which finds expression in all the various religions — except in the Jewish, as you do not find it *expressed* even in the Kabala.

Does that mean that we do not recognize *any truth* in the Jewish faith? And can even Mr. Solovyov discover a *feeling of brotherhood* toward men of other beliefs, among the Jews, whether ancient or modern? Does he not understand that the *truth* of which I speak on page 45 has reference to the “truth” of the *principle of brotherhood*, and not to divine truth in general? I cannot refrain from suspecting that he understands well enough, but nevertheless hastens to throw an additional slur on me in the eyes of the readers who reverence the Old Testament. I leave the behaviour of the “critic” to the judgment of all just and unprejudiced men. The insinuation is completely devoid of any foundation and may be easily refuted by perusing any of our journals. Theosophists, collectively, respect the Bible as much as they do the sacred scriptures of other people, finding in it the same eternal truths as in the *Vedas*, the *Zend-Avesta*, the *Tripitakas*, etc., and Christian-Theosophists see in it the highest truth. In our Society there are as many orthodox and other Christians, as there are devout Jews (even Rabbis), Brāhmanas, Buddhists, Parsīs, Mussulmans, repentant Materialists, and ardent atheists; these latter, however, do not study philosophy. The Theosophical Society has never been a “sect” — another error of the critic. *It includes representatives of all the sects and religions*, and none has ever been required to renounce his own religion upon becoming a Fellow of the Society.<sup>1</sup> It is founded on pure ethics

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of a few agnostics, all the Fellows of the *outer* (exoteric) section of the Theosophical Society, continue to profess the respective religion in which they were born, remaining in it and following its dogmas and rituals, just as they did before becoming “Theosophists.” Acquainted with our Society as he has been for many years, Mr. Solovyov should also know that “Theosophy” is not “*a religion without definite dogmas,*” as he expresses it, but is *a universal system of philosophy*, absolutely without any *man-made* dogmas. Therefore, the Society, as such, remains in its collective whole without participation in the dogmas of any religion, but respects both the beliefs and rites pertaining to the faith of each one of its members, belonging as they do to various religious creeds.

and *in the spirit*, if not the dead letter, of pure science, and because of this some Theosophists study the *Upanishads*, the Kabbalah, the Hermetic Sciences and Symbolism, without a key to which it is impossible adequately to understand either the *Vedas* or the Old Testament. Surely Mr. Solovyov is not going to contradict the fact that the *Pentateuch* of Moses, and especially *Genesis*, are full of allegories and figurative expressions. This is exactly what is taught by the Apostle Paul<sup>1</sup> when he speaks of the story of Abraham and his two sons, and of Sarah and Agar, as being “allegories.” That much was taught by the Church Fathers as well as by Jewish philosophers and rabbis — Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Hillel, Philo Judæus, up to the time of and including Maimonides.

The same laxness in translation and conclusion characterizes the words of the critic concerning the Divine in Theosophy, the “passional soul” (*i.e.*, simply “the *seat of human passions*”), will-prayer, and everything else. That is why he does not find any “definite and firm statements,” in the book and hence pictures “Mrs. Blavazky” vacillating from one side to the other. I make bold to assure the well-known philosopher that I am not vacillating at all, of which, I hope, he will become convinced when he is better acquainted with the language in which my book is written. What does he intend to say when he affirms that *our* divinity “is either defined [by us] as absolute being, or is looked upon merely as a pure abstraction”? Can anything absolute, whether being or *non-being*, exist for finite human thought — conditioned in its concepts by form — *otherwise* than as a “pure abstraction”? Do I, a mere pygmy in comparison to such a philosophical giant, have to teach him that in pure philosophy there is an abyss between the *infinite* and the *absolute*? Can absoluteness ever be “fragmented,” or in philosophy have any relation whatsoever to the finite and the conditioned? Really, in reading the criticism of Mr Solovyov, one would imagine that I am teaching the Fellows of our Society some sort of new philosophy invented by myself. It would seem that all those acquainted with our teachings know that all such world problems are explained *not* by “Madame Blavazky” but by the philosophy of the *Upanishads*,<sup>2</sup> the key to the meaning of which is to be found in the secret works of the Vedānta, inaccessible, so far, to the Orientalists. As to the philosophy of India, our critic apparently knows as little about it, as he does of Theosophy — even less, if that be possible. For instance, for the sake of the pleasure of saying to “our author” (*i.e.*, his humble servant) that he is unable to ascribe to the author of the *Key* (that means me) any of the varied viewpoints of Indian philosophy; in other words, that my (?) Theosophical system is sillier than the “least of the Indian degrees of illumination” — our critic enters a blind alley! He informs the world of the alleged existence of “*sixteen systems of Indian philosophy.*” (!!!)



