

*Isis Unveiled is a Treasure
of Light and Knowledge,
which exceeds all riches.*



Contents and Abstract¹

Part 1. Introductory and historical notes on the trans-Himalayan Adepts, and other prominent contributors, involved in the literary production of “Isis Unveiled.”

Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff.

Isis is Divine Wisdom beheld by the pure in heart, and symbol of abstract Mother-Nature personified as Virgin; and so is the Rosicrucian Rose, anagram of the Orphic Eros.	8
“Isis Unveiled” is the most influential book of modern times, and a revolutionary act of brotherly love and sympathy with every creature, including the gnat that dances in the rays of the sun.	10
In the summer of 1875, Madame Blavatsky began sketching out a plan for unveiling Isis, the Lunar Goddess.	11
The awesome task of revealing the secrets of Nature began in a small flat, in a modest district of New York, directed and overseen by Masters of Eastern Occultism.	17
William Q. Judge’s younger brother, John, also contributed by preparing Mme. Blavatsky’s manuscript for the printer.	18
“Isis Unveiled” was a collaborative production between Mme. Blavatsky and several Adepts of the trans-Himalayan Arhat Esoteric School.	19
An Adept can transfer part of his consciousness to a disciple-messenger or mediator, in order for the latter to carry out a task upon the former’s behest in the outer world, or to teach. The Tibetan term for this delegated authority is Tulku, whereby the messenger is doing his Master’s bidding by mutual consent.	19
In Tulku there is no loss of consciousness: on the contrary, the mediator remains lucid and self-conscious throughout the occult transmission.	20
While the medium of the séances is a hapless and helpless instrument of erratic and vagrant astral forces, the mediator in Tulku is a willing intermediary between the Brotherhood of trans-Himalayan Adepts and humanity at large. Such a mediator may be also called a transmitter, as was the case with Mme. Blavatsky.	21
In the course of Col. Olcott’s training, Mme. Blavatsky assigned topics to write about, and suggesting the salient points that should be brought in. But she could hardly conceal her exasperation at Olcott’s often jumbled and confused ideas, and expressed her frustration in no uncertain terms.	23
When receiving mental dictation, Mme. Blavatsky’s pen would be flying over the page, when she would suddenly stop, look out into space with the vacant eye of the clairvoyant seer (as though looking at something held before her), and then copying what she saw.	25

¹ Frontispiece by Haruna BloodMoon.

Thus Mme. Blavatsky, led by the Celestial Light of Lakshmi, kept gazing at the grandest repository of all ages hidden in the fathomless realms of Occultism.	28
Someone comes and envelops me as a misty cloud, pushes me out of myself, and then I am not Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, but someone else — someone strong and powerful, born in a totally different region of the world; and, as to myself, it is almost as if I were asleep, or lying by not quite conscious, not in my own body but close by, held only by a thread which ties me to it.	29
He who knows all, my Master, dictates to me and, occasionally, others whom I knew years ago in my travels. When writing upon a subject I know little or nothing of, I address myself to Them, and one of Them allows me to write down what I see in manuscripts, and even printed matter that pass before my eyes in the air.	29
Madame Blavatsky was living in two parallel worlds, the spiritual and the natural.	
She began unveiling “Isis” upon her return from ten years’ travelling in the Caucasus and other remote lands shimmering with snow, where her occult faculties and powers to heal were heightened, widely admired, and gratefully appreciated by those who were fortunate enough to have met her.	32
The editorial board of “Isis” consisted of several Adepts and Initiates, inwardly of one mind as to the timing of lifting Her mysterious veil and unfurling it from East to West.	
Outwardly, however, they were all of dissimilar idiosyncrasies, mental characteristics, predilections, and peculiarities of temper, directing their thoughts to a living writing machine — H.P. Blavatsky. Col. H.S. Olcott recollects some of the personalities of the editorial board:	33
* One, when deeply pondering, was constantly pulling at his long moustache, twisted into his side whiskers; another, of a fine artistic talent and a passion for mechanical invention, disliked English so much that only talked to me in French.	33
* One, would reel off to me poetical stanzas embodying sublime ideas alternating with humorous mode; another, was jovial, fond of good stories, and witty to a degree.	33
* One, was all dignity, reserve, and erudition; another, calm, patient, and helpful.	33
* One, was testy and sometimes exasperating; another, always willing to emphasise his philosophical or scientific explanation of the subjects I was to write upon, by doing phenomena for my edification; while to another, I dared not even mention them.	33
At one time, a huffy Adept rebuked thrifty Olcott over a pencil!	34
Despite the diverse Occult Agencies involved in the production of “Isis Unveiled” there was a clear sense of individuality and deep conviction running throughout it and Mme. Blavatsky’s other works — something special and unique to herself.	35
There were times when Mme. Blavatsky was neither “controlled,” nor dictated to by any superior intelligence, but was simply H.P.B., our beloved friend and teacher, who was trying as well as she could to carry out the noble object of her literary mission.	35
As daylight passing through the cathedral’s windows becomes coloured to the tints of the stained glass, so the thoughts transmitted by the Masters to Mme. Blavatsky’s brain were coloured by her own literary style. Still, though her modes of expression may have been somewhat different, the innermost train of thought was the same.	36
While the principal contributors to the production of “Isis Unveiled” were enlightened living men, of great learning and wisdom, they were joined by at least one disincarnate yet earth-bound entity — Sir Henry More — one of the truest Platonists of modern times, a precious ornament to our race, a glory to his country, and so pure and unselfish that the Masters held him in profound esteem.	37

Sir Henry's mind had been so intensely employed in purely intellectual speculation, that his spirituality had been temporarily stifled. Though he did not "materialize" and sit with us, he would converse with Mme. Blavatsky psychically, dictating copy, telling her what references to trace, answering Olcott's questions, and making scholarly contributions to the literary symposium.	37
Every time that Mme. Blavatsky was told by her Master to sit down and take dictation, she did so without wondering even for a moment if she were equal to the task.	38
When Mme. Blavatsky first arrived in America, she could hardly speak or write English. Having learned a good deal of English from her Master and Teacher, His verbal expressions and construction of sentences can be traced, like the course of a river, throughout her writings.	40
Madame Blavatsky admitted that the first edition of "Isis Unveiled," hailed by some as "masterpiece" and "monumental work," had given her more anxiety and trouble than anything else during a lifetime more full of thorns than of roses: it had no system in it, as if a mass of unconnected paragraphs shaken up in a wastebasket, taken out at random, and published with hideous metamorphoses of one word into another, misprints, and misplaced quotation marks.	42
Nevertheless, descending from on high like manna from heaven, "Isis" has been appreciated by those who, by separating the kernel of wisdom from the dead shell, can discern the true from the false.	43
Regardless of its literary shortcomings, "Isis" affords lucid glimpses to hitherto concealed regions of Eastern Knowledge, over which Western minds have brooded silently until 1877. And, to this day, "Isis Unveiled" remains a Treasure of Light and Knowledge, which exceeds all riches.	43
Little wonder that "Isis Unveiled" unleashed an unpreceded torrent of ugly accusations from venomous and unscrupulous tongues, pouring all their wrath upon Mme. Blavatsky.	43
It was an unholy alliance of libellous charges, from fraud and immorality, down to the Russian spy and charlatan innuendos — accusing Mme. Blavatsky of acting on false pretences, being a living lie, a habitual drunkard, an emissary of the Pope, an agent of the Jesuits to break down Spiritualism, and suchlike absurd yet brutal slander.	43
Thought acts independently of the brain which gave it birth. Once generated and released, that thought will live by its own energy.	44
It therefore stands to reason that, as thought is beyond space and time, when two minds are in perfect psycho-magnetic resonance and, of these two, one is Adept in Occult Sciences, then His thoughts from an immeasurable distance become as comprehensible to the other as if spoken across a room.	44
Madame Blavatsky's contempt for slanderers was too great to permit her to notice them: she left all calumnies and the nauseating filth unrefuted, rather than stooping to the gutter and risk dirtying her feet.	45
Madame Blavatsky extends her deep gratitude for the vital contributions of:	
* Henry Steel Olcott, for correcting the English and proof-reading "Isis," suggesting that the work should be divided into chapters, and that Vol. I to be devoted to Science, and Vol. II to Theology.	46
* Alexander Wilder, for correcting the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew words, suggesting quotations, writing the greater part of the Introduction "Before the Veil," and compiling a brilliant Index.	46
All baseless and feeble accusations of plagiarism were firmly refuted, one after the other.	48
What Mme. Blavatsky claims as her own are the fruits of her learning and studying in fields unchartered by modern science, and unknown to the West.	50

A most reprehensible oversight by Mr. J.W. Bouton, Publisher of “Isis Unveiled,” who pretended to be Mme. Blavatsky’s friend.	51
Responding to a reproach by a spiritualist medium, that “the material [in “Isis”] sadly needed reducing to order,” Mme. Blavatsky declared that she was duty-bound to point out the dangers of modern Spiritualism, and to provide evidence corroborating her conclusions.	53
Neither Gautama Buddha, nor any of the Hindu philosophers, ever taught immediate reincarnation in the same cycle of devachanic rest, or of the same personality, but of the glorified “Triune Man” (Atman-Buddhi-Manas) and conqueror of death (Hierophant) who, united with his immortal essence, is “capable of running the race” forward to spiritual perfection.	55
“Isis Unveiled” was a tentative effort to divert the attention of the Spiritualists from their hard-crusted preconceptions to the true state of post-mortem existence. However, “Isis” was not entirely unveiled, but rents sufficiently large were made to afford flitting glances by the student’s spiritual insight.	57
There is no contradiction between a passage referred as the “Trinity Doctrine” (man’s imperishable monas, i.e., Atman-Buddhi-Manas) and the later theosophical teachings, simply because the Septenary Constitution of Man had not been divulged at the time when “Isis” was written.	57
Most of the errors in the original edition occur in the citations of works quoted or referred to, and in the orthography of foreign words. Master K.H. once said that “Isis” ought to be rewritten for the sake of the family honour.	58
In a brazen and dishonourable move, Mr. J.W. Bouton, the Publisher of “Isis Unveiled,” asserted copyright under his name, instructed Dr. Alexander Wilder (whom he employed as reader) to abridge the text “as much as it would bear,” and refused every proposition afterward to transfer copyright ownership to H.P. Blavatsky, or to drop the price to a reasonable level.	59
The publication of “Isis” unleashed petty and virulent criticism regarding the provenance of quotations from, and references to, various authorities. As no accusations could be made against its sublime philosophical concepts, bringing out to everyone (whether profane or profound) Occult Knowledge and Truths, we can safely conclude that the sole aim of the ruthless and opinionated “literary criticism” was to discredit Mme. Blavatsky.	61
Ingratitude brings about its own demise and irrelevancy.	
No amount of scholarly criticism can justify the unsubstantiated accusations of “wholesale plagiarism,” especially when the sincerity of purpose and noble objective of “Isis Unveiled” have been acclaimed by independent thinkers, and highly esteemed by those who read it.	61
In January 1884, Mme. Blavatsky began rewriting and amplifying “Isis Unveiled”, expanding it like the bud of the lotus, and calling it “The Secret Doctrine” — unquestionably the magnum opus of the modern age; Vol. I was published in October 1888.	62
Back in October 1885, Mme. Blavatsky said that the new “Isis” was an entirely new work, freed from useless stuff, and without even twenty pages imported from the old “Isis:” Dogmas and doctrines, laws secular and divine, myths and mysteries, signs and symbols, are now expounded in the light of the perennial fountainhead of Ageless Wisdom, whose eloquence flows from the heart not the lips.	63
“Isis Unveiled,” the bestseller in 1877, went through at least twelve reprints, each deceptively marketed as new edition by Mr. J.W. Bouton, the assumed copyright owner. But as all such “editions” came from the same printer’s plates, they perpetuated the same errors and, while the print quality kept fading away, Bouton’s earnings became blessed beyond measure.	64

THEOSOPHY AND THEOSOPHISTS SERIES
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The First Point Loma Edition was published in 1906; the Second, in 1910.	64
The First Revised Edition was published in 1910 by the Theosophical Publishing Society of London and Benares; and London, in 1923.	65
The Third and Revised Point Loma Edition was published in 1919. It was reset on monotype and bound in four volumes preserving the original pagination.	65
The First Facsimile Edition of the original edition was published by The Theosophy Company of Los Angeles, in 1931. It was printed on bible paper with both volumes under one binding. A second edition was published in 1945, and a third, from new plates, in 1968.	66
Another Facsimile Edition of the original edition was published by Rider & Co. of London, in 1936, as part of the “Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky.”	66
In January 1950, the Theosophical University Press at Covina published a new two-volume edition, reset in a larger and more readable type face, while retaining the original pagination and style.	66
The present Centennial Edition, published to coincide with The Theosophical Society’s Centennial in 1975, is a heartfelt tribute of gratitude to the Masters of Wisdom behind “Isis Unveiled,” by those whose eyes have since opened to new vistas of cosmic splendour and inspiration, above and beyond the narrow horizons of crystallized and despotic faiths.	67
Superbly written, and in defiance of its literary shortcomings, the authoritative character of “Isis Unveiled” has never been questioned, and its intrinsic value has not been superseded or duplicated by “The Secret Doctrine.”	68
The aim and plan of “Isis Unveiled” was three-fold:	
* To exhume the primeval strata of man’s being.	69
* To lay bare the archaic records of man’s divine ancestry and heritage.	69
* To throw down the gauntlet to those who appropriated it for their own benefit and power, in the hope that their crime will remain undetected by posterity.	69
Stirring up man’s latent potentialities, “Isis” dilates the most exalted aspirations of Spirit, expands man’s consciousness and, by providing a sound basis for elevated morality and tenderness, it kindles the flame of brotherly love and sympathy with every living creature — whether human or animal — for none of us live for ourselves, we all live in and for each other.	70
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Part 2. Preface to “Isis Unveiled.”

By Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.

Founder and leading exponent of the modern Theosophical Movement, great noetic radiance of our epoch, acclaimed philosopher and mystic, indefatigable servant of humanity.	75
The perennial outflow of Eastern Philosophy has room for no other faith than absolute trust and reliance in the omnipotence of Man’s Divine Self.	76
“Isis Unveiled” shows that Mysteries are no mystery, save the idle speculations of the twittering mystery-mongers.	76

The drift of modern thought is palpably in the direction of liberalism in religion, and is poised to seize from theology and sceptical science the lawful domains of cosmogonical doctrine and metaphysical philosophy.	77
The far-right conservatives must surrender their despotic authority over the public conscience, which they have for so long enjoyed with impunity, by enforcing their lofty infallibility under the penalty of opprobrium.	77
Faith is the key of Christendom, and when that key is broken and lorn, verily Christendom is lorn, and stands vain and without fruit.	78
Long centuries of ecclesiastical oppression, inquisition, and papal dispensation for murder and mayhem have not quite congealed the life-blood of men into crystals around a blind spot of delusion overpowering the intellect.	78
The Wisdom-Religion of Theosophy is the once Universal Religion of Reason, and Mother-parent of all religions, harmonizing the divine with the human in man, and unifying the great diversity of beliefs, creeds, and opinions.	78
The enemies of Truth, and those for whom the price of a paragraph is more than the value of sincerity, are now arraigned for all to see.	78

Appendix. The vacillations and volte-face of Dr. G. Bloede.

Dr. Bloede, an ardent Spiritualist, warned people against joining the newly-formed Theosophical Society, and accused Madame Blavatsky of being the paid tool of the Jesuits to pull down Spiritualism.	80
Once a fierce antagonist to me, says Madame Blavatsky, Dr. Bloede made all the amends befitting a scholar and a gentleman, and now he does me the honour to call me friend.	83
Alas, one of our most esteemed and valued members was ensnared by the evil fluid of Jesuits.	84
Dr. Bloede erred considerably in maintaining that the Theosophical Society was a “failure.”	84

Suggested reading for students.

From our Theosophy and Theosophists Series.	86
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Part 1.

Introductory and historical notes on the trans-Himalayan Adepts, and other prominent contributors, involved in the literary production of “Isis Unveiled.”

Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff.

Isis is Divine Wisdom beheld by the pure in heart, and symbol of abstract Mother-Nature personified as Virgin; and so is the Rosicrucian Rose, anagram of the Orphic Eros.

The original edition of *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, was first published in 1877 in New York: J.W. Bouton; and London: Bernard Quaritch, 1877; Vol. I: xlv, 628pp; Vol. II: iv, 692pp.

A definitive edition, revised, corrected, and with additional material, compiled by Boris de Zirkoff, Editor of *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, was published by The Theosophical Publishing House in 1972. ISBN: 0-8356-0193-5. The Philaletheians edition herein is a preamble to *Isis Unveiled* (1972), Vol. I, [pp. 1-62], followed by a Preface by the author herself, H.P. Blavatsky, in Part 2.

Τα οντα και τα εσομενα και τα γεγονοτα εγω ειμι. Τον εμον χιτωνα ουδεις αποκαλυψεν. Ον εγω καρπον ετεκον ηλιος εγενετο.

I am all that has been, all that is, all that ever shall be; and no mortal has ever raised my garment. The fruit which I brought forth became the Sun.¹

On Saturday, September 29th, 1877, the first monumental work of H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, was published in New York by J.W. Bouton. Its title page declared it to be “A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology,” and the one thousand copies of the first printing were sold in ten days. Even some of the advance subscribers had to wait for the second printing.² [2]

¹ Inscription on the statue of Isis in the adytum of a temple, according to Proclus, *Commentaries on the Timæus of Plato*, Pt. II, p. 30, in Plato’s edition, Basileæ 1534.