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<sup>1</sup> See *Epistle to the Galatians* iv, 24 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Vide infra.*

I can assure our Russian philosopher that he is much mistaken; that there are in Indian philosophy only six recognized systems which are known as the *Shad-Darśana*, literally the six demonstrations or “six schools.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. Solovyov is referring to the “code of systems” by Mādhavāchārya, in the work entitled *Sarva-darśana-samgraha*, in which this sectarian of the XIV<sup>th</sup> century analyses sixteen systems, placing Buddhism on the last rung of world conceptions. But he has not taken into account, first, the fact that Buddhism has never been regarded as a school in India, where for many centuries there have been few Buddhists; and second, that the code of systems mentioned by Mādhavāchārya represents merely an incomplete catalogue of both orthodox and heretical sects which existed in his day, and against which he fought during his lifetime, defending and praising *his own system* (a sect nowadays) of Dvaita (or *dualism*), of which he was the founder. Thus, it is not at all a “code of systems of Indian philosophy” but merely a code of opinions of Mādhavāchārya, a fanatical Vedāntist and a worshipper of Vishnu. Moreover, where did Mr. Solovyov get the idea that “Vedānta or absolute pantheism<sup>2</sup> . . . the highest and sixteenth [?] system, was founded by the philosopher Śamkara-Āchārya?”<sup>3</sup> — a statement which, in three lines contains three important errors.

In the first place, Vedānta is not the *sixteenth* system, but one that includes the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> schools (or *Mīmāmsā*) of interpretation;

In the second place, “Śamkara-Āchārya” (*i.e.*, Śamkarāchārya, namely, Śamkara the Teacher) could not be the *founder* of the Vedānta because the Vedānta had existed for a thousand years before his birth;<sup>4</sup> and

In the third place, Vedānta in itself is not a school, but, as already said, a system of interpretation of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Mīmāmsās.



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<sup>1</sup> Namely:

- 1 *Nyāya*, the logical school of Rishi Gautama;
- 2 *Vaiśeṣika* the atomic system of Kanāda;
- 3 *Sāṅkhya*, the pantheistic school of Kapila;
- 4 *Yoga*, the mystical school of Patañjali;
- 5 *Pūrva* (early) *Mīmāmsā*; and
- 6 *Uttara* (later) *Mīmāmsā*, of Vyāsa, which is called *Vedānta*.

There is a seventh school which is a much later one, the *Paurānika*, or the eclectic school which presents the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, but is not included in the number of the ancient *Darśanas*. None of the other, later schools are taken into account.

<sup>2</sup> Not altogether “absolute” pantheism. The Vedānta is divided in India into three aspects or sects, namely: *Advaita*, founded by Śamkarāchārya and the only *absolutely pantheistical*, *Dvaita*, the sect of Mādhavāchārya, which teaches pure *Deism*; and *Viśishtādvaita*, which is something between these two. All the three sects belong to the system of the *Vedānta*, but the Dvaitas have never been pantheists.

<sup>3</sup> p. 884

<sup>4</sup> If Mr. Solovyov should refer me to the translation of Mādhavāchārya’s *Sarva-darśana* by Cowell, the best English Sanskritist, by the way, then I will refer him to Elphinstone’s *The History of India* edited by Cowell himself. On page 130 of this authoritative work, under the heading of “Vedānta, or Uttara-Mīmāmsā School,” it is said:

“The foundation of this school is ascribed to Vyāsa, the supposed compiler of the Vedas, who lived about 1400 B.C. . . .”