² The above-mentioned date of publication appears in a letter written by Mme. Blavatsky to N.A. Aksakov and dated October 2nd, 1877. See V.S. Solovyov, *A Modern Priestess of Isis* (London 1895), pp. 276-77; on the Russian original text of this work, 2nd ed., (St. Petersburg 1904), p. 287. Mme. Blavatsky writes:

Well, my book has appeared at last. My darling was born last Saturday, September 29th, but a week earlier my publisher had sent pre-publication copies to the editors of all the papers. I am enclosing here-with the review in the *New York Herald* . . .

There exists, however, in the Adyar Archives, namely in Mme. Blavatsky’s own *Scrapbook* No. II, p. 44, an original telegram from Bouton, the publisher, to Col. Olcott, dated September 8th, 1877, saying: “See Commercial Advertiser this afternoon.” The clipping from this New York paper is pasted there also. It states that *Isis Unveiled* was published “this day,” namely September 8th, and gives various particulars about the work. It may be that some of the papers received their pre-publication copies as early as three weeks prior to the date of September 29th mentioned by Mme. Blavatsky. We have no definite explanation, however, for this discrepancy in dates. →

Riding the incoming tide of interest in the occult, which was then engaging the minds of an ever-increasing number of people, and coming, as it did, in the wake of widespread controversies created by H.P. Blavatsky's challenging articles and essays, published off and on for a period of three years in some of the New York dailies and the journals of the Spiritualistic movement, *Isis Unveiled* produced a powerful impact from the very day of its appearance.

The reaction of the Press was on the whole favourable. Dr. Shelton Mackenzie, one of the most capable literary critics of the day, wrote in the *Philadelphia Press* of October 9th, 1877, that

. . . it is one of the most remarkable works for originality of thought, thoroughness of research, depth of philosophic exposition, and variety and extent of learning that has appeared for very many years.

The New York *Herald* of September 30th, 1877, said that independent minds

. . . will welcome the new publication as a most valuable contribution to philosophical literature [and that it] will supplement the *Anacalypsis* of Godfrey Higgins.¹

Finding a great resemblance between them, it declared that the work under review

. . . with its striking peculiarities, its audacity, its versatility and the prodigious variety of subjects which it notices and handles . . . is one of the [most] remarkable productions of the century.

Dr. G. Bloede,² an erudite German scholar, said that

. . . under all considerations, it will range among the most important contributions to the literature of the modern science of the spirit, and be worth the attention of every thinking student of this.

The New York *World* thought it to be

. . . an extremely readable and exhaustive essay upon the paramount importance of re-establishing the Hermetic Philosophy in a world which blindly believes that it has outgrown it.

As to the rapid sale of the first impression, Col. Olcott (*Old Diary Leaves*, I, p. 294) says that "the first edition was exhausted within ten days." A similar statement occurs in Mme. Blavatsky's letter to Madame C.R. Corson, dated New York, August 28th, 1878, in which she says (writing in French): «La première édition (1,000 copies) fut vendue dans neuf jours, et les deux autres sont épuisées depuis bien longtemps. Mon Éditeur, Bouton, en fait imprimer une quatrième édition pour octobre.» ["The first edition (1,000 copies) was sold in nine days, and two subsequent ones have been long since exhausted. My Publisher, Bouton, intends printing a fourth edition in October."]

As is the case in many other instances, the word "edition" is used to denote repeated "printings" or "impressions" from the same original plates.

¹ [Godfrey Higgins, 1773–1833, *Anacalypsis: an Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis; or an Inquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations, and Religions*. First published in London, the first volume appearing in 1833, and the second in 1836. The 1927 edition by Macy-Masius Publishers, printed in New York in 1927, is the first complete reprinting of both volumes, and it follows exactly the complete text of the first edition; 2-vols, 1384pp. — ED. PHIL.]

² [An ardent spiritualist and bitter antagonist to Mme. Blavatsky, turned defender and friend. Refer to Appendix, on "The vacillations and volte-face of Dr. G. Bloede," on page 80 *et seq.* of this study. — ED. PHIL.]

The *American Bookseller* for October 1877 felt that

. . . the sale . . . is unprecedented for a work of its kind, the entire edition having been exhausted within ten days of the date of publication.

It also compared it to Higgins' *Anacalypsis* and declared the demand for it to be "far beyond the expectations of its publishers."

Some of the notices were flippant and prejudiced enough to make it clear that the critics had not read the work; and the Editor of the New [3] York *Times* wrote to Bouton that they were sorry they could not touch *Isis Unveiled*, as they "have a holy horror of Mme. Blavatsky and her letters."

One of the finest endorsements came from Bernard Quaritch, the famous bookseller and publisher, who wrote to Bouton from London, December 27th, 1877:

The book will evidently make its way in England and become a classic. I am very glad to be the English agent.

Writing about this in his *Old Diary Leaves* (Vol. I, p. 296, *fn.*), Col. Olcott adds:

. . . we were more glad that he should be; knowing his reputation for indomitable energy and high-mindedness.¹

"Isis Unveiled" is the most influential book of modern times, and a revolutionary act of brotherly love and sympathy with every creature, including the gnat² that dances in the rays of the sun.

According to Col. Olcott,

. . . the first money received for a copy of *Isis* was sent to me by a lady of Styria with her order; we kept it "for luck," and it now hangs, framed, on the walls of *The Theosophist* office at Adyar. The truest thing ever said about *Isis* was the expression of an American author that it is "a book with a revolution in it."

It appears that J.W. Bouton was so surprised and pleased with the situation that on Sunday, February 10th, 1878, in the presence of Col. Olcott,

. . . he offered [Mme. Blavatsky] \$5,000 as copyright on an edition of a book in one volume, if she would write it, which should a little more unveil *Isis*. He intended to print only 100 copies and make the price \$100 per copy. Though she

¹ Bernard Quaritch was a renowned bookseller, born at Worbis, a village in Prussian Saxony, April 23th, 1819; he was of Wendish origin. After a few years of apprenticeship in the book business in his native country, he came to London and was employed for a couple of years in the shop of Henry George Bohn, the famous bookseller of York Street, Convent Garden. After a brief stay in Paris, he returned to London and started his own bookselling business in 1847; he became naturalized as a British subject and established himself at 16 Castle Street, Leicester Square. Soon he became known as a dealer in European and Oriental linguistics, and from then on acquired an ever-increasing reputation along his chosen line of work. He published his first catalogue in 1858, and in 1860 moved to 15 Piccadilly, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Throughout his successful career, he purchased a very large number of libraries, bought remainders of expensive books, and attended either personally or by proxy every important book auction in Europe and America. The last complete record of his stock was a *General Catalogue of Old Books and Manuscripts* (1887–88, index 1892, 7-vols., 8vo., with portrait), increased by special Supplements between 1894–97 to some 12 volumes, a monument of bookselling enterprise, and of considerable bibliographical value. In the course of his career extending over more than fifty years, he developed the most extensive trade in old books in the world. He was a man of strong character, shrewd, unyielding, energetic and industrious. He died at Belsize Grove, Hampstead, December 17th, 1899, and his business passed into the hands of his son, also named Bernard Quaritch.

² [Look up "Shelley on the devotion of the moth for the star," in our Mystic Verse and Insights Series. — ED. PHIL.]

needed money badly enough, she refused the offer on the ground that she was not permitted at that time to divulge any more arcane secrets than she had done in *Isis* . . . ¹ [4]

In order to understand the nature of this impact, and to realize its repercussions in various departments of human thought, it is necessary to recall the nature of the era in which *Isis Unveiled* was published. As far as the Occident was concerned, the background was one of heavy and dull materialism which permeated most avenues of human endeavour. A climate in which scientific denial of all spirituality, self-righteous smugness of organized religion, artificial respectability of social customs, and barrenness of intellectual speculation were the prevailing influences of the day, presented difficulties which men of today may not easily grasp. The very existence of occult knowledge, of perfected men and initiates, of the latent powers in the human being, and of a secret path which leads to the attainment of that knowledge, were practically unknown, except among a few rare individuals who kept what they knew to themselves, and kept themselves unknown.

Only one Movement — known as Spiritualism in America, and as Spiritism in Europe — evinced a certain degree of open-mindedness towards little-known facts of Nature, even though the interest of its devotees was riveted on mere phenomena, without a philosophy to uphold them.

An ever-increasing number of people, some of them well known and influential in various circles, were being attracted to this phase of mediumistic phenomenalism, which, in spite of its confused and most uncertain antecedents, provided a fertile soil for new speculation, for the expression of new ideas, and the exercise of heretofore unsuspected intuition in the minds of men.

Against this background of materialistic denial and curiosity in the occult, the appearance of *Isis Unveiled* was somewhat similar to an exploding bomb, the repercussions of which jolted many established opinions, entrenched dogmas, and crystallized beliefs in the entire range of current thought.

Considering its extensive and varied contents, and the circumstances of its appearance, it is but natural to ask *how* this work was written.

In the summer of 1875, Madame Blavatsky began sketching out a plan for unveiling Isis, the Lunar Goddess.

A comprehensive record of the writing of *Isis Unveiled* is contained in Colonel Henry S. Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. I, ch. XIII–XVII, even though some inaccuracies have crept into his account mainly because it was written from memory and not from his actual *Diaries*. The MS. of the *Diaries* for the years 1874–77 had mysteriously disappeared and so was unavailable to the author. Olcott wrote:

One day in the Summer of 1875, Mme. Blavatsky showed me some sheets of manuscript which she had written, and said: →

¹ H.S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, p. 295, *fn.*

“I wrote this last night ‘by order,’ but what the deuce¹ it is to be I don’t know. Perhaps it is for a newspaper article, perhaps for a book, perhaps for nothing: anyhow, I did as I was ordered.”

And she put it away in a drawer, and nothing more was said about it for some time. But in the month of September — [5] if my memory serves me — she went to Syracuse (N.Y.),² on a visit to her new friends, Professor and Mrs. Corson, of Cornell University, and the work went on. She wrote me that it was to be a book on the history and philosophy of the Eastern Schools, and their relations with those of our own times. She said she was writing about things she had never studied, and making quotations from books she had never read in all her life: [and] that, to test her accuracy, Prof. Corson had compared her quotations with classical works in the University Library, and had found her to be right.³

At the time when Mme. Blavatsky visited Prof. and Mrs. Hiram Corson, they lived in Ithaca, N.Y., occupying temporarily the so-called “Richardson Cottage,” on Heustis Street, where Mme. Blavatsky spent approximately three weeks. She seems to have left New York, September 15th, 1875, going by the evening boat to Albany, N.Y. Either the next day or the 17th, she arrived at Ithaca. By the second week in October, she was back in New York.

Dr. Eugene Rollin Corson, the son of Prof. Hiram Corson, speaks of Mme. Blavatsky’s stay in Ithaca, N.Y., and says that:

She spent her time at her desk, writing, writing, writing most of the day and way into the night, carrying on a huge correspondence. Here she started *Isis Unveiled*, writing about twenty-five closely written foolscap pages a day. She had no books to consult; my father’s very extensive library was almost wholly on English literature, Early English, Anglo-Saxon, English poetry, and classic literature, and she rarely consulted him about anything.⁴

In support of Col. Olcott’s own words about the beginnings of *Isis Unveiled*, we have the following statement from Mme. Blavatsky herself:

When I started to write that which developed later into *Isis Unveiled*, I had no more idea than the man in the moon what would come of it. I had no plan; did not know whether it would be an essay, a pamphlet, a book, or an article. I knew that *I had to write it*, that was all. I began the work before I knew Colonel Olcott well, and some months before the formation of the Theosophical Society.⁵

The statement about not knowing Colonel Olcott “well” is, however, subject to question, as Mme. Blavatsky and the Colonel met October 14th, 1874, at [6] Chittenden,

¹ [exclamation of confusion]

² [Error for Ithaca, N.Y.]

³ *Old Diary Leaves, op. cit.*, I, pp. 202-3.

⁴ E.R. Corson, *Some Unpublished Letters of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky*, London: Rider & Co. [1929], pp. 27-28.

⁵ *Lucifer*, Vol. VIII, art. “My Books,” May 1891, p. 224. [Full text under the title “Blavatsky defends Isis Unveiled,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

Vermont, and this period of about one year was marked by a constant collaboration between them on various lines of activity.

At the time when Mme. Blavatsky started writing *Isis Unveiled*, i.e., approximately in the Summer of 1875, she was rapidly becoming known as a forceful writer, mainly through her contributions to *The Spiritual Scientist* of Boston, and *The Daily Graphic* of New York. In the midst of her labours on the MS. of her forthcoming work, she published some of her most challenging articles, such as “The Science of Magic,” “A Story of the Mystical,” “Indian Metaphysics,” “A Crisis for Spiritualism” and others, which appeared in Spiritualistic journals and the New York newspapers.¹

The beginnings of *Isis* are therefore fairly clear in their historical background, even though many details are wanting, and the actual dates are somewhat blurred. It is therefore with great surprise that the student reads in *The Mahātma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 289, the unequivocal statement by Master K.H. to the effect that

. . . it was then that she was ordered to write *Isis* — just a year after the Society had been founded.²

This statement will have to remain for the present as one of the curious puzzles which are to be met with in early Theosophical literature.

It is impossible to say just exactly how much of *Isis* was written in Ithaca, but it is interesting to note that Mme. Blavatsky, writing from there to N.A. Aksakov, under date of September 20th, 1875, mentions the first intended title for her book. She writes:

I am now writing a big book, which I call by John’s [John King’s] advice “Skeleton Key to Mysterious Gates.” I’ll show them up, your European and American men of science, Papists, Jesuits, and that race of the half-learned, *les châtres de la science*,³ who destroy everything without creating anything, and are incapable of creating.⁴

Upon her return to New York from Ithaca, Col. Olcott and Mme. Blavatsky took two suites of rooms at 433 West 34th Street, she on the first and he on the second floor, and thenceforward, the writing of *Isis* went on without break or interruption until its completion.⁵ The greater part of the work, [7] however, was done at another address, since the Founders very soon moved to 302 West 47th Street, the “Lamasery,” as it became known later. The accompanying drawing of the building, and its description, both by William Quan Judge, will help to re-create the surroundings:

¹ All these may be found in Vol. I of *H.P. Blavatsky’s Collected Writings*. [The Philaetheians editions of these articles can be found under the titles: “Magic is the Occult Knowledge of Natural Law,” in our Black versus White Magic Series, “Magnetism, Mesmerism, Hypnotism,” in our Confusing Words Series, “Adventures and Peregrinations of the Metaphysical Atom,” in our Secret Doctrine’s Third Proposition Series, and “Cross + Fire,” in our Secret Doctrine’s First Proposition Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² The original of this Letter has been checked in the British Museum, and the wording is correct.

³ [castrated from science]

⁴ V.S. Solovyov, *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, (London 1895), p. 257; on the Russian original text of this work, 2nd ed., (St. Petersburg 1904), pp. 274-75.

⁵ H.S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, p. 203. The Colonel, however, is mistaken when saying that Mme. Blavatsky wrote but spasmodically during her Philadelphia stay. She resided in that city from November 1874, to approximately June 1875, which was before she began writing her book.

A flat was taken afterwards on the corner of 47th Street and Eighth Avenue, in the house which is shown in the picture.

The illustration shows the narrow front of the house facing Eighth Avenue, which is a business street running all the way from lower New York to 155th street. The building is what is known as a double flat, with a shop on the street level. The entrance to the apartments is down on 47th street under the rear suites of rooms. H.P.B. had the flat which begins in the middle of the building, running to the front on Eighth Avenue and being immediately over the shop. The building is at this date [1893] in the same condition and under the same arrangement as when H.P.B. lived there.¹



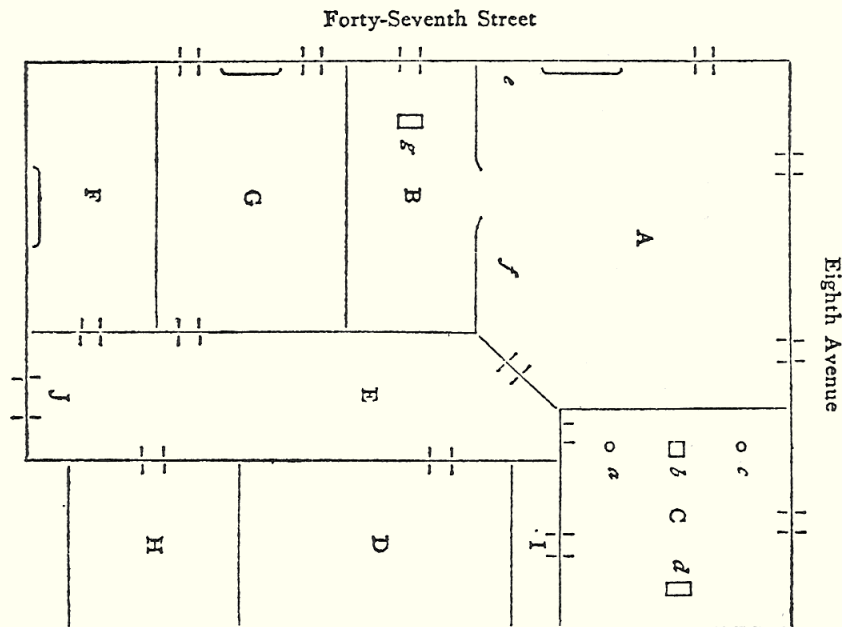
House at 302 West 47th Street, New York,
as drawn by William Quan Judge.