This seems to be clear enough! Śamkarāchārya was only the interpreter of the Vedānta and of the *Upanishads*, and the founder within his own system of the *Advaita school*, *i.e.*, “Unitarianism.”



It is a descriptive term which literally means; “end of the *Vedas*,” i.e., *end of knowledge* or cognition (*Vidyā*)<sup>1</sup> and is also known as *Brahma-Jñāna* or “knowledge concerning the Divine.” Śamkarāchārya was a great Yogīn and reformer who taught the idol worshippers the universal oneness of divinity (*Parabrahman*) and the soul, of matter and spirit, and has for that reason been nicknamed *prachchanna bauddha* (disguised Buddhist), and his school, Vedāntism turned inside out. Even the Orientalist sometimes call his school *the new Vedānta* or *Neo-Vedāntism*, as our own enemies call us “*Neo-Buddhists*” — terms in both cases neither clever nor correct.

In the system of the *Advaita* there is a great deal of the true, secret teaching of the Buddha, namely that which he taught to his Arhats, *Budhism*, i.e., the universal system of a hidden science containing all the other *esoteric* or *secret* teachings, e.g., the Kabbalah of the Tannaïms, the *Zohar* of Shimon-ben-Yochai, the *Books of Hermes*, etc. That such teaching exists to this day is evidenced by the *Upanishads*, i.e., the “esoteric doctrine,” even in the translation of the Orientalists.<sup>2</sup> Eitel, Inspector of Schools in Hong Kong, and author of a Sanskrit-Chinese lexicon, and Edkins, a missionary who had lived his whole life in China and had studied the Chinese systems of philosophy as well as Buddhism in all its aspects, as it exists in the Celestial Kingdom and Tibet, both of them, devote whole chapters to the “secret schools,” although, knowing very little of the real teaching, they understandingly say many foolish things about them. According to the assertion of Sanskrit pundits generally, the *Upanishads* are that which destroys ignorance, and leads those who study them to *spiritual liberation*, due to the knowledge acquired and on account of their greater understanding of divine truth. Do we not find the same definition of the teachings of Christ in *John* viii, 32:

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free?

Just as the treatises known as *Brāhmanas* (a supplement to the *Vedas*), full of dry ceremonialism, of dead-letter ritualism, and idol worship, are the *Talmud* of the Hindus, so are the *Upanishads* their Kabbalah, explaining the spirit of that dead letter.



<sup>1</sup> The word “Veda” is derived from the root *vid*, “to know” or “to cognize.” One of the names of the *Veda* is *brahma-vidyā*, meaning literally “cognition” of, or “wisdom concerning Brahma,” as the *Rig-Veda* is ascribed to the pen of that god himself, and the other three *Vedas* to his own direct revelation. *Brahma-vidyā* translated means “theosophy.”

<sup>2</sup> Some thirty years ago the *Upanishads*, consisting of brief treatises, numbered approximately 150. Little by little, hidden away by the Brāhmanas, they gradually disappeared, with the exception of some 20 of them, and even those were not all genuine. There is a widespread rumour in India that all the best *Upanishads*, as well as the explanatory manuscripts of the Vedānta (gradually composed through the centuries and providing the key to the *Upanishads*) are in the hands of initiated Tāraka-Rāja-Yogīns, in the chief *Mathas* (monasteries) of the Vedāntists belonging to the Advaita school; and also in the hands of some independent Yogīns, adept-mystics, scattered through the jungles of the Himālayas and the inaccessible summits of the mountain ranges of Southern India. These brotherhoods or communities have existed for thousands of years, and enough of them exist even in our day for us to form some judgment of them. But now the real *learned Yogīns* become fewer and fewer with every year that passes, yielding to charlatans and ignorant parasites, who live at the expense of the superstitious masses. I hope in the near future to submit to the Russian periodicals an article on the subject of contemporary Yogīns with the description of some of the *Aśramas*, i.e., retreats, known in India.

[Untimely death prevented Madame Blavatsky from carrying out her intention.]

But the *Upanishads* and the Kabbalah require for their complete understanding a key, and the latter can be found only in the hands of the “initiated” Adepts of the *Gupta-Vidyā*, the secret science, *i.e.*, the authors of the books on the Vedānta.<sup>1</sup> Śamkarāchārya was one of the most remarkable of these Adepts after the Buddha and is considered by the Advaita Vedāntists as an *incarnation* or an *Avatāra* of the god Śiva, the great Yogīn (*Mahāyogīn*) of India. He was one of the best interpreters of the *Upanishads* according to the system of the Vedānta, but there were better ones than he. Vanishing from this world when only 32 years of age, he explained only *a part* of the whole; and according to tradition no one could be found anywhere in the world able to explain the secret sciences from beginning to end, though they are all contained in the *Upanishads* . . .

It is these very teachings of the oldest conceptions in the world, that we consider to be the chief witnesses to that which we call the *Wisdom-Religion* (the religion of reason), *Theosophy* — and we call our teaching a religion only because (owing to the etymology of the word) these tenets once upon a time united the entire human race by means of their spiritual thought. He who understands the essence and the meaning of universal truth, will not be surprised therefore to find its rays fragmented here and there, not only in the ancient philosophical beliefs but even in the gross fetishism of the savage, where it is still possible to trace them in the dying sparks of that truth. And the savage, unlike Mr. Vladimir Solovyov, will not *arbitrarily* label as Neo-Buddhism that which includes in itself the seeds of all the ancient and modern conceptions of life. He will not assert (*i.e.*, if he be not a Catholic to whom the reading of the Gospels is forbidden), forgetting the teachings of the latter, that “the pure ray of the universal principle, refracted by human consciousness” is “in the first place *merely a metaphor*,” and in the second place — remembering the injunctions:

I and my Father are one,  
The Father is in me, and I in him,<sup>2</sup>

and especially the forked tongues of fire<sup>3</sup> — he won’t ask, “*Where* does this human consciousness come from, with its capacity to divide the Divine Light, and to fragment absolute oneness?” Likewise, if he remembers the words of the Apostle Paul,

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<sup>1</sup> As a proof of the fact that it is precisely in the *Upanishads* that we have to look for the source of all the succeeding systems of philosophy of Asia Minor and Europe. I quote the opinion of Elphinstone from his *History of India* (edited by E.B. Cowell):

“When we examine the older *Upanishads*, however, we are struck by one remarkable peculiarity — the total absence of any Brāhmanical exclusiveness in their doctrine. They are evidently later than the older *Samhitās* and *Brāhmanas*; but they breathe an entirely different spirit, a freedom of thought unknown in any earlier work except the *Rig-Veda* hymns themselves. The great teachers of this highest knowledge are not Brahmins but Kshatriyas, and Brahmins are continually represented as going to the great Kshatriya kings (especially Janaka of Videha), to become their pupils . . .” [p. 282]

“. . . no Hindu works have probably exercised a wider influence on the world [than the *Upanishads*]. It is from these forlorn ‘guesses at truth,’ as from a fountain, that all those various rills of Pantheistic speculation have diverged, which, under different names, are so continually characterised as ‘Eastern philosophy.’ Thus the reader of the *Upanishads* soon recognises familiar ideas in the speculations of the *Phædrus* as well as in Empedocles or Pythagoras — in the Neo-Platonism of the Alexandrian, as well as in the Gnostic schools, although Plotinus aimed to emancipate Greek philosophy from the influence of the Oriental mind; and the Cabbala of the Jews and the Sufism of the Mohammedans seem to be derived from the same source . . . and why should the tradition of the Eastern origin of much of early Greek philosophy be incredible or even improbable?” [p. 281]

<sup>2</sup> *John* x, 30 & 38

<sup>3</sup> *Acts* ii, 3

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the *Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*<sup>1</sup>

(and also the assertion of Christ himself, in answer to the calumny of the Pharisees, “Is it not written in your law, I said, *Ye are Gods*”),<sup>2</sup> he will not accuse us of self-deification. Assuring the public that *all of us* (Theosophists) “are endowed with a very definite and quite *unique* inclination to self-deification of *man and opposition to any superhuman principle*,”<sup>3</sup> Mr. Solovyov merely distorts the truth and slanders us wholesale.