Her writing room was in front, taking in the corner window and the next two over the shop. The third window in front is of a small room which was used for

¹ A picture of the same house taken in 1966, by A. Merrell Powers of New York, shows hardly any changes to have taken place in the intervening years. This recent picture shows also how faithful to the original was Mr. Judge's drawing.

various purposes, sometimes for breakfast, at other [times] for sleeping. On that side, within, the inner hall ran down to the entrance door of the apartment with rooms in the following order: adjoining the writing and sitting room was her bedroom, having doors as well as a door into the hall, and cut-off from the dining-room, next on that side, by a solid wall. Beyond the living-room is the kitchen, which looks out on 47th street. On the other side of the hall is first the bathroom fronting the kitchen, and next, proceeding again forward, is a small dark room in which Col. Olcott slept. Upstairs, Mrs. I.C. Mitchell, sister of Col. Olcott, lived for some time. The writing room and the small room first spoken of cut the hall off in front.¹

Writing on the same subject, Col. Olcott gives the following plan of the “Lamasery” and a description of it which differs in one or two points from that of Mr. Judge. He says (see the accompanying plan):



Plan of the flat at 302 West 47th Street,
New York, as drawn by Col. H. S. Olcott.

- A, our working and only reception room;
- B, bedroom of H.P.B.;
- C, my bedroom;
- D, a small, dark bedroom;
- E, passage;
- F, kitchen;
- G, dining-room;
- H, bathroom;
- I, hanging closet;
- J, exterior door of the flat opening upon the house staircase; always [8] closed with a spring latch and locked at night.

¹ William Quan Judge in: “Habitations of Mme. Blavatsky,” *The Path*, Vol. VIII, November 1893, pp. 238-39.

In my room, *a* is the chair where I sat reading; *b* the table; *c* the chair where my visitor [Master M.] seated himself during the interview; *d* my camp-cot.¹ In our workroom *e* is where the cuckoo clock hung, and / the place of the hanging shelves against which I bruised myself. In B, *g* represents the place of H.P.B.'s bed . . . ²

There was nothing out of the common in the furnishing and decoration of our apartment save in the dining-room and workroom — which was at the same time our reception-room and library all in one — and they were certainly quaint enough. The dead wall³ of the dining-room which separated it from H.P.B.'s bedroom was entirely covered with a picture *in dried forest leaves*, representing a tropical jungle scene. An elephant stood, ruminating beside a pool of water, a tiger was springing at him from the background, and a huge serpent was coiled around the trunk of a palm tree . . . I have never heard of another wall-picture of the sort mentioned, and it seemed to strike all our guests as entirely appropriate in such a home as the “Lamasery.” The whole forest scene grew out of the covering with autumn leaves, of a figure of an elephant cut from brown paper. I made another similar invention in the work-room. The entrance door was in an angle made by cutting off a corner, and above it the wall formed a square of perhaps 4 x 5 ft. One day I found at a curiosity shop a splendidly mounted lioness-head; the eyes glaring, the jaws wide open, the tongue retracted, the teeth white and menacing. On getting it home and looking around for a place to put it, this square of wall struck my eye, and there I hung my trophy. By an arrangement of long, dried grasses, I made it seem as though an angry lioness were creeping through the jungle and ready to spring upon the visitors who chanced to look up at her. It was one of our jokes to have newcomers seated in an easy chair that faced the door, and enjoy their start when their eyes wandered from H.P.B. to glance around the room. If the visitor chanced to be an hysterical old maid who screamed on seeing the trophy, H.P.B. would laugh heartily. In two corners of the room stood palm-fronds that touched the ceiling and bent over their tips in graceful curves; little stuffed monkeys peered out over the curtain cornices; a fine stuffed snake lay on top of the mantel mirror, hanging its head over one corner; a large stuffed baboon, decked out with a collar, white cravat and pair of my spectacles, carrying under one arm the manuscript of a lecture on [9] “Descent of Species,” and dubbed “Professor Fiske,”⁴

¹ [A light bed that folds up for storage or transport.]

² *Old Diary Leaves, op. cit.*, I, pp. 377-78. As our recent photograph of this building shows, it is now the Sherman Hotel. An attempt has been made to photograph the rooms formerly occupied by the Founders, but it has been ascertained that they have been completely changed and made into small hotel rooms; under these circumstances, nothing would be gained by photographing them.

³ [A wall unbroken by a door, window, or any other opening.]

⁴ [Boris de Zirkoff on John Fiske, from his *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (BIBLIOGRAPHY) VIII p. 437: John Fiske was an American historical, philosophical, and scientific writer, born in Hartford, Conn., March 30th, 1842; died at Gloucester, Mass., July 4th, 1901. Graduated at Harvard, in 1863; continued to study languages and philosophy; spent two years in Harvard Law School and opened an office in Boston. Resided most of his life at Cambridge, Mass., devoting time to writing. Lectured at Harvard, in 1869 and 1871. His lectures on evolution, revised and expanded, were published as *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy* (1874). Assistant librarian at Harvard, 1872-79. Contributed by means of his many lectures to spread the knowledge of Darwin and Spencer in America, and demonstrated that religion and evolution were not incompatible. Fiske's reputation was primarily due to his historical writings, which form a nearly complete colonial history. Among his works may be men-

stood upright in a corner; a fine large grey owl sat perched on a bookcase; a toy lizard or two crawled up the wall; a Swiss cuckoo clock hung to the left of the chimney breast; small Japanese cabinets, carved wooden images of Lord Buddha and a Siamese talapoin, curios of sorts and kinds, occupied the top of the cottage piano, wall brackets, corner *étagères*¹ and other convenient spaces; a long writing table took up the centre of the room; some bookshelves with our scanty library rose above its farther end, between the two Eighth Avenue windows; and chairs and a divan or two filled up the floor space, so that one had to pick one's way to get to the farther end of the chamber. A hanging four-light gas chandelier with a drop-light over the table gave us the necessary physical illumination; the other, H.P.B. supplied. A pair of sliding glass doors (seldom closed) divided the workroom from her little bedroom, and on the wall over the doors we constructed a huge double triangle of thin punched steel sheets. Altogether the room was very artistic and pleasing to its occupants and guests, the theme of many a description in newspapers and talk among our friends. No frame could have been more appropriate for setting off the bizarre personality of its mysterious occupant, H.P.B.²

The awesome task of revealing the secrets of Nature began in a small flat, in a modest district of New York, directed and overseen by Masters of Eastern Occultism.

Resuming Mr. Judge's description:

It was in this flat, in the larger front room, that *Isis Unveiled* was written and finished. There, so many extraordinary phenomena had place that volumes would be required to describe them. Here the "astral music and bells" were so often heard, which self-styled wise critics have assumed were produced by a maid walking up and down the hall with an instrument: an absurdity for those who, like myself, were there and heard all such things. Here, in the corner of the room over Eighth Avenue, the stuffed owl stood and sometimes blinked. It is now in the possession of a lady living not far from the New York Headquarters. And here, when *Isis* was finished H.P.B., sat among her few belongings and saw the auctioneer sell them off to the highest bidder; from here she at last, in December 1878, went off to the steamer which took her to London, from whence she sailed to India never to return to the land where she was ever such a perplexity and an amusement to the people of the metropolis. It is a modest place in a modest, busy part of a great city; yet how much was done there and what mighty forces played within those four walls while the immense personality known as Helena P. Blavatsky dwelt therein!³ [10]

tioned: *Darwinism*, 1879; *Excursions of an Evolutionist*, 1883; *A Century of Science*, 1899; *The American Revolution*, 1891.]

¹ [A piece of furniture with open shelves for displaying small ornaments.]

² *Old Diary Leaves*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 420-22.

³ W.Q. Judge, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

Writing about these early days in New York, Mrs. Laura Langford Holloway speaks of James C. Robinson as being

. . . another young brilliant Irish lawyer, who was as eager to study occultism as was Mr. Judge, and who did study and serve with enthusiasm and unflagging zeal. The first copy of *Isis Unveiled* that came from the press, young Robinson secured, and he took it to a newspaper office where he had a friend, and asked for an advance notice. This was accorded him with the provision that he write the notice, which he did, and he had the satisfaction of taking to Mme. Blavatsky the first recognition of her book printed in a daily paper. Had his life been prolonged, Theosophy would have had an able exponent, for of all the group of young New York lawyers of that day, James Robinson was the most cultured. His family had wealth and influence, and he had enjoyed every advantage, and was a noble specimen of an Irish-American lawyer. His sudden death occurred at the end of the first year of his acquaintance with Mme. Blavatsky and it was a distinct loss to the work and to the workers.¹

Actually, *Isis Unveiled* was a production in collaboration between H.P. Blavatsky herself and several Initiates or Adepts of the Occult Brotherhood, one or two of whom are known to some extent, the others practically unknown.

William Q. Judge's younger brother, John, also contributed by preparing Mme. Blavatsky's manuscript for the printer.

Another interesting fact about this period is mentioned by Geoffrey A. Barborka, who writes:

In all the accounts telling of the writing of *Isis Unveiled*, not one has given credit to a young man who assisted H.P.B. in a very capable way. Therefore, the writer considers it a privilege to honour the memory of William Q. Judge's younger brother, John, for the service he rendered in the matter of preparing Mme. Blavatsky's manuscript for the printer, by copying a good portion of the work. This was not a light task, for typewriters were unknown in those days, and it was necessary to prepare manuscripts for publication by means of hand-written copy.

Young John H. Judge met H.P.B. when he was only seventeen years of age, so he related to the students who had gathered to greet him on the occasion of his visit to the Raja-Yoga College and School at the Point Loma Theosophical Headquarters in California. He went on to say that he had a great admiration for H.P.B. and considered it a great privilege to assist her in preparing *Isis Unveiled* for the publisher. Mr. John H. Judge visited Point Loma on August 25th, 1914, and the writer was present when he told of the assistance which he rendered H.P. Blavatsky. The account of the reception accorded to the brother of one of the Founders of The Theosophical Society was recorded in the *Raja-Yoga Messenger* (October 1914, Vol. X, No. 10, pp. 16-17), the magazine published by students of the College.² [11]

¹ *The Word*, New York, Vol. XXII, December 1915.

² H.P. Blavatsky, *Tibet and Tulku*, pp. 205-6 *fn*.

“Isis Unveiled” was a collaborative production between Mme. Blavatsky and several Adepts of the trans-Himalayan Arhat Esoteric School.

From the ordinary worldly standpoint, *Isis Unveiled* was of course written by H.P. Blavatsky, and on that, exoterically, nothing more needs to be said. From the viewpoint of occult fact and doctrine, however, the authorship of this remarkable work is not so easily determined, and requires careful consideration of little-known and rather abstruse teachings of the Esoteric Philosophy.

Actually, *Isis Unveiled* was a production in collaboration between H.P. Blavatsky herself and several Initiates or Adepts of the Occult Brotherhood, one or two of whom are known to some extent, the others practically unknown.

Portions of this work were written by the ordinary conscious mind of its acknowledged author. Others were dictated to her by one or another Initiate, for whom she served as an amanuensis, along lines of clairaudient communication. Still other portions of her MSS. were written when one or another of these Initiates temporarily overshadowed her outer form and used it. And there were also portions which were precipitated for her, *in her own handwriting*, while she was asleep.

At no time, however, was there any ordinary mediumism involved in the process, nor was it in any way akin to automatic writing. It is of primary importance to realize that. Otherwise, endless confusion and misunderstanding will result.

An Adept can transfer part of his consciousness to a disciple-messenger or mediator, in order for the latter to carry out a task upon the former’s behest in the outer world, or to teach. The Tibetan term for this delegated authority is Tulku, whereby the messenger is doing his Master’s bidding by mutual consent.

In order to understand the situation, the student must bear in mind the doctrine of *Tulku*, a technical Tibetan term which is one of the most comprehensive and mystically significant in the entire range of the many important words used in Tibetan Buddhism. The term, in one of its applications, describes the condition when a living Initiate or high Occultist sends a part of his consciousness to take embodiment, for a longer or shorter period of time, in a neophyte-messenger whom that Initiate sends into the outer world to perform a duty or to teach. The Messenger acts as a transmitter of the spiritual and divine powers of the Initiate. H.P. Blavatsky acted frequently throughout her public career as the temporary *tulku* of one or another Initiate. This transference of consciousness from one occultist to the constitution of another is also known in Tibetan esotericism under the term of *hpho-wa*, and is a fact far better known in the Orient than in the West.

The doctrine of *Tulku* is intimately connected with the doctrine of *Avatāras*, of which there are several distinct kinds.¹ [12]

¹ When transliterated from Tibetan characters, the term *tulku*, appears as *spurl-sku*. The dictionary form of it is *sprul-pa*. The final *pa* is a frequently used suffix. When used along with a noun, the intent of *pa* is to represent a given root as a noun. When used in connection with a verb, it indicates the infinitive form of the verb, or also a participial form. In the case of *sprul-pa*, it indicates an infinitive and the term means “to appear,” “to change,”

In Tulku there is no loss of consciousness: on the contrary, the mediator remains lucid and self-conscious throughout the occult transmission.

Ordinary mediumship, so prominent in modern Spiritualistic circles, and known under other names throughout the history of the human race, is at the opposite pole of the condition of *tulku*. Mediumship is intimately connected with various conditions of trance, or temporary cessation or loss of personal consciousness. *Tulku* is performed without loss of personal consciousness and with definite and complete knowledge of what is taking place. The phenomena performed by ordinary mediums are accomplished either during the condition of trance, and with no subsequent memory whatever of what has taken place, or out of trance but nevertheless without control over, or specific knowledge about, what has occurred. In the condition of *tulku*, however, the occultist maintains his self-conscious awareness at all times and merely lends his astro-physical organism to the temporary usage of another and higher consciousness, by mutual consent. The ordinary medium is usually acting under the influence of various types of ex-human [Elementaries] and elemental entities¹ in the lower sub-planes of the astral world, while the occultist transmits the power, knowledge and influence of *living men* who have learned by means of arduous occult training how to withdraw temporarily from their own outer constitution and enter another, for the performance of a specific task.

An ordinary medium can never hope to become an occultist unless and until he achieves complete and final control over his mediumistic tendencies, which are psychically-pathological and disorderly, and brings his entire astro-physical constitution under the dominance of his Spiritual Will.

Like several other well-known Occultists in history, H.P. Blavatsky had strong mediumistic tendencies in the early years of her life, but these were transmuted and controlled, by means of severe occult training under her Teacher. She wrote:

I have *known* and *conversed* with many a “John King” in my life — a generic name for more than one spook — but thank heaven, I was never yet “controlled” by one! My mediumship has been crushed out of me a quarter of a century or more [ago]; and I defy loudly all the “spirits” of *Kāma-loka* to approach — let alone to control me now . . . ² [13]

The period to which she refers coincides with her stay in the Caucasus, about 1859–63, during which time she had a near-fatal illness of a mysterious kind, and underwent a complete change of consciousness. It must have been one of the major turning points in her occult development.

“to transform one’s self.” The second component, *sku*, signifies “body.” Hence the compound may be rendered: “to appear in a body,” or “the appearance in a body.” Also, “to change a body,” or “a changing of the body.”

The Sanskrit equivalent for *tulku* is *āveśa*. The prefix *ā* in connection with verbs of motion means “in,” “into”; *veśa* is derived from the verbal root *viś*, meaning “to enter,” “to possess.” Hence the compound may be rendered: “the entrance into, the taking possession of — a vehicle (an *upādhi*).”

Col. Olcott defines this term at some length in his *Old Diary Leaves*, I, pp. 269-76, and gives several interesting cases from Eastern sources.

¹ [Consult “Blavatsky on Elementals and Elementaries,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² *Light*, London, Vol. IV, August 9th, 1884, pp. 323-24; Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VI, p. 271.

What should be carefully borne in mind in connection with this entire subject is the difference between an ordinary medium — especially a *trance-medium* — and what might be termed, for lack of a better word, a *mediator*, if we limit the latter term to an occultist able to perform *tulku*.

The opinion of those critics who have ascribed to H.P. Blavatsky the condition of ordinary mediums, and interpreted her occult phenomena as trance-mediumship, is based upon ignorance of the factors involved and on superficial judgment of mere appearances. It is perfectly true that certain phenomena performed by H.P. Blavatsky were similar to those performed by genuine mediums, but their similarity of appearance may be likened to the similarity which exists between two people, one of whom is walking on the street by self-directed will and intention, while the other is sleep-walking without the slightest knowledge of what is going on. Both are nevertheless walking!

While the medium of the séances¹ is a hapless and helpless instrument of erratic and vagrant astral forces, the mediator in Tulku is a willing intermediary between the Brotherhood of trans-Himalayan Adepts and humanity at large. Such a mediator may be also called a transmitter, as was the case with Mme. Blavatsky.

There is, therefore, a sharp distinction made in Occultism between a mere medium — often a hapless and helpless tool of erratic and vagrant astral forces — and a mediator, who is a wholly voluntary and fully acquiescent, willing, and self-conscious, intermediary between the Brotherhood of Adepts and ordinary humanity. A mediator is thus a highly evolved and trained human being possessing a strong and vigorously active, spiritually-intellectual individuality, usually working through a forceful and positive personality, which was certainly the case with H.P. Blavatsky. Such a mediator may be termed a *transmitter* — one might almost say a *transformer*, in the sense used in electrical science — and stands at the opposite pole from an ordinary medium who is a human being with a more or less dislocated psychological apparatus, the unconscious, or at best half-conscious, prey or victim of every astral current or energy that may happen to flow towards him or her. A medium, in fact, is one [of] the principles of whose constitution are not under the control of the higher spiritual will and mind, or only partially so. This renders the lower parts of his constitution more or less erratic, easily swayed by the thoughts and feelings of others.

The mediator, on the other hand, is a free agent so far as his will is concerned, and is one in whom the spiritual stream from the inner god is more or less constantly at work. Therefore, and on the basis of the definition itself, a mediator is an individual of high occult training who is not servile or subject to the will of any other, and is not suffering from either psychologization or self-psychologization, which would unfit him for being a mediator. Whatever a mediator does, he does as a result of self-determination and [14] free choice, and his acting as a mediator is in itself the grandest and most sublime part of this willing service to a highly spiritual Cause.

¹ [Necromancy is Black Magic. — ED. PHIL.]

In addition to being at times *tulku* for one or another Adept, there were times when, because of her training to this specific end, Mme. Blavatsky could, by a supreme effort of the will, ally her own psychological or psycho-mental or intermediate nature with the inner Ray from her own divinity or Spiritual Monad, the effect being similar, but not identical to the other cases of “inspiration” as explained above. The difference between her personality and that source of inner inspiration has been frequently — but unfortunately not with much consistency — indicated by speaking of H.P. Blavatsky on the one hand, and of “H.P.B.” on the other.¹

With the above explanation of this recondite subject before him, the student will better understand the following excerpts from Col. H.S. Olcott’s *Old Diary Leaves*, giving a vivid, eyewitness description of the writing of *Isis Unveiled*:

In her whole life she had not done a tittle of such literary labour, yet I never knew even a managing daily journalist who could be compared with her for dogged endurance or tireless working capacity. From morning till night she would be at her desk, and it was seldom that either of us got to bed before 2 o’clock a.m. During the daytime I had my professional duties to attend to, but always, after an early dinner, we would settle down together to our big writing-table and work, as if for dear life, until bodily fatigue would compel us to stop. What an experience! The education of an ordinary lifetime of reading and thinking was, for me, crowded and compressed into this period of less than two years. I did not merely serve her as an amanuensis or a proof-reader, but she made me a collaborator; she caused me to utilize — it almost seemed — everything I had ever read or thought, and stimulated my brain to think out new problems that she put me in respect to occultism and metaphysics, which my education had not led me up to, and which I only came to grasp as my intuition developed under this forcing process. She worked on no fixed plan, but ideas came streaming through her mind like a perennial spring which is ever overflowing its brim. Now she would be writing upon Brahmā, anon upon Babinet’s electrical [15] “meteor-cat”; one moment she would be reverentially quoting from Porphyry, the next from a daily newspaper or some modern pamphlet that I had just brought home; she would be adoring the perfections of the ideal Adept, but diverge for an instant to thwack Professor Tyndall or some other pet aversion of hers, with her critical cudgel. Higgledy-piggledy it came, in a ceaseless rivulet, each paragraph complete in itself and capable of being excised without harm to its predecessor or successor. Even as it stands now, after all its numerous recastings, an examination of the wondrous book will show this to be the case.

¹ The only work on the subject of *tulku* in connection with H.P. Blavatsky is the one by Geoffrey A. Barborca entitled *H.P. Blavatsky, Tibet, and Tulku*, published by The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, India, in 1966 (xxiv, 476pp; with illustrations and copious Index). This outstanding work is from the pen of one of the finest scholars of the Theosophical Movement, who was raised and worked for many years at the Headquarters of the Point Loma Theosophical Society, both under Katherine Tingley and Dr. G. de Purucker. It includes a great deal of valuable information about Tibetan Buddhism and the Lamaic Hierarchy, and should prove of great help to the serious student of the Esoteric Philosophy.

In the course of Col. Olcott's training, Mme. Blavatsky assigned topics to write about, and suggesting the salient points that should be brought in. But she could hardly conceal her exasperation at Olcott's often jumbled and confused ideas, and expressed her frustration in no uncertain terms.

If she had no plan, despite all her knowledge, does not that go to prove that the work was not of her own conception? that she was but the channel through which this tide of fresh, vital essence was being poured into the stagnant pool of modern spiritual thought? As a part of my educational training she would ask me to write something about some special subject, perhaps suggesting the salient points that should be brought in, perhaps just leaving me to do the best I could with my own intuitions. When I had finished, if it did not suit her, she would usually resort to strong language, and call me some of the pet names that are apt to provoke the homicidal impulse; but if I [were] prepared to tear up my unlucky composition, she would snatch it from me and lay it by for subsequent use elsewhere, after a bit of trimming, and I would try again.¹ Her own manuscript was often a sight to behold; cut and patched, re-cut and re-pasted, until if one held a page of it to the light, it would be seen to consist of, perhaps, six, or eight, or ten slips cut from other pages, pasted together, and the text joined by interlined words or sentences. She became so dexterous in this work that she used often to humorously vaunt her skill to friends who might be present. Our books of reference sometimes suffered in the process, for her pasting was frequently done on their open pages, and volumes are not wanting in the Adyar Headquarters and London libraries which bear the marks to this day. [16]

From the date of her first appearance in the *Daily Graphic*, in 1874 [October, 30th], throughout her American career, she was besieged by visitors, and if among them there chanced to be any who had some special knowledge of any particular thing cognate to her field of work, she invariably drew him out and, if possible, got him to write down his views or reminiscences for insertion in her book. Among examples of this sort are Mr. O'Sullivan's account of a magical *séance* in Paris, Mr. Rawson's interesting sketch of the secret initiations of the Lebanon Druses, Dr. Alexander Wilder's numerous Notes and text paragraphs in the Introduction ["Before the Veil"] and throughout both volumes, and others which add so much to the value and interest of the work . . .

One might fancy, upon seeing the numerous quotations in *Isis Unveiled* that she had written it in an alcove of the British Museum, or of the Astor Library in New York. The fact is, however, that our whole working library scarcely comprised one hundred books of reference. Now and again single volumes would be

¹ [Col. Olcott's own candid statement is supported by a footnote which Master M. appended to his letter to A.P. Sinnett (Letter XIII, received at Allahabad in January 1882. See *The Mahātma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 77, fn.), wherein he says:

By the by, I'll rewrite for you pages 345 to 357, Vol. I, of *Isis* — much jumbled, and confused by Olcott, who thought he was improving it!

No record exists, however, of this text having been rewritten. Curiously enough, it is within the above-mentioned pages that occur (on pp. 346-47 & 351) the sentences, concerning the reincarnation of the human entity, which contain a number of errors that Mme. Blavatsky was unable to correct before the work was published. As is well known, she went to considerable trouble in correcting them at a later date. The student is referred to later pages of this Introductory.]

brought her by Mr. Sotheran, Mr. Marble or other friends and, latterly, she borrowed a few of Mr. Bouton. Of some books she made great use — for example, King’s *Gnostics*; Jennings’s *Rosicrucians*; Dunlap’s *Sod* and *Spirit History of Man*; Moor’s *Hindoo Pantheon*; Des Mousseaux’s furious attacks on Magic, Mesmerism, Spiritualism, etc., all of which he denounced as the Devil,¹ Éliphas Lévi’s various works; Jaccoliot’s twenty-seven volumes; Max Muller’s, Huxley’s, Tyndall’s, Herbert Spencer’s works, and those of many other authors of greater or less repute: yet not to exceed the hundred, I should say. Then what books *did* she consult, and what [17] library had she access to? Mr. W.H. Burr asked Dr. Wilder in an open letter to *The Truth Seeker*² whether the rumour was true that *he* had written *Isis* for H.P.B.; to which our beloved old friend would truthfully reply that it was a false rumour, and that he had done as much for H.P.B. as I have above stated, had given her much excellent advice, and had, for a consideration, prepared the very copious Index of some fifty pages, from advance plate-proofs sent [to] him for the purpose. That is all. And equally baseless is the oft-repeated tale that I wrote the book and she touched it up: it was quite the other way about. I corrected every page of her manuscript several times, and every page of the proofs; wrote many paragraphs for her, often merely embodying her ideas that she could not then (some fifteen years before her death and anterior to almost her whole career as a writer of English literature) frame to her liking in English; helped her to find out quotations, and did other purely auxiliary work: the book is hers alone, so far as personalities on this plane of manifestation are concerned, and she must take all the praise and the blame that it deserves. She made the epoch with her book and, in making it, made me — her pupil and auxiliary — as fit as I may have been found to do Theosophical work during these past twenty years. Then, whence did H.P.B. draw the materials which compose *Isis*, and which cannot be traced to accessible literary sources of quotation? *From the Astral Light* and, by her soul-senses, from her Teachers — the “Brothers,” “Adepts,” “Sages,” “Masters,” as they have been variously called. How do I know it? By working two years with her on *Isis* and many more years on other literary work.

¹ [The full titles of the works which Col. Olcott had in mind are as follows: C.W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*, London 1864 (2nd ed., 1887); Hargrave Jennings, *The Rosicrucians, their Rites, and Mysteries*, London 1870 (2nd ed., 1879; 3rd ed., 1887); S.F. Dunlap, *Söd: The Son of the Man; Söd: The Mysteries of Adoni*, both London & Edinburgh 1861; and *Vestiges of the Spirit History of Man*, New York, 1858; E. Moor, *The Hindoo Pantheon*, London 1810; and mainly two works by H.-R. Gougenot des Mousseaux, namely, his *Les hauts phénomènes de la magie, précédés du spiritisme antique*, Paris 1864, and *Mœurs et pratiques des démons*, Paris 1854 (2nd ed., 1865).

In addition to the above, Mme. Blavatsky quoted to a very large extent from the following works: C.C.J. Bunsen, *Egypt’s Place in Universal History*, London 1848–67; W.R. Cassels, *Supernatural Religion*, which had been published anonymously in London in 1874 and had gone through six or seven editions by 1877; I.P. Cory, *Ancient Fragments*, London 1832 (2nd ed.); J.W. Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, New York 1874; J. Ennemoser, *The History of Magic*, London 1854; F. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, New York 1867; E. Salverte, *The Philosophy of Magic*, London 1846; and Col. Henry Yule, *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 2nd ed., London 1875. From the nature and number of quotations from, and references to, the above-mentioned works, it is fairly certain that she either had some of them among her own books, or had an easy access to them through friends.]

² [Founded by D.M. Bennett (1818–1882) in 1873, the world’s oldest and most influential Freethought publication in America during the period following the Civil War, and into the first decades of the 20th century, known as the Golden Age of Freethought. Though there were other Freethought periodicals, *The Truth Seeker* was the only one with a national circulation. Among other general-readership titles, only *Harper’s Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *Scientific American*, and *The Nation* are older. Students to consult “Blavatsky on the Travelling Truthseeker” and “Tributes to De Robigne Mortimer Bennett,” in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. — ED. PHIL.]

When receiving mental dictation, Mme. Blavatsky's pen would be flying over the page, when she would suddenly stop, look out into space with the vacant eye of the clairvoyant seer (as though looking at something held before her), and then copying what she saw.

To watch her at work was a rare and never-to-be-forgotten experience. We sat at opposite sides of one big table usually, and I could see her every movement. Her pen would be flying over the page, when she would suddenly stop, look out into space with the vacant eye of the clairvoyant seer, shorten her vision as though to look at something held invisibly in the air before her, and begin copying on her paper what she saw. The quotation finished, her eyes would resume their natural expression, and she would go on writing until again stopped by a similar interruption.¹

I remember well two instances when I, also, was able [18] to see and even handle books from whose astral duplicates she had copied quotations into her manuscript, and which she was obliged to “materialise” for me, to refer to when reading the proofs, as I refused to pass the pages for the “strike-off” unless my doubts as to the accuracy of her copy were satisfactory [satisfied?]. One of these was a French work on physiology and psychology; the other, also by a French author, upon some branch of neurology. The first was in two volumes, bound in half calf, the other in pamphlet wrapper. It was when we were living at 302 West 47th street — the once-famous “Lamasery,” and the executive headquarters of the Theosophical Society. I said: “I cannot pass this quotation, for I am sure it cannot read as you have it.” She said: “Oh don't bother; it's right; let it pass.” I refused, until finally she said: “Well, keep still a minute and I'll try to get it.” The far-away look came into her eyes, and presently she pointed to a far comer of the room, to an *étagère* on which were kept some curios, and in a hollow voice said: “There!” and then came to herself again. “There, there; go look for it over there!” I went, and found the two volumes wanted, which, to my knowledge, had not been in the house until that very moment. I compared the text with H.P.B.'s quotation, showed her that I was right in my suspicions as to the error, made the proof correction and then, at her request, returned the two volumes to the place on the *étagère* from which I had taken them. I resumed my seat and work, and when, after awhile, I looked again in that direction, the books had disappeared! After my telling this (absolutely true) story, ignorant sceptics are free to doubt my sanity; I hope it may do them

¹ [In Countess Constance Wachtmeister's account of her stay and work with Mme. Blavatsky at Würzburg, she quotes Mme. Blavatsky's words with regard to this very subject of seeing in the Astral Light. It appears that Mme. Blavatsky said to her on one occasion:

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 . . . (*Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky and "The Secret Doctrine,"* p. 33)

Even though the account is connected with the writing of her *magnum opus* [*The Secret Doctrine*], it is most likely that the same process was employed by Mme. Blavatsky at the time *Isis Unveiled* was being written.]

good. The same thing happened in the case of the *apport*¹ of the other book, but this one remained, and is in our possession at the present time.² [19]

The “copy” turned off by H.P.B. presented the most marked dissemblances at different times. While the handwriting bore one peculiar character throughout, so that one familiar with her writing would always be able to detect any given page as H.P.B.’s, yet, when examined carefully, one discovered at least three or four variations of the one style, and each of these persistent for pages together, when it would give place to some other of the calligraphic variants. That is to say, there would not often — never, as I now remember — be more than two of the styles on the same page, and even two only when the style which had been running through the work of, perhaps, a whole evening or half an evening, would suddenly give place to one of the other styles which would, in its turn, run through the rest of an evening, or the next whole evening, or the morning’s “copy.” One of these H.P.B. handwritings was very small, but plain; one bold and free; another plain, of medium size, and very legible; and one scratchy and hard to read, with its queer, foreign-shaped a’s and x’s and e’s.³ There was also the greatest possible difference in the English of these various styles. Sometimes I would have to make several corrections in each line, while at others I could pass many pages with scarcely a fault of idiom or spelling to correct. Most perfect of all were the manuscripts which were written for her while she was sleeping. The beginning of the chapter on the civilisation of Ancient Egypt (Vol. I, ch. xiv) is an illustration. We had stopped work the evening before at about 2 a.m. as usual, both too tired to stop for our usual smoke and chat before parting; she almost fell asleep in her chair while I was bidding her good night, so I hurried off to my bedroom. The next morning, when I came down after my breakfast, she showed me a pile of at least thirty or forty pages of beautifully written H.P.B. manuscript, which, she said, she had had written for her by — well, a Master, whose name has never yet been degraded like some others. It was perfect in every respect, and went to the printers without revision. [20]

¹ [Transference of an object from one place to another, or the appearance of an object from an unknown source, e.g., at a séance.]

² [The undoubted fact, that Mme. Blavatsky used at times the stored up records of the Astral Light for her literary purposes should not be exaggerated, however, as has often been done by over-zealous students. It should be borne in mind that she also used ordinary sources of information, quoted from many books which were made available to her, and included in her writings many references to, and quotations from, other writers, which occurred in the works she used. This has been ridiculed by certain captious critics, notably W. Emmette Coleman, who pointed out that Mme. Blavatsky quoted in a great many cases second-hand, from books she had never consulted herself. This is unquestionably true, but is that a crime? It has been repeatedly done by numerous writers all over the world. Just exactly *how* she derived some of her innumerable references, whether by consulting the actual work, or by copying the reference found in someone else’s work, or by doing either or both, by means of spiritual vision, will never be fully demonstrated; but it is safe to say that *all* of these methods were employed, in addition to the fact that various portions of her MSS. were directly dictated to her, with all the references included.]

³ [One of the most glaring examples of this variation in Mme. Blavatsky’s handwriting has been preserved among her letters to A.P. Sinnett, the originals of which are in the holdings of the British Museum. If the student consults the work entitled *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, he will find on pages 230-33, Letter No. CVI, headed *Private and Confidential*, containing some very startling statements and ending on a note of prophecy. It is unsigned, and undated, though the most likely time for it is about August 1885, or somewhat later. As compared with Mme. Blavatsky’s handwriting in letters immediately preceding this one, Letter No. CVI conspicuously stands out as being written in a much more regular hand, extremely clear and legible, with lines following each other with great regularity in their horizontal position on the page. The very nature of the subject treated in this letter indicates the probability of its having been written under a powerful impress from one or another Occultist for whom Mme. Blavatsky served at times as the amanuensis.]

Now it was a curious fact that each change in the H.P.B. manuscript would be preceded, either by her leaving the room for a moment or two, or by her going off into the trance or abstracted state, when her lifeless eyes would be looking beyond me into space, as it were, and returning to the normal waking state almost immediately. And there would also be a distinct change of personality, or rather personal peculiarities, in gait, vocal expression, vivacity of manner and, above all, in temper . . .

Not another [person] as to visible change of physical body, but another as to tricks of motion, speech, and manners; with different mental brightness, different views of things, different command of English orthography, idiom, and grammar, and different — very, *very* different command over her temper; which, at its sunniest, was almost angelic, at its worst, the opposite . . . ¹

. . . [when] *Isis Unveiled* came off the press of Trow,² after Bouton had spent above \$600 for the corrections and alterations that she had made in galley, page, and electroplate proofs, it was, and to this day is, without a definite literary plan. Volume I professes to be confined to questions of Science, Volume II to those of Religion, yet there are many portions in each volume that belong in the other; and Miss Kislingbury, who sketched out the Table of Contents of Vol. II on the evening when I was sketching out that of Vol. I, can testify to the difficulty we had in tracing the features of a plan for each of our respective volumes.

Then, again, when the publisher peremptorily refused to put any more capital into the venture, we had prepared almost enough additional MS. to make a third volume, and this was ruthlessly destroyed before we left America; H.P.B. not dreaming that she should ever want to utilise it in India, and *The Theosophist*, *Secret Doctrine*, and her other subsequent literary productions, not even being thought of. How often she and I mingled our regrets that all that valuable material had been so thoughtlessly wasted!³

We had laboured at the book for several months and had turned out 870-odd pages of manuscript when, one evening, she put me the question whether, to oblige — (our “*Pāramaguru*”), I would consent to begin all over again! I well remember the shock it gave me to think that all those weeks of hard labour, of psychical thunderstorms and head-splitting archæological conundrums, were to count — as I, in my [21] blind-puppy ignorance, imagined — for nothing. However, as my love and reverence and gratitude to this Master, and all the Masters, for giving me the privilege of sharing in their work was without limits, I consented, and at it we went again . . . ⁴

¹ H.S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, pp. 203-12.

² *Isis Unveiled* was set up and printed by Trow's Printing and Bookbinding Co., 205-213 East 12th Street, New York, N.Y.

³ [In a letter written to Sinnett, January 6th, 1886, Mme. Blavatsky confirms this saying that “. . . this *Isis* is the *third part only* of what I wrote and destroyed . . .” — *The Mahātma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Letter CXL.]

⁴ Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 216-18.

At this point, Mme. Blavatsky's own testimony may be introduced with advantage, as it shows in her own words what she thought and felt about the circumstances of her writing. In a letter to her sister, Vera P. de Zhelihovsky, she wrote:

Thus Mme. Blavatsky, led by the Celestial Light of Lakshmi, kept gazing at the grandest repository of all ages hidden in the fathomless realms of Occultism.

Well, Vera believe it or not, some enchantment is upon me. You can hardly imagine in what a charmed world of pictures and visions I live. I am writing *Isis*; not writing, rather copying out and drawing that which *She personally* is showing me. Really, sometimes it seems to me that the ancient Goddess of Beauty in person leads me through all the lands of past centuries which I have to describe. I am sitting with my eyes open and, to all appearances, see and hear everything real and actual around me, and yet at the same time I see and hear *that which I write*. I feel short of breath; I am afraid to make the slightest movement for fear the spell might be broken . . . Slowly, century after century, image after image, float out of the distance and pass before me as if in a magic panorama; and meanwhile I put them together in my mind, fitting in epochs and dates, and know *positively* that there *can be no mistake*. Races and nations, countries and cities, long vanished in the darkness of the prehistoric past, emerge and disappear, giving place to others; and then I am told the consecutive dates. Hoary antiquity makes way for historical periods; myths are explained to me by events and people who have actually existed, and every event which is at all remarkable, every newly-turned page of this many-colored book of life, impresses itself on my brain with photographic accuracy. My own reckonings and calculations appear to me later on as the separate coloured pieces of different shapes in the game which is called *casse-tête* [puzzles]. I gather them together and try to match them one after the other, and at the end there always comes out a geometrical whole . . . Most assuredly it is not I who do it all, but my *Ego*, the highest principle which lives in me. And even this with the help of my *Guru* and teacher who helps me in everything. If I happen to forget something, I have just to address him, or another one like him, in my thought, and what I have forgotten rises once more before my eyes — sometimes whole tables of numbers passing before me, long inventories of events. *They* remember everything. [22] *They know everything* . . . Without them, whence would I gather my knowledge?¹

¹ [Excerpt from a letter of Mme. Blavatsky to her sister Vera P. de Zhelihovsky, written from New York probably sometime in 1876. The Russian original text was published in a valuable Biographical Sketch which Mme. Blavatsky's sister wrote for the *Russkoye Obozreniye* (Russian Review), Vol. VI, November 1891, p. 274, from which the present translation has been made. A translation by Vera V. Johnston, Mme. Blavatsky's niece, published by W.Q. Judge in *The Path*, Vol. IX, January 1895, pp. 300-1, differs from the above only in a few unimportant details obviously due to difficulties of literal translation.

It is, however, surprising to find that when Mme. Blavatsky's sister quoted from what appears to be the same letter, in her serial article "The Truth about H.P. Blavatsky" (published in *Rebus*, 1883, Nos. 40-48), the Russian text exhibited a large number of variations and changes. When Mme. Blavatsky translated that account into English for the benefit of A.P. Sinnett, she made further changes; although most of these were minor, the opening sentence of the excerpt contains a marked departure and reads thus:

"You may disbelieve me, but I tell you that in saying this I speak the truth; I am solely occupied, not with writing "Isis," but with *Isis* herself . . ." →

At approximately the same time, or possibly somewhat earlier, Mme. Blavatsky's sister heard that she had commenced to write in a way that would have been impossible for her a few years before. There seem to have been rumours afloat in Russia as to "sorcery" being at the root of it and, filled with forebodings and terror, Madame de Zhelihovsky wrote to Madame Blavatsky, imploring her to explain the circumstances. The following excerpt is from Mme. Blavatsky's reply:

Someone comes and envelops me as a misty cloud, pushes me out of myself, and then I am not Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, but someone else — someone strong and powerful, born in a totally different region of the world; and, as to myself, it is almost as if I were asleep, or lying by not quite conscious, not in my own body but close by, held only by a thread which ties me to it.

Do not be afraid that I am off my head. All that I can say is that someone positively *inspires me* . . . more than this: someone enters me. It is not I who talk and write: it is something within me, my higher and luminous Self, that thinks and writes for me. Do not ask me, my friend, what I experience, because I could not explain it to you clearly. I do not know myself! The one thing I know is that now, when I am about to reach old age, I have become a sort of storehouse of somebody else's knowledge . . . *Someone* comes and envelops me as a misty cloud and all at once pushes me out of myself, and then I am not "I" any more — Helena Petrovna Blavatsky — but someone else. Someone strong and powerful, born in a totally different region of the world; and as to myself it is almost as if I were asleep, or lying by not quite conscious — not in my own body but close by, held only by a thread which ties me to it. However, at times I see and hear everything quite clearly: I am [23] perfectly conscious of what my body is saying and doing — or at least its new possessor. I even understand and remember it all so well that afterwards I can repeat it and even write down *his* words . . . At such a time I see awe and fear on the faces of Olcott and others, and follow with interest the way in which *he* half-pityingly regards them out of my own eyes and teaches them with my physical tongue. Yet not with my mind but his own, which enwraps my brain like a cloud . . . Ah, but really I cannot explain everything.¹

He who knows all, my Master, dictates to me and, occasionally, others whom I knew years ago in my travels. When writing upon a subject I know little or nothing of, I address myself to Them, and one of Them allows me to write down what I see in manuscripts, and even printed matter that pass before my eyes in the air.

From another letter of the same epoch, written to her family, we glean the following:

Upon my word, I can hardly understand why you and people generally should make such a fuss over my writings — whether Russian or English! True, during the long years of my absence from home, I have constantly studied and have

It is in this latter form that the excerpt was published by Sinnett in his *Incidents, etc.*, pp. 206-8. The original letter does not exist any longer, and so comparison with it is impossible at this late date.]

¹ [*The Path*, Vol. IX, December, 1894, p. 266. A few of these sentences appear to be similar to the excerpt published in Sinnett's *Incidents, etc.*, pp. 205-6.]

learned certain things. But when I wrote *Isis*, I wrote it so easily, that it was certainly no labour, but a real pleasure. Why should I be praised for it? Whenever I am *told* to write, I sit down and obey, and then I can write easily upon almost anything: metaphysics, psychology, philosophy, ancient religions, zoology, natural sciences — or what not. I never put myself the question: “*can* I write on this subject? . . . ” or — “am I equal to the task?” — but I simply sit down and *write*. Why? Because *He who knows all* simply dictates to me . . . My MASTER, and occasionally others whom I knew years ago in my travels . . . Please do not imagine that I have lost my senses. I have hinted to you before now about Them . . . and I tell you candidly that whenever I write upon a subject I know little or nothing of, I address myself to *Them*, and one of Them *inspires* me, *i.e.*, he allows me to simply copy what I write from manuscripts, and even printed matter that pass before my eyes, in the air . . . It is that knowledge of His protection, and faith in *His* power that have enabled me to become mentally and spiritually so strong . . . and even He (the Master) is not always required; for, during his absence on some other occupation, he awakens in me his substitute in knowledge . . . At such times, it is no more *I* who writes, but my *inner ego*, my “luminous Self,” who thinks and writes for me. Only see. Is it possible that in a few years I should have become so very learned as to write without hesitation page after page of *Isis*, with all its *verbatim* quotations from, and innumerable references to, books that I had never seen, nor could I ever see them? Then all this running after me of reporters and journalists, [24] and of Russian editors after my articles . . . What is it caused by? . . . Whence all this knowledge?¹

Resuming now Col. Olcott’s interesting narrative, we find him saying:

While I may well despair of proving the exact degree in which the complex personality, H.P.B., may be said to have written *Isis Unveiled*, yet I think it [is] clear and beyond dispute that she digested and assimilated all the material, making it her own and fitting it into her book like bits of stone into a mosaic.

Unfamiliar with grammatical English and literary methods, and with her mind absolutely untrained for such sustained desk work, yet endowed with a courage without bounds and a power of continuous mental concentration that has scarcely been equalled, she floundered on through weeks and months towards her goal, the fulfilment of her Master’s orders. This literary feat of hers surpasses all her phenomena.



¹ [This excerpt has been copied from Mme. Blavatsky’s own English translation of her Russian letter, which she made when translating for A.P. Sinnett her sister’s manuscript of “The Truth about H.P. Blavatsky.” This manuscript is in the Adyar Archives. Sinnett’s *Incidents*, etc., pp. 205-6, quote this excerpt with various modifications which may or may not be Sinnett’s own alterations. The excerpts in *Rebus*, No. 47, 1883, pp. 429-30, are shorter yet. The reader will notice various overlappings of excerpts previously quoted. These are difficult to explain, especially as we have no access to the Russian originals of the *complete* letters which have probably been destroyed.]

Madame Blavatsky was living in two parallel worlds, the spiritual and the natural.

The glaring contrasts between the jumbled and the almost perfect portions of her MS. quite clearly prove that the same intelligence was not at work throughout: and the variations in handwriting, in mental method, in literary facility, and in personal idiosyncrasies, bear out this idea. At this distance of time and with her MS. destroyed, it is impossible for me to say which of her shifting personalities is mainly responsible for her alleged unacknowledged use of quotations.¹ Whatever came into my hands that seemed as if taken from another author I, [25] of course, would put between inverted commas, and it is quite possible that their blending with some of her own original ideas is chargeable to me; the passages in question reading as if somebody else's. When she wrote other people's words into her current argument without break of the continuity, then, naturally enough — unless the passages were from books I had read, and that were familiar to me — I would go on correcting it as H.P.B.'s own "copy." I have said above that I got my occult education in the compilation of *Isis* and in H.P.B.'s teaching and experiments; I must now add that my previous literary life had taken me into other and much more practical fields of study than the literature which is synthesized in *Isis*, viz., Agricultural Chemistry and Scientific Agriculture generally. So that she might have given me "copy" entirely made up of passages borrowed from Orientalists, Philologists, and Eastern Sages, without my being able to detect the fact. Personally I have never had plagiarisms in *Isis* pointed out to me, whether verbally or otherwise, nor do I know there are such; but if there are, two things are possible:

- (a) That the borrowing was done by the untrained, inexperienced literary beginner, H.P.B., who was ignorant of the literary sin she committed, or
- (b) That the passages had been so worked into the copy as not to draw my editorial attention to their incongruity with what preceded and succeeded them.

Or — a third alternative — might it be that, while writing she was always half on this plane of consciousness, half on the other; and that she read her quotations clairvoyantly in the *Astral Light* and used them as they came *à propos*, without really knowing who were the authors or what the titles of their books?

Surely her Eastern acquaintances will be prepared to think that a plausible theory, for if ever anyone lived in two worlds habitually, it was she. Often — as

¹ [The fact that the publisher allowed the manuscript of *Isis Unveiled* to be destroyed is a sad commentary on the lack of a historical sense in those early days of the Movement. This manuscript would have been a prized possession of either The Theosophical Society, the Library of Congress, or the British Museum, had it been preserved. It would have been an invaluable source of information concerning one of the most recondite problems of occult science, namely, the variants of Mme. Blavatsky's handwriting under the influence of various extraneous occult forces. Such a manuscript would have been an important factor in her defence against accusations of forgery and the like. The fact that this manuscript is now unavailable is a great loss to the cause of Theosophy, a loss which should stand as a warning for the future.]

above stated — I have seen her in the very act of copying extracts out of phantom books, invisible to my senses, yet most undeniably visible to her.¹

She began unveiling “Isis” upon her return from ten years’ traveling in the Caucasus and other remote lands shimmering with snow, where her occult faculties and powers to heal were heightened, widely admired, and gratefully appreciated by those who were fortunate enough to have met her.

Interrupting Col. Olcott’s narrative at this point, let us remind ourselves of certain facts in Mme. Blavatsky’s life at an earlier date. In the early sixties of last century, Mme. Blavatsky was in the Caucasus, having but recently returned from ten years’ wandering in foreign lands. During part of that period she travelled through and lived in Imeretiya, Guriya, and Mingreliya, in the virgin forests of Abhasiya, and along the Black Sea Coast. She seems to have studied with native *kudeyani*,² or magicians, and to have become widely [26] known for her healing powers. Her occult powers became much stronger at the time, and she seemed finally to subject to her will every kind of manifestation. The whole countryside was talking about her, and the superstitious members of various native noble families, such as the Princes Gouriel, Dadiani, and Abashidze, very soon began to regard her as a magician, and people came from distant places to consult her about their affairs. Mme. Blavatsky had long since given up communication by means of raps, and preferred to answer people either verbally or by means of direct writing. In speaking of this in his work on Mme. Blavatsky’s life, A.P. Sinnett appends a footnote which states:

This was done always in full consciousness, and simply, as she [Mme. Blavatsky] explained, watching people’s thoughts as they evolved out of their heads in spiral luminous smoke, sometimes in jets of what might be taken for some radiant material, and settled in distinct pictures and images around them. Often such thoughts and answers to them would find themselves impressed in her own brain, couched in words and sentences in the same way as original thoughts do. But, so far as we are able to understand, the former visions are always more trustworthy, as they are independent and distinct from the seer’s own impressions, belonging to pure clairvoyance, not “thought-transference,” which is a process always liable to get mixed up with one’s own vivid mental impressions.³

Commenting on this statement, Col. Olcott says, continuing his account:

This seems to throw light upon the present problem, and to suggest that it is thinkable that H.P.B., while quite normal as to waking consciousness, saw clairvoyantly, or by thought-absorption — a better word than thought-transference in this connection — the stored-up wisdom of the branch of literature she was examining, and so took it into her own brain as to lose the idea that it was not original with herself. Practical Eastern psychologists will not re-

¹ H.S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, pp. 220-26.

² This term is one of the many modifications and derivatives from the term *kud*, which means both a “dæmon” and the practice of magic in its various forms. The verb *kudesnichat* means to engage in magical performances.

³ A.P. Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 146, *fn.*

gard this hypothesis so unreasonable as others may. True, after all, it is but a hypothesis, and her enemies will simply call her a cribber, a plagiarist. With the ignorant, insult is the line of least resistance.

The supporters of this theory should, however, recollect that H.P.B.'s most ardent and passionate wish was to gather together as many corroborations as possible, from all ancient and modern sources, of the theosophical teachings she was giving out; and her interest all lay on [27] the side of quoting respectable authorities, not in plagiarizing from their works for her own greater glory.¹

The editorial board of “Isis” consisted of several Adepts and Initiates, inwardly of one mind as to the timing of lifting Her mysterious veil and unfurling it from East to West.

Outwardly, however, they were all of dissimilar idiosyncrasies, mental characteristics, predilections, and peculiarities of temper, directing their thoughts to a living writing machine — H.P. Blavatsky. Col. H.S. Olcott recollects some of the personalities of the editorial board:

*** One, when deeply pondering, was constantly pulling at his long moustache, twisted into his side whiskers; another, of a fine artistic talent and a passion for mechanical invention, disliked English so much that only talked to me in French.**

*** One, would reel off to me poetical stanzas embodying sublime ideas alternating with humorous mode; another, was jovial, fond of good stories, and witty to a degree.**

*** One, was all dignity, reserve, and erudition; another, calm, patient, and helpful.**

*** One, was testy and sometimes exasperating; another, always willing to emphasise his philosophical or scientific explanation of the subjects I was to write upon, by doing phenomena for my edification; while to another, I dared not even mention them.**

It is stated above that the H.P.B. manuscript varied at times, and that there were several variants of the one prevailing script; also, that each change in the writing was accompanied by a marked alteration in the manner, motions, expression, and literary capacity of H.P.B. When she was left to her own devices, it was often not difficult to know it, for then the untrained literary apprentice became manifest and the cutting and pasting began; then the copy that was turned over to me for revision was terribly faulty, and after having been converted into a great smudge of interlineations, erasures, orthographic corrections, and substitutions, would end in being dictated by me to her to rewrite. . . Now often things were, after a while, said to me that would be more than hints

¹ Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, p. 230.

that other intelligences than H.P.B.'s were at times using her body as a writing machine: it was never expressly said, for example, "I am so and so," or "Now this is A or B." It did not need that, after we "twins" had been working together long enough for me to become familiar with her every peculiarity of speech, moods, and impulses. The change was as plain as day, and by and by¹ after she had been out of the room and returned, a brief study of her features and actions enabled me to say to myself, "This is * * * * , or * * * * , or * * * * ," and presently my suspicion would be confirmed by what happened. One of these *Alter Egos* of hers, one whom I have since personally met, wears a full beard and long moustache that are twisted, Rājput fashion, into his side whiskers. He has the habit of constantly pulling at his moustache when deeply pondering: he does it mechanically and unconsciously. Well, there were times when H.P.B.'s personality had melted away and she was "*Somebody else*," when I would sit and watch her hand as if pulling at and twisting a moustache that certainly was not growing visibly on H.P.B.'s upper lip, and the faraway look would be in the eyes, until presently resuming attention of passing things, the moustached Somebody would look up, catch me watching him, hastily remove the hand from the face, and go on with the work of writing. Then there was another Somebody, who disliked English so much that he never willingly talked with me in anything but French: he had a fine artistic talent and a passionate fondness for mechanical invention. Another one would now and then sit there, scrawling something with a pencil and reeling off for me dozens of poetical stanzas which embodied, now sublime, now humorous ideas. So each of the several Somebodies had his peculiarities distinctly marked, as recognizable as those of any [28] of our ordinary acquaintances or friends. One was jovial, fond of good stories and witty to a degree; another, all dignity, reserve, and erudition. One would be calm, patient, and benevolently helpful, another testy and sometimes exasperating. One Somebody would always be willing to emphasise his philosophical or scientific explanation of the subjects I was to write upon, by doing phenomena for my edification, while to another Somebody I dared not even mention them.

At one time, a huffy Adept rebuked thrifty Olcott over a pencil!

I got an awful rebuke one evening. I had brought home a while before two nice, soft pencils, just the thing for our desk work, and had given one to H.P.B. and kept one myself. She had the very had habit of borrowing pen-knives, pencils, rubber, and other articles of stationery and forgetting to return them: once put into her drawer or writing-desk, there they would stay, no matter how much of a protest you might make over it. On this particular evening, the artistic Somebody was sketching a navvy's face on a sheet of common paper and chatting with me about something, when he asked me to lend him another pencil. The thought flashed into my mind, "If I once lend this nice pencil it will go into her drawer and I shall have none for my own use." I did not say this, I only thought it, but the Somebody gave me a mildly sarcastic look, reached out to the pen-tray between us, laid his pencil in it, handled it with his fingers of that hand for a moment, and lo! a dozen pencils of the identical make and quality! He said

¹ [*i.e.*, soon, not before long. — ED. PHIL.]

not a word, did not even give me a look, but the blood rushed to my temples and I felt more humble than I ever did in my life. All the same, I scarcely think I deserved the rebuke, considering what a *stationery-annexer* H.P.B. was!

Despite the diverse Occult Agencies involved in the production of “Isis Unveiled” there was a clear sense of individuality and deep conviction running throughout it and Mme. Blavatsky’s other works — something special and unique to herself.

Now, when either of these Somebodies was “on guard,” as I used to term it, the H.P.B. manuscript would present the identical peculiarities that it had on the last occasion when he had taken his turn at the literary work. He would, by preference, write about the class of subjects that were to his taste, and instead of H.P.B. playing the part of an amanuensis, she would then have become for the time being that other person . . . If you had given me in those days any page of *Isis* manuscript, I could almost certainly have told you by which Somebody it had been written. Where, then, was H.P.B.’s self at those times of replacement? Ah, that is the question; and that is one of the mysteries which are not given to the first comer. As I understood it, she herself had loaned her body as one might one’s typewriter, and had gone off on other occult business that she could transact in her astral body; a certain group of Adepts occupying and manoeuvring the body by turns. When they knew that I could distinguish between them, so as to even have invented a name for each by which H.P.B. and I might designate them in our conversation in their absence, they would frequently give me a grave bow or a friendly farewell nod when about to leave the room and give place to the next relief-guard. And they [29] would sometimes talk to me of each other as friends do about absent third parties, by which means I came to know bits of their several personal histories; and would also speak about the absent H.P.B., distinguishing her from the physical body they had borrowed from her. One Mahātma, writing me about some occult business, speaks of it — the H.P.B. body — as “the old appearance”; again, in 1876, he writes about “it and the Brother inside it”; another Master asks me — *à propos* of a terrific fit of anger to which I had (unintentionally) provoked H.P.B. — “Do you want to kill the body?”; and the same one, in a note of 1875, speaks of “those who represent us in the shell” — the underscoring of the word being his.

There were times when Mme. Blavatsky was neither “controlled,” nor dictated to by any superior intelligence, but was simply H.P.B., our beloved friend and teacher, who was trying as well as she could to carry out the noble object of her literary mission.

Then, again, I have spoken of the part of the *Isis*-writing that was done by H.P.B. *in propria persona*,¹ which was inferior to that done for her by the Somebodies. This is perfectly comprehensible, for how could H.P.B., who had had no previous knowledge of this sort, write correctly about the multifarious subjects treated in her book? In her (seemingly) normal state, she would read a book, mark the portions that struck her, write about them, make mistakes, correct them, discuss them with me, set me to writing, help my intuitions, get

¹ [personally]

friends to supply materials, and go on thus as best she might, so long as there were none of the teachers within call of her psychic appeals. And they were not with us always, by any means. She did a vast deal of splendid writing, for she was endowed with marvellous natural literary capacity; she was never dull or uninteresting and, as I have elsewhere noted, she was equally brilliant in three languages when the full power was upon her. She writes [to] her Aunt that when her Master was busy elsewhere he left his substitute with her, and then it was her “Luminous Self,” her Augoeides,¹ which thought and wrote for her . . . About this, I cannot venture an opinion, for I never observed her in this state: I only knew her in three capacities, *viz.*, her proper H.P.B. self; with her body possessed or over-shadowed by the Masters; and as an amanuensis taking down from dictation. It may be that her Augoeides, taking possession of her physical brain, gave me the impression that it was one of the Masters that was at work: I cannot say. But what she omits telling her Aunt is that there were many, many times, when she was neither possessed, controlled, nor dictated to by any superior intelligence, but was simply and palpably H.P.B., our familiar and beloved friend, latterly our teacher; who was trying as well as she could to carry out the object of her literary mission. Yet, despite the mixed agencies at work in producing *Isis*, there is an expression of individuality running throughout it and her other works — something peculiar to herself.² [30]

As daylight passing through the cathedral’s windows becomes coloured to the tints of the stained glass, so the thoughts transmitted by the Masters to Mme. Blavatsky’s brain were coloured by her own literary style. Still, though her modes of expression may have been somewhat different, the innermost train of thought was the same.

Then how are we to regard the authorship of *Isis Unveiled*, and how H.P.B.? As to the former, it is unquestionably a collaborated work, the production of several distinct writers and not that of H.P.B. alone. My personal observations upon this point are fully borne out by what she herself admits in her explanatory letters to her family, as quoted by Mr. Sinnett, for she says that all the portions which deal with subjects previously unfamiliar to her were either dictated to her by some Master or written by her higher self through the brain and hand of her physical body. The question is highly complex, and the exact truth will never be known as to the share which each of the participants had in it. The personality of H.P.B. was the mould in which all the matter was cast, and which, therefore, controlled its form, colouring, and expression, so to say, by its own idiosyncrasies, mental as well as physical. For, just as the successive occupiers of the H.P.B. body only modified its habitual handwriting, but did not write their own, so in using the H.P.B. brain, they were forced to allow it to colour their thoughts and arrange their words after a fixed personal fashion peculiar to it. Like as the daylight passing through cathedral windows becomes coloured to the tints of the stained glass, so the thoughts transmitted by them through

¹ [Consult “Nous Augoeides of the Neoplatonists,” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 243-52.

H.P.B.'s peculiar brain would have to be modified into the literary style and habits of expression to which it had been by her developed. And even common sense teaches us that the closer the natural identity between the possessing intelligence and the intellectual and moral personality controlled, the easier should be the control, the more fluent the composition, the less involved the style. In point of fact what I noticed was this, that at times when the physical H.P.B. was in a state of supreme irascibility, the body was rarely occupied save by the Master whose own pupil and spiritual ward she was, and whose iron will was even stronger than her own; the gentler philosophers keeping aloof. Naturally, I asked why a permanent control was not put upon her fiery temper, and why she should not always be modified into the quiet, self-centred sage that she became under certain obsessions. The answer was that such a course would inevitably lead to her death from apoplexy; the body was vitalised by a fiery and imperious spirit, one which had from childhood brooked no restraint, and if vent were not allowed for the excessive corporeal energy, the result must be fatal.¹

While the principal contributors to the production of "Isis Unveiled" were enlightened living men, of great learning and wisdom, they were joined by at least one disincarnate yet earth-bound entity — Sir Henry More — one of the truest Platonists of modern times, a precious ornament to our race, a glory to his country, and so pure and unselfish that the Masters held him in profound esteem.

Sir Henry's mind had been so intensely employed in purely intellectual speculation, that his spirituality had been temporarily stifled. Though he did not "materialize" and sit with us, he would converse with Mme. Blavatsky psychically, dictating copy, telling her what references to trace, answering Olcott's questions, and making scholarly contributions to the literary symposium.

While Col. Olcott was very particular to point out the fact that the chief collaborators in the production of *Isis Unveiled* were *living men* of advanced knowledge, completely unrelated to any quasi-spiritualistic "controls" or the like, yet, it appears that in one particular instance, another type [31] of individuality took part in the production of the MSS. In the words of Col. Olcott:

And yet, despite the above, I was made to believe that we worked in collaboration with at least one disincarnate entity — the pure soul of one of the wisest philosophers of modern times, one who was an ornament to our race, a glory to his country. He was a great Platonist, and I was told that, so absorbed was he in his life study, he had become earth-bound, *i.e.*, he could not snap the ties which held him to the Earth, but sat in an astral library of his own mental creation, plunged in his philosophical reflections, oblivious to the lapse of time, and anxious to promote the turning of men's minds towards the solid philosophical basis of true religion. His desire did not draw him to taking a new birth among us, but made him seek out those who, like our Masters and their

¹ Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 255-58.

agents, wished to work for the spread of truth and the overthrow of superstition. I was told that he was so pure and so unselfish that all the Masters held him in profound respect and, being forbidden to meddle with his Karma, they could only leave him to work his way out of his (Kāmalokic) illusions, and pass on to the goal of formless being and absolute spirituality according to the natural order of Evolution. His mind had been so intensely employed in purely intellectual speculation that his spirituality had been temporarily stifled. Meanwhile there he was, willing and eager to work with H.P.B. on this epoch-making book, towards the philosophical portion of which he contributed much. He did not materialize and sit with us, nor obsess H.P.B. medium-fashion; he would simply talk with her psychically, by the hour together, dictating copy, telling her what references to hunt up, answering my questions about details, instructing me as to principles and, in fact, playing the part of a third person in our literary symposium. He gave me his portrait once — a rough sketch in coloured crayons on flimsy paper — and sometimes would drop me a brief note about some personal matter, but from first to last his relation to us both was that of a mild, kind, extremely learned teacher and elder friend. He never dropped a word to indicate that he thought himself aught but a living man and, in fact, I was told that he did not realize that he had died out of the body. Of the lapse of time, he seemed to have so little perception that, I remember, H.P.B. and I laughed, one morning at 2:30 a.m., when, after an unusually hard night's work, while we were taking a parting smoke, he quietly asked H.P.B. "Are you ready to begin?," under the impression that we were at the beginning instead of the end of the evening! And I also recollect how she said: "For Heaven's sake don't laugh deep in your thought, else the 'old gentleman' will surely hear you and feel hurt!" That gave me an idea: to laugh superficially is ordinary laughter, but to laugh deeply is to shift your merriment to the plane of psychic [32] perception! So emotions may, like beauty, be *sometimes* but skin-deep. Sins, also: think of that!

Every time that Mme. Blavatsky was told by her Master to sit down and take dictation, she did so without wondering even for a moment if she were equal to the task.

Rejecting the idea that H.P.B. wrote *Isis* as an ordinary spirit-medium "under control," we have seen, however, that some portions of it were actually written to a spirit's dictation: a most extraordinary and exceptional entity, yet still a man out of the physical body. The method of work with him as above described tallies closely with that she described in a family letter, when explaining how she wrote her book without any previous training for such work.

"Whenever I am *told* to write, I sit down and obey, and then I can write easily upon almost anything: metaphysics, psychology, philosophy, ancient religions, zoology, natural sciences — or what not. I never put myself the question: 'can I write on this subject?' . . . or 'am I equal to the task?' but simply sit down and *write*. Why? Because *he who knows* all simply

dictates to me . . . My MASTER, and occasionally others whom I knew years ago in my travels . . . ”¹

This is exactly what happened between her and the old Platonist, but he was not her “Master,” nor could she have met him on her travels on this physical plane, since he died before she was born — this time. Then arises the question whether the Platonist was really a spirit disincarnate, or an Adept who had lived in that philosopher’s body and seemed to, but really did not, die out of it on September 1st, 1687.² It is [33] certainly a difficult problem to solve. Considering that the ordinary concomitants of spirit-possession and spirit-intercourse were wanting, and that H.P.B. served the Platonist in the most matter-of-fact way as amanuensis, their relation differing in nothing from that of any Private Secretary with his employer, save that the latter was invisible to me but visible to her, it does look more as if we were dealing with a living than with a disincarnate person. He seemed not quite a “Brother” — as we used to call the Adepts then — yet more than that anything else; and as far as the literary work itself was concerned, it went on exactly as the other parts of it did when the dictator, or writer, as the case might be, was professedly a Master . . . ³



¹ A.P. Sinnett, *Incidents in the Life of H.P. Blavatsky* (London & New York 1886), pp. 205-6, corrected by Mme. Blavatsky’s own translation.

² [The individual whom Col. Olcott has in mind is Henry More, English philosopher of the 17th century, who was born in 1614, and died September 1st, 1687. During his studies at Cambridge, he was delivered from an attitude of early scepticism by becoming immersed in the reading of Platonic writers, and was especially fascinated by Neo-Platonism. He drew around him many young men of a refined and thoughtful turn of mind. Among his pupils the most remarkable was Lady Conway, at whose country seat at Ragley, Warwickshire, Henry More spent at intervals considerable time. In due course, Ragley became a centre of enlightened scholarship and devotion. Henry More was one of the finest thinkers among the Cambridge Platonists, a school of philosophico-religious thought which flourished at Cambridge University in the second half of the 17th century, and which included such men as Ralph Cudworth, Joseph Glanvill, John Norris, and others. Their views tended towards mysticism and the contemplation of things transcendental, and exercised a valuable influence on English theology and on contemporary thought in general. Henry More represented the more mystical and theosophic aspect of the Cambridge Movement, and his life had been marked by humility and charity, no less conspicuous than his piety of thought. Henry More wrote a large number of works, one of the most valuable being the *Divine Dialogues* (1688), summarizing his general views of philosophy and religion. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

Look up “Boris de Zirkoff on Sir Henry More,” in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 237-43.

When Mme. Blavatsky first arrived in America, she could hardly speak or write English. Having learned a good deal of English from her Master and Teacher, His verbal expressions and construction of sentences can be traced, like the course of a river, throughout her writings.

The participation of the Adept-Brothers in the writing of *Isis Unveiled* is clearly evidenced by the following excerpt from a letter written by Mme. Blavatsky to Col. Olcott from Würzburg, January 6th, 1886, the original of which is in the Adyar Archives:

When I arrived in America, I could hardly speak English and could not write [it] at all — *it is a fact*, as you know. *Isis* was the first work with the exception of a few articles corrected by you and others that I ever wrote in English in all my life and *it was mostly dictated* by K.H. (Kashmiri) *as you know*. I learnt to write English with him, so to say. I took up all his peculiarities even to writing sceptic with a *k* — which I dropped in India and he preserved the habit. What wonder then, that similarity is found between the style of *Isis* and letters to Sinnett and so on . . . 40, 50 pages at a time would be written of *Isis* MSS. without one mistake . . .

She also wrote a long letter to Sinnett on the same day, and took occasion to point out to him more or less the same ideas as she did to Olcott. She dwells particularly on the fact of having learned a good deal of her English from Mahātma K.H., and therefore using very naturally many of his expressions and constructions of sentences.¹

There is also some evidence to the effect that parts of *Isis Unveiled* were dictated by a Southern Indian Initiate known as Nārāyana, who lived at Tiruvallur,² a landed proprietor to all appearances, and whom the Founders and T. Subba Row personally knew.

Isis Unveiled, or at least part of the MS., must have gone to the publisher, J.W. Bouton, sometime in the early part of 1877. As galley proofs and page proofs were sent to the author, Mme. Blavatsky would make innumerable corrections and emendations on them, much to the publisher's [34] dismay.³



¹ *The Mahātma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Letter No. CXL.

² [Tiruvallur, Tamil Nadu, India]

³ An illustration of this *may* be the third paragraph in Vol. I, p. 479, in which Mme. Blavatsky says that she is writing it as late as April 1877, and the paragraph in Vol. II, pp. 594-95, where the date of July 19th, 1877 is mentioned.

By May 17th, 1877, Bouton, seeing it all merely from the commercial standpoint, was tearing his hair at the unexpected additional cost in the production of the book.¹ The final bill for alterations in type amounted to more than \$600.00.² This, however, is entirely understandable in the case of someone like Mme. Blavatsky who, in her own words:

. . . had not the least idea of literary rules. The art of writing books, or preparing them for print and publication, reading and correcting proofs, were so many close secrets to me.³

Under such circumstances, and in spite of Col. Olcott's willingness and hard work, it is no wonder that *Isis Unveiled* contained many editorial errors, typographical mistakes and the like. It is amazing that it did not contain more! On this subject no one is more outspoken than Mme. Blavatsky herself. Any criticisms coming from others — kindly and constructive criticisms from serious students, not fault-finding from enemies — do no more than support and endorse her own frank appraisal.

In her last article published during her lifetime in *Lucifer*, entitled "My Books,"⁴ Mme. Blavatsky wrote:

Some time ago, a Theosophist, Mr. R * * * * , was travelling by rail with an American gentleman, who told him how surprised he had been by his visits to our London Headquarters. He said that he had asked Mme. Blavatsky what were the best Theosophical works for him to read, and had declared his intention of procuring *Isis Unveiled*, when to his astonishment she replied, "Don't read it, *it is all trash*." [35]



¹ He wrote to Col. Olcott on May 17th, 1877, as follows:

" . . . the alterations have already cost \$280.80, and at that rate, by the time the book appears it will be handicapped with such fearful expense that each copy of the first 1000 will cost a great deal more than we shall get for it, a very discouraging state of affairs to begin with. The cost of composition of the first volume alone (with stereotyping) amounts to \$1,359.69, and this for one volume alone, mind you, *without paper, press work or binding!*" (*Old Diary Leaves*, I, pp. 216-17 *fn.*)

Col. Olcott adds:

"Not only did she [Mme. Blavatsky] make endless corrections in the types, but even after the plates were cast, she had them cut to transpose the old matter and insert new things that occurred to her, or that she had come across in her reading."

² *Old Diary Leaves*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 216.

³ *Lucifer*, Vol. VIII, May 1891, p. 244.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 241-47. [Full text under the title "Blavatsky defends *Isis Unveiled*," in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

Madame Blavatsky admitted that the first edition of "Isis Unveiled," hailed by some as "masterpiece" and "monumental work," had given her more anxiety and trouble than anything else during a lifetime more full of thorns than of roses: it had no system in it, as if a mass of unconnected paragraphs shaken up in a wastebasket, taken out at random, and published with hideous metamorphoses of one word into another, misprints, and misplaced quotation marks.

Now I did not say "trash" so far as I remember; but what I did say in substance was:

"Leave it alone; *Isis* will not satisfy you. Of all the books I have put my name to, this particular one is, in literary arrangement, the worst and most confused."

And I might have added with as much truth that, carefully analysed from a strictly literary and critical standpoint, *Isis* was full of misprints and misquotations; that it contained useless repetitions, most irritating digressions, and to the casual reader unfamiliar with the various aspects of metaphysical ideas and symbols, as many apparent contradictions; that much of the matter in it ought not to be there at all and also that it had some very gross mistakes due to the many alterations in proofreading in general, and word corrections in particular. Finally, that the work, for reasons that will be now explained, has no system in it; and that it looks in truth, as remarked by a friend, as if a mass of independent paragraphs having no connection with each other, had been well shaken up in a wastebasket, and then taken out at random and — published.

Such is also now my sincere opinion. The full consciousness of this sad truth dawned upon me when, for the first time after its publication in 1877, I read the work through from the first to the last page, in India in 1881. And from that date to the present, I have never ceased to say what I thought of it, and to give my honest opinion of *Isis* whenever I had an opportunity for so doing. This was done to the great disgust of some, who warned me that I was spoiling its sale; but as my chief object in writing it was neither personal fame nor gain, but something far higher, I cared little for such warnings. For more than ten years this unfortunate "masterpiece" this "monumental work," as some reviews have called it, with its hideous metamorphoses of one word into another, thereby entirely transforming the meaning,¹ with its misprints and wrong quotation marks, has given me more anxiety and trouble than anything else during a long lifetime which has ever been more full of thorns than of roses.

¹ "Witness the word 'planet' for 'cycle' as originally written, corrected by some unknown hand (Vol. I, p. 347, 2nd ¶), a 'correction' which shows Buddha teaching that there *is no rebirth on this planet* (!!), when the contrary is asserted on p. 346, and the Lord Buddha is said to teach how to 'avoid' *reincarnation*; the use of the word 'planet,' for *plane*, of 'Monas' for *Manas* [I, 348]; and the sense of whole ideas sacrificed to the grammatical form, and changed by the substitution of wrong words and erroneous punctuation, etc., etc., etc." [H.P. Blavatsky]

Nevertheless, descending from on high like manna from heaven, "Isis" has been appreciated by those who, by separating the kernel of wisdom from the dead shell, can discern the true from the false.

Regardless of its literary shortcomings, "Isis" affords lucid glimpses to hitherto concealed regions of Eastern Knowledge, over which Western minds have brooded silently until 1877. And, to this day, "Isis Unveiled" remains a Treasure of Light and Knowledge, which exceeds all riches.

But in spite of these perhaps too great admissions, I maintain that *Isis Unveiled* contains a mass of original and never hitherto divulged information on occult subjects. That this is so, is proved by the fact that [36] the work has been fully appreciated by all those who have been intelligent enough to discern the kernel, and pay little attention to the shell, to give the preference to the idea and not to the form, regardless of its minor shortcomings. Prepared to take upon myself *vicariously* as I will show the sins of all the external, purely literary defects of the work, I defend the ideas and teachings in it, with no fear of being charged with conceit, since *neither ideas nor teachings are mine*, as I have always declared; and I maintain that both are of the greatest value to mystics and students of Theosophy. So true is this, that when *Isis* was first published, some of the best American papers were lavish in its praise even to exaggeration, as is evidenced by the quotations below.¹

Little wonder that "Isis Unveiled" unleashed an unprecedented torrent of ugly accusations from venomous and unscrupulous tongues, pouring all their wrath upon Mme. Blavatsky.

It was an unholy alliance of libellous charges, from fraud and immorality, down to the Russian spy and charlatan innuendos — accusing Mme. Blavatsky of acting on false pretences, being a living lie, a habitual drunkard, an emissary of the Pope, an agent of the Jesuits to break down Spiritualism, and suchlike absurd yet brutal slander.

The first enemies that my work brought to the front were Spiritualists, whose fundamental theories as to the spirits of the dead communicating in *propria persona*² I upset. For the last fifteen years — ever since this first publication — an incessant shower of ugly accusations has been poured upon me. Every libellous charge, from immorality and the "Russian spy" theory, down to my acting on false pretences, of being a chronic fraud and a *living lie*, habitual drunkard, an emissary of the Pope, paid to break down Spiritualism, and Satan incarnate. Every slander that can be thought of has been brought to bear upon my private and public life. The fact *that not a single one of these charges has ever been substantiated*; that from the first day of January to the last of December, year after year, I have lived surrounded by friends and foes like as in a glass house,

¹ [Excerpts from reviews of *Isis Unveiled* in various American newspapers were appended to this article in a footnote.]

² [personally]

— nothing could stop these wicked, venomous, and thoroughly unscrupulous tongues. It has been said at various times by my ever active opponents:

1. That *Isis Unveiled* was simply a rehash of Éliphas Lévi and a few old alchemists;
2. That it was written by me under the dictation of Evil Powers and the *departed spirits* of Jesuits (*sic*); and finally;
3. That my two volumes had been compiled from MSS. (never before heard of), which Baron de Palm — he of the cremation and double-burial fame — had left behind him, and which I had found in this trunk!¹

On the other hand, friends, as unwise as they were kind, spread abroad that which was really the truth, a little too enthusiastically, about the connection of my Eastern Teacher and [37] other Occultists with the work; and this was seized upon by the enemy and exaggerated out of all limits of truth. It was said that the whole of *Isis* had been dictated to me *from cover to cover* and *verbatim* by these invisible Adepts. And, as the imperfections of my work were only too glaring, the consequence of all this idle and malicious talk was, that my enemies and critics inferred — as well they might — that either these invisible inspirers had no existence, and were part of my “fraud,” or that they lacked the cleverness of even an average good writer.

Now, no one has any right to hold me responsible for what anyone may say, but only for that which I myself state orally, or in public print over my signature. And what I say and maintain is this: save the direct quotations and the many afore specified and mentioned misprints, errors, and misquotations, and the general make-up of *Isis Unveiled*, for which I am in no way responsible,

1. Every word of information found in this work or in my later writings, comes from the teachings of our Eastern Masters; and that
2. Many a passage in these works has been written by me *under their dictation*.

Thought acts independently of the brain which gave it birth. Once generated and released, that thought will live by its own energy.²

It therefore stands to reason that, as thought is beyond space and time, when two minds are in perfect psycho-magnetic resonance and, of these two, one is Adept in Occult Sciences, then His thoughts from an immeasurable distance become as comprehensible to the other as if spoken across a room.

In saying this no *supernatural* claim is urged, for no *miracle* is performed by such a dictation. Any moderately intelligent person, convinced by this time of the many possibilities of hypnotism (now accepted by science and under full

¹ “This Austrian nobleman, who was in complete destitution at New York, and to whom Colonel Olcott had given shelter and food, nursing him during the last weeks of his life, left nothing in MS. behind him but bills. The only effects of the baron were an old valise, in which his ‘executors’ found a battered bronze Cupid, a few foreign Orders (imitations in pinchbeck and paste, as the gold and diamonds had been sold); and a few shirts of Colonel Olcott’s, which the ex-diplomat had annexed without permission.” [H.P. Blavatsky]

² [Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (FOOTNOTES TO “LASKMIBAI”) III, p. 426.]

scientific investigation), and of the phenomena of *thought-transference*, will easily concede that if even a hypnotized subject, a mere irresponsible medium, *hears the unexpressed thought* of his hypnotizer, who can thus transfer his thought to him — *even to repeating the words read by the hypnotizer mentally from a book* — then my claim has nothing impossible in it. Space and distance do not exist for thought; and if two persons are in perfect mutual psychomagnetic *rapport*, and of these two, one is a great Adept in Occult Sciences, then thought-transference and dictation of whole pages, become as easy and as comprehensible at the distance of ten thousand miles as the transference of two words across a room.

Madame Blavatsky's contempt for slanderers was too great to permit her to notice them: she left all calumnies and the nauseating filth unrefuted, rather than stooping to the gutter and risk dirtying her feet.

Hitherto, I have abstained — except on very rare occasions from answering any criticism on my works, and have even left direct slanders and lies unrefuted, because in the case of *Isis* I found almost every kind of criticism justifiable, and in that of “slanders and lies,” my contempt for the slanderers was too great to permit me to notice them. Especially was it the case with regard to the libellous matter emanating from America. It has all come from one and the same source, well known to all Theosophists, a *person* most indefatigable in attacking me personally for the last twelve years,¹ though I have never seen or met the creature. [38] Neither do I intend to answer him now. But, as *Isis* is now attacked for at least the tenth time, the day has come when my perplexed friends and that portion of the public which may be in sympathy with Theosophy, are entitled to the whole truth — *and nothing but the truth*. Not that I seek to excuse myself in anything even before them or to “explain things.” It is nothing of the kind. What I am determined to do is to give *facts*, undeniable and not to be gainsaid, simply by stating the peculiar, well-known to many but now almost forgotten, circumstances, under which I wrote my first English work. I give them *seriatim*.

① When I came to America in 1873, I had not spoken English — which I had learned in my childhood colloquially — for over thirty years. I could understand when I read it, but could hardly speak the language.

② I had never been at any college, and what I knew I had taught myself; I have never pretended to any scholarship in the sense of modern research; I had then hardly read any scientific European works, knew little of Western philosophy and sciences. The little which I had studied and learned of these, disgusted me with its materialism, its limitations, narrow cut-and-dried spirit of dogmatism, and its air of superiority over the philosophies and sciences of antiquity.

③ Until 1874 I had never written one word in English, nor had I published any work in any language. Therefore, →

¹ “I will not name him. There are names which carry a moral stench about them, unfit for any decent journal or publication. His words and deeds emanate from the *cloaca maxima* of the Universe of matter and have to return to it, without touching *me*.” [H.P. Blavatsky]

④ I had not the least idea of literary rules. The art of writing books, of preparing them for print and publication, reading and correcting proofs, were so many close secrets to me.

⑤ When I started to write that which developed later into *Isis Unveiled*, I had no more idea than the man in the moon what would come of it. I had no plan; did not know whether it would be an essay, a pamphlet, a book, or an article. I knew that *I had to write it*, that was all. I began the work before I knew Colonel Olcott well, and some months before the formation of the Theosophical Society.

Madame Blavatsky extends her deep gratitude for the vital contributions of:

*** Henry Steel Olcott, for correcting the English and proof-reading "Isis," suggesting that the work should be divided into chapters, and that Vol. I to be devoted to Science, and Vol. II to Theology.**

*** Alexander Wilder, for correcting the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew words, suggesting quotations, writing the greater part of the Introduction "Before the Veil," and compiling a brilliant Index.**

Thus, the conditions for becoming the author of an English theosophical and scientific work were hopeful, as everyone will see. Nevertheless, I had written enough to fill four such volumes as *Isis*, before I submitted my work to Colonel Olcott. Of course he said that everything save the pages dictated — had to be rewritten. Then we started on our literary labours and worked together every evening. Some pages the English of which he had corrected, I copied; others which would yield to no mortal correction, he used to read aloud from my pages, Englishing¹ them verbally as he went on, dictating to me from my almost [39] undecipherable MSS. It is to him that I am indebted for the English in *Isis*.² It is he again who suggested that the work should be divided into chapters, and the first volume devoted to SCIENCE and the second to THEOLOGY. To do this, the matter had to be reshifted, and many of the chapters also; repetitions had to be erased, and the literary connection of subjects attended to. When the work was ready, we submitted it to Professor Alexander Wilder, the well-known scholar and Platonist of New York, who after reading the matter, recommended it to Mr. Bouton for publication.

Next to Colonel Olcott, it is Professor Wilder who did the most for me. It is he who made the excellent *Index*, who corrected the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew words, suggested quotations and wrote the greater part of the *Introduction* "Be-

¹ [Translating into English]

² [An interesting and important sidelight upon this situation, and the nature and characteristics of Mme. Blavatsky's work, is the fact — which any student can prove for himself — that prior to the publication of *Iris Unveiled* in the Fall of 1877, Mme. Blavatsky had published upward of thirty articles, stories and letters to Editors in American newspapers and Spiritualistic journals, couched in excellent English and written with her usual "gusto." Several of them, such as "A Few Questions to 'Hirai'," "The Science of Magic," and the one entitled obviously by the Editor himself "From Madame H.P. Blavatsky to her Correspondents," and bearing the sub-title "An Open Letter such as Few can Write," are of a challenging nature and expressed with the ease and forcefulness which we usually associate with the Blavatsky material of later years. How are we to explain satisfactorily this curious phenomenon?]

fore the Veil.” If this was not acknowledged in the work, the fault is not mine, but because it was Dr. Wilder’s express wish that his name should not appear except in footnotes. I have never made a secret of it, and every one of my numerous acquaintances in New York knew it. When ready the work went to press.¹

From that moment the real difficulty began. I had no idea of correcting galley proofs; Colonel Olcott had little leisure to do so; and the result was that I made a mess of it from the beginning. Before we were through with the first three chapters, there was a bill for six hundred dollars for corrections and alterations, and I had to give up the proofreading.² Pressed by the publisher, Colonel Olcott doing all that he possibly could do, but having no time except in the evenings, and Dr. Wilder far away at Jersey City, the result was that the proofs and pages of *Isis* passed through a number of willing but not very careful hands, and were finally left to the tender mercies of the publisher’s proof-reader. [40]



¹ Dr. Alexander Wilder was a distinguished physician, author, and Platonic scholar. He was born at Verona, Oneida Co., N.Y., May 14th, 1823, and died at Newark, N.J., September 8th, 1908. A comprehensive account of his life and work may be found in Volume I, pp. 531-33, of the *Collected Writings* of Mme. Blavatsky.

² [According to Col. Olcott, however, the \$600 was the overall cost of corrections made while *Isis* was being produced. Cf. *Old Diary Leaves*, I, p. 216.]

Can one wonder after this if “Vaivaswata” (Manu) became transformed in the published volumes into “Viswamitra,”¹ that thirty-six pages of the Index were irretrievably lost, and quotation marks placed where none were needed (as in some of my own sentences!), and left out entirely in many a passage cited from various authors? If asked why these fatal mistakes have not been corrected in a subsequent edition, my answer is simple: the plates were stereotyped; and notwithstanding all my desire to do so, I could not put it into practice, as the plates were the property of the publisher; I had no money to pay for the expenses, and finally the firm was quite satisfied to let things be as they are, since, notwithstanding all its glaring defects, the work — which has now reached its seventh or eighth edition, is still in demand.²

And now and perhaps in consequence of all this — comes a new accusation: I am charged *with wholesale plagiarism* in the Introductory Chapter “Before the Veil”! [41]

All baseless and feeble accusations of plagiarism were firmly refuted, one after the other.

Well, had I committed plagiarism, I should not feel the slightest hesitation in admitting the “borrowing.” But all “parallel passages” to the contrary, as I have not done so, I do not see why I should confess it; even though “thought-transference” as the *Pall Mall Gazette* wittily calls it, is in fashion, and at a premium just now . . .³ Indeed, at this stage of our civilization and *fin de siècle*, one should feel highly honoured to be placed in such good and numerous company, even as a — plagiarist. But I cannot claim such a privilege and, simply

¹ [*Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 257.]

² [To some of the statements made by Mme. Blavatsky in this article, Colonel H.S. Olcott took exception. In the XIVth Chapter of *Old Diary Leaves*, as originally published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. XIV, May 1893, pp. 449-58, he writes as follows (these remarks were *not* included in the book-edition published in 1895):

She had not even written as much as would make ten pages of the book before showing me the MSS., and it was not I, at all, who said the book must be rewritten, nor was the idea her own. It was not “some,” but many, many corrected pages that she copied or rewrote from my dictation. Nor am I to be credited with all, or nearly all the English of “Isis” for, as above stated, she would sometimes hand over to me blocks of ten, twenty, or more pages which were “letter perfect” as English, and went to the printer untouched. As regards the proofreading, she made such a mess of it, even after I taught her the rules and signs, as to drive me and the compositors almost wild, and I fairly dragged her to the printing office to show her what types looked like, how they were “composed,” and what trouble and expense “proof-corrections” involved. It was long, however, before she got into the swing of it, but finally things went on smoothly enough, so far as the proofreading was concerned . . .

. . . My “little leisure” was nearly two years of night work, from say 8 p.m. to 2 a.m., or, so many of those hours as were not taken up by visitors. Prof. Wilder lived at Newark, not Jersey City; the “six hundred dollars” for extra corrections that the Publisher charged up against the Author, were for all those made on the two Volumes (1,320pp., Royal 8vo.), in galleys, in page, and in stereotype-plate proofs. Very little reading was done by third parties, and even that I had to revise three or more times; the last thirty-six pages of the Index *we never saw*, the MSS. having been inadvertently destroyed by Dr. Wilder’s house-maid; and to say that the omission of quotation marks and Authors’ names from quoted passages was due to her not having control over the plates, is simply nonsense, and shows that her mind was all confused about these early details. She must be held blameless for the inaccuracies of reminiscence, whatever may be fairly charged against the Author of “Isis” as to sins of omission or commission. Whatever they have been, it is a splendid book, one of the best of our times, an invaluable repository of facts and arguments for the mystic and, especially, the Theosophist: not one of her calumniators has ever or ever can write one equal to it. They are like those who throw vitriol upon dresses, or mutilate grand pictures with their knives and lancets; but that is all: the book will stand long after this generation has passed on to the Judgment Hall of Yama, the Lord of Death.]

³ [Mme. Blavatsky mentions at this point a number of well-known apparent plagiarisms in current literature. For the complete text of the present article, see Vol. XIII of her *Collected Writings*.]

for the reason already told that out of the whole Introductory chapter “Before the Veil,” I can claim as my own only certain passages in the Glossary appended to it, the Platonic portion of it, that which is now denounced as “a barefaced plagiarism” having been written by Professor A. Wilder.

That gentleman is still living in or near New York, and can be asked whether my statement is true or not. He is too honourable, too great a scholar, to deny or fear anything. He insisted upon a kind of *Glossary*, explaining the Greek and Sanskrit names and words with which the work abounds, being appended to an Introduction, and furnished a few himself. I begged him to give me a short summary of the Platonic philosophers, which he kindly did. Thus from *p.* xi down to *p.* xxii the text is his, save a few intercalated passages which break the Platonic narrative, to show the identity of ideas in the Hindu Scriptures. Now who of those who know Dr. A. Wilder personally, or by name, who are aware of the great scholarship of that eminent Platonist, the editor of so many learned works, would be insane enough to accuse *him* of “plagiarising” from any author’s work! . . . The charge would be simply preposterous!

The fact is that Dr. Wilder must have either forgotten to place quotes before and after the passages copied by him from various authors in his Summary; or else, owing to his very difficult handwriting, he has failed to mark them with sufficient clearness. It is impossible, after the lapse of almost fifteen years, to remember or verify the facts. To this day I had imagined that this disquisition on the Platonists was his, and never gave a further thought to it. But now enemies have ferreted out unquoted passages and proclaim louder than ever “the author of *Isis Unveiled*,” to be a plagiarist and a fraud. Very likely more may be found, as that work is an inexhaustible mine of misquotations, errors, and blunders, to which it is impossible for me to plead “guilty” in the ordinary sense. Let then the slanderers go on, only to find in another fifteen years as they have found in the preceding period, that whatever they do, *they cannot ruin Theosophy, nor even hurt me*. I have no author’s vanity; [42] and years of unjust persecution and abuse have made me entirely callous to what the public may think of me — personally.

But in view of the facts as given above; and considering that:

- 1** The language in *Isis* is not mine; but (with the exception of that portion of the work which, as I claim, was *dictated*), may be called only a sort of translation of my facts and ideas into English;
- 2** It was not written for the public — the latter having always been only a secondary consideration with me — but for the use of Theosophists and members of the Theosophical Society to which *Isis* is dedicated;
- 3** Though I have since learned sufficient English to have been enabled to edit two magazines — *The Theosophist* and *Lucifer* — yet, to the present hour I never write an article, an editorial or even a simple paragraph, without submitting its English to close scrutiny and correction.

What Mme. Blavatsky claims as her own are the fruits of her learning and studying in fields uncharted by modern science, and unknown to the West.

Considering all this and much more, I ask now every impartial and honest man and woman whether it is just or even fair to criticize my works — *Isis*, above all others — as one would the writings of a born American or English author! What I claim in them as my own is only the fruit of my learning and studies in a department, hitherto left uninvestigated by Science, and almost unknown to the European world. I am perfectly willing to leave the honour of the English grammar in them, the glory of the quotations from scientific works brought occasionally to me to be used as passages for comparison with, or refutation by, the old Science, and finally the general make-up of the volumes, to every one of those who have helped me. Even for *The Secret Doctrine* there are about half-a-dozen Theosophists who have been busy in editing it, who have helped me to arrange the matter, correct the imperfect English, and prepare it for print. But that which none of them will ever claim from first to last, is the fundamental doctrine, the philosophical conclusions, and teachings. Nothing of that have I invented, but simply given it out as I have been taught; or as quoted by me in *The Secret Doctrine* (Vol. I, p. 46) from Montaigne:

“I have here made only a nosegay of culled [Eastern] flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the string that ties them.”

Is any one of my helpers prepared to say that I have not paid the full price for the string?

April 27th, 1891

H.P. BLAVATSKY [43]



**A most reprehensible oversight by Mr. J.W. Bouton, Publisher of
"Isis Unveiled," who pretended to be Mme. Blavatsky's friend.**

The mention of the introductory section, "Before the Veil," brings up a very natural question: before what veil? Of course, *The Veil of Isis* — and this was to be the original title of the work. But on May 8th, 1877, J.W. Bouton, the Publisher, addressed the following letter to H.P. Blavatsky:

Dear Madame Blavatsky,

Our mutual friend Sotheran called upon me yesterday and during our conversation suggested something which, considering its source, is really worth considering. It appears there has been another and a very good book published in England, under the title of "The Veil of Isis."¹ Now, as you are aware, it is a very awkward affair to publish *our* book under the same title as one previously issued, and when we come to advertise, the public may well suppose it to be the same thing, and pass it by. Another matter — the other book is undoubtedly copyrighted in England, under the title aforesaid, and consequently it will put a stop to the sale of our book entirely, in England, as it would be an infringement of copyright. Strange as it may appear, the idea struck Sotheran² and myself, simultaneously, that it would be better to change our title a little, and we both hit upon exactly the same one, *viz.*, "Isis Unveiled," which, it seems to me is, in many respects, much better than the other title, for in itself it has a distinctive meaning, which the other has not . . .

Sincerely your friend,

J.W. Bouton

This letter discloses a most reprehensible oversight on the part of the Publisher. And thus it happened that the running head of the left-hand pages throughout the entire Volume I of the work remained "The Veil of Isis," as it would have cost too much to alter it; and the section "Before the Veil" retained its original title also.

The relatively incomplete and fragmentary nature of *Isis Unveiled* and its teachings is also frankly conceded by Mme. Blavatsky. She has expressed herself on this subject on repeated occasions. She wrote:

When *Isis* was written, it was conceived by those — from whom the impulse, which directed its preparation, came — that the time was not ripe for the explicit declaration of a great many truths which they [44] are now willing to impart in plain language. So the readers of that book were supplied rather with

¹ [*The Veil of Isis, or the Mysteries of the Druids*. By William Winwood Reade (1838–1875). London: Charles J. Skeet, 1861; 250pp. A work which is scarce nowadays.]

² [Charles Sotheran (1847–1902), journalist, author and well-known Mason, one of the original Founders of the Theosophical Society, and a great friend of Mme. Blavatsky and Col. Olcott. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.

Consult "Tributes to Charles Sotheran," in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. — ED. PHIL.]

hints, sketches, and adumbrations of the philosophy to which it related, than with methodical expositions. . . .¹

Writing from Madras to Commandant D.A. Courmes² under date of January 17th, 1882, Mme. Blavatsky states again that:

. . . the book [*Isis*] is written with so much reticence and caution, that quite often the ideas in it are apt to be misunderstood, and sometimes not understood at all.³

In the course of an explanation of certain facts in the “Esoteric History” of mankind, she stated:

Isis Unveiled may appear very puzzling and contradictory to those who know nothing of Occult Sciences. To the occultist it is correct and, while perhaps, left purposely sinning (for it was the first cautious attempt to let into the West a faint streak of Eastern esoteric light), it reveals more facts than were ever given before its appearance . . .⁴

Similar ideas are expressed in the following passage:

I am quite aware of the fact that *Isis* is far from being as complete a work as, with the same materials, it might have been made by a better scholar; and that it lacks a symmetry, as a literary production, and perhaps here and there accuracy. But I have some excuse for all that. It was my first book; it was written in a language foreign to me — in which I had not been accustomed to write; the language was even more unfamiliar to certain Asiatic philosophers who rendered assistance; and, finally, Colonel Olcott, who revised the manuscript and worked with me throughout, was then in the years 1875 and 1876 almost entirely ignorant of Aryan Philosophy, and hence unable to detect and correct such errors as I might so readily fall into when putting my thoughts into English . . .⁵

In regard to the general objective which she had in view when writing this work, Mme. Blavatsky wrote:

. . . when *Isis Unveiled* was being written, the most important point the work aimed at was the demonstration of the following: [45]

1. The reality of the *Occult* in nature; →

¹ *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, November 1882, p. 28. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, “Death and Immortality,” pp. 250-56.

² [Dominique A. Courmes (1843–1914), a staunch friend of Mme. Blavatsky.]

³ Charles Blech, *Histoire de la Société Théosophique en France*, Paris, Éditions Adyar, 1933, p. 11.

⁴ *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, October 1883, p. 9. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. V, p. 221.

⁵ *ibid.*, *The Theosophist*, Vol. VII, January 1886, p. 279. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VII, p. 50.

2. The thorough knowledge of, and familiarity with, all such occult domains amongst “certain men,” and their mastery therein;
3. Hardly an art or science known in our age, that the *Vedas* have not mentioned; and that
4. Hundreds of things, especially, mysteries of nature — *in abscondito* as the alchemists called it — were known to the Āryas of the *pre-Mahābhārata* period, which are unknown to us, the modern sages of the XIXth century.¹

In a letter written to Dr. Alexander Wilder in August 1876, Mme. Blavatsky stated:

There are many parts in my Book that I do not like either, but the trouble is I do not know how to get rid of them without touching facts which are important, as arguments. You say that when I prove something, I prove it too much. There again you are right, but in such a work — (and the first one of some importance that I ever wrote, having limited myself to articles) in such a work when facts crowd and elbow each other in my brain, really one does not know sometimes where to stop. Your head is fresh, for you read it for the first time. Therefore you see all the faults and shortcomings, while my overworked brain and memory are all in a sad muddle, having read the manuscripts over and over again. I am really *very, very* thankful to you for your suggestions. I wish you made more of them . . .

As appears from the same letter, Mme. Blavatsky was then just about ready to send Dr. Wilder “the last chapters of the Second Part,” for his perusal.

Responding to a reproach by a spiritualist medium, that “the material [in “Isis”] sadly needed reducing to order,” Mme. Blavatsky declared that she was duty-bound to point out the dangers of modern Spiritualism, and to provide evidence corroborating her conclusions.

Commenting on the statement of Wm. Stainton Moses² to the effect *that* the material in her work “sadly needed reducing to order” and that “many of the statements required elucidation,” Mme. Blavatsky wrote:

It is not the first time that the *just* reproach is *unjustly* laid at my door. It is but too true, that “the material sadly needed reducing to order,” but it never was my province to do so, as I gave out one detached chapter after the other and was quite ignorant, as Mr. Sinnett correctly states in *The Occult World*, whether I had started upon a series of articles, one book or two books. Neither did I much care. It was my duty to give out some hints, to point to the dangerous phases of modern Spiritualism, and to bring to bear upon this question all the assertions and testimony of the ancient world and its sages that I could find —

¹ *The Theosophist*, April 1886, p. 426. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VII, p. 62.

² [Stainton Moses (1839–1892) was an English cleric and spiritualist medium guided by a spirit called “Imperator,” often writing under the pen name of “M.A. Oxon.” He was a member of the Spiritualist Group in England, as well as of The Theosophical Society, but he estranged himself from the latter. — ED. PHIL.]

as evidence to corroborate my conclusions. I did the best I could and knew how. If the critics of *Isis Unveiled* but consider:

1. That its author had never studied the English language, and after learning it in her childhood *colloquially* had not spoken it before coming to [46] America half a dozen of times during a period of many years;
2. That most of the doctrines (or shall we say hypotheses?) given, had to be translated from an Asiatic language; and
3. That most, if not all of the quotations from, and references to, other works — some of these out of print, and many inaccessible but to the few — and which the author personally had never read or seen, though the passages quoted were proved in each instance minutely correct, then my friends would perhaps feel less critically inclined . . . ¹

In her well-known and most important essay entitled “Theories About Reincarnation and Spirits,”² Mme. Blavatsky discusses at considerable length the several passages in *Isis Unveiled* treating of transmigration and reincarnation, which had been misunderstood by readers. Students of *Isis Unveiled* should give careful study to this essay, as it clarifies a number of points which were merely hinted at when Mme. Blavatsky wrote her first work.

In addition to this essay, Mme. Blavatsky elucidates several important points of teaching merely sketched in *Isis*, in the following articles:

- A “Seeming Discrepancies,”³ mainly on the nature of mediumistic manifestations and disembodied entities, as mentioned in *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. 67, 69, 325.
- B “*Isis Unveiled* and *The Theosophist* on Reincarnation,”⁴ dealing at greater length and with more detail with the same subject.
- C “‘C.C.M.’ and *Isis Unveiled*,”⁵ a defence of her work and of the Masters.
- D “A Levy of Arms against Theosophy,”⁶ on the subject of misconceptions in France.
- E “*Isis Unveiled* and the Viśishtādvaita,”⁷ an article which may have been written by Col. Olcott, as would appear from Mme. Blavatsky’s own words, but which is highly reminiscent of her own phraseology. [47]

¹ *The Theosophist*, Vol. II, September 1881, p. 258, fn. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. III, “The Claims of Occultism,” pp. 271-75. The last part of the sentence closing the above passage is somewhat confused, but is correctly copied from the original source.

² *The Path*, New York, Vol. I, November 1886, pp. 232-45; article can be found in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VII, pp. 176-99. [Full text under the title “Post-mortem wanderings of the wicked soul,” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ *The Theosophist*, Vol. III, June 1882, pp. 225-26. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, pp. 119-22.

⁴ *ibid.*, August 1882, pp. 288-89. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, pp. 182-86.

⁵ *ibid.*, September 1882, p. 324. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, pp. 226-28.

⁶ *ibid.*, Supplement to June 1883. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, pp. 546 *et seq.*

⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. VII, January 1886, pp. 279-80. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VIII, pp. 50-52.

ⓕ A long footnote appended to J.H. Mitalmier's article "The Dirge for the Dead."¹ In this footnote, Mme. Blavatsky specifically discusses the passage in *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. 351, which is as follows:

Reincarnation, *i.e.*, the appearance of the same individual, or rather of his astral monad, twice on the same planet, is not a rule in nature; it is an exception, like the teratological phenomenon of a two-headed infant. It is preceded by a violation of the laws of harmony of nature, and happens only when the latter, seeking to restore its disturbed equilibrium, violently throws back into earth-life the astral monad which had been tossed out of the circle of necessity by crime or accident. Thus, in cases of abortion, of infants dying before a certain age, and of congenital and incurable idiocy, nature's original design to produce a perfect human being has been interrupted. Therefore, while the gross matter of each of these several entities is suffered to disperse itself at death, through the vast realm of being, the immortal spirit and astral monad of the individual, the latter having been set apart to animate a frame and the former to shed its divine light on the corporeal organization — must try a second time to carry out the purpose of the creative intelligence.

If reason has been so far developed as to become active and discriminative, there is no reincarnation on this earth, for the three parts of the triune man have been united together, and he is capable of running the race . . .

Neither Gautama Buddha, nor any of the Hindu philosophers, ever taught immediate reincarnation in the same cycle of devachanic rest, or of the same personality, but of the glorified "Triune Man" (Atman-Buddhi-Manas) and conqueror of death (Hierophant) who, united with his immortal essence, is "capable of running the race" forward to spiritual perfection.

In explanation of the error which exists in this passage, Mme. Blavatsky writes as follows:

Since 1882, when the mistake was first found out in *Isis Unveiled*, it has been repeatedly stated in *The Theosophist*, and last year in *The Path*, that the word "planet" was a mistake and that "cycle" was meant, *i.e.*, the "cycle of Devachanic rest." This mistake, due to one of the literary editors — the writer knowing English more than imperfectly twelve years ago, and the editors being still more ignorant of Buddhism and Hinduism has led to great confusion and numberless accusations of contradictions between the statements in *Isis* and later theosophical teaching[s]. The paragraph quoted meant to upset the theory of the French Reincarnationists who maintain that the same *personality* is reincarnated, often a few days after death, so that a grandfather can be reborn as his own granddaughter.² Hence the idea was combated, and it was said that neither Buddha nor any of the Hindu philosophers ever taught [48] reincarnation *in the same cycle, or of the same personality*, but of the "triune man" (*vide* note which follows), who, when properly united, was "capable of running the race"

¹ *Lucifer*, Vol. III, February 1889, pp. 527-28. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol X, pp. 212-17.

² [The same explanation occurs in *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 191.]

forward to perfection. The same and a worse mistake occurs on pages 346 and 347 (Vol. I). For on the former it is stated that the Hindus dread *reincarnation* “only on other and inferior planets,” instead of what is the case, that Hindus dread reincarnation *in other and inferior bodies*, of brutes and animals or *transmigration*, while on page 347 the said error of putting