This should suffice. I will merely add the following: if our critic had studied the Theosophical teachings half as well as he has studied Papism and Judaism, he would easily have succeeded in the difficult task of writing about the meaning of our teachings. Then he would probably have abstained from writing about the *Key to Theosophy*, since *he would have understood that this book was not written for Russia — the only country where the pure ideal of Christ is still preserved*; and knowing this he would have understood for whose benefit I was quoting the Gospel precept concerning the tree that is known by its fruit.<sup>4</sup> The *Key* has been written by me for countries where such things are possible as the Salvation Army, with its wild street howlings and song themes from the repertoire of operettas, and where the name of the “beautiful Helen” is changed to the name of Him they call the Son of God; for a country where at the present moment there are not less than *sixteen incarnations of Christ*, from the Reverend Missionary Schweinfurt, to Kennedy, a former thief from a reformatory, and now recognized by the Connecticut sectarians as a *Messiah*; it was written for pseudo-Christian countries like England and America, where in the former, Bishops make public speeches against the “Sermon on the Mount,” calling it a Utopia,<sup>5</sup> and the citizens of the latter, members of the seven hundred and seventy-two warring sects, build five saloons for every church or chapel, and as many houses of ill repute; for these countries from which *cant* (hypocrisy), the mad rush after money, superstition instead of religion, and all sorts of vices, in their most disgusting aspects, have long ago driven not only any kind of faith in the divine self of man and the immortality of the soul, but even all human feeling. Finally, he would understand that the *Key to Theosophy* does not contain any special teaching, but is simply an attempt to correct some of the rather wild ideas held by the public concerning certain beliefs of the Asiatic mystics, and the Theosophical Society. I will say more: he would have been convinced that not only Christian Fellows continue — in spite of their fellowship — to look upon Christ as a God descended on Earth, but that even Theosophists who are Buddhists, Brahmans, Parsis and Mussulmans look upon him as a great Arhat and Prophet. Had Mr. Solovyov known all this, there would have been no

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<sup>1</sup> [1 Corinthians iii, 16]

<sup>2</sup> John x, 34

<sup>3</sup> p. 886

<sup>4</sup> I suggest that Mr. Solovyov read my article in *The North American Review* (New York, August 1890) entitled “Recent Progress in Theosophy,” where he will find listed the *fruits* of the Theosophical tree. [See *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, XII pp. 292-308.]

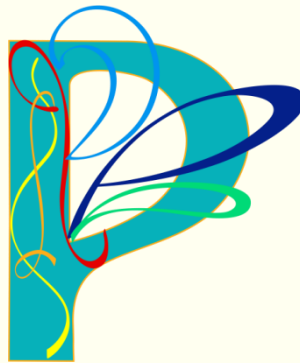
<sup>5</sup> Bishop of the Diocese of Peterborough

incentive for the present answer, the whole meaning of which is contained in the immortal saying:

Judge not, that ye be not judged.<sup>1</sup>

H. BLAVATSKY  
(Radda-Bai)

London  
September 1890



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<sup>1</sup> [Matthew vii, 1-3; KJV]

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- SUBBA ROW'S ESOTERIC WRITINGS (1895)
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- THE REVIVAL OF EASTERN OCCULT PHILOSOPHY
- THE SUN OF TRUTH FEARS NO LIGHT AND NEEDS NO LIES
- THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IS NOT A NURSERY FOR BUDDING ADEPTS
- THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ARCANES TERMS
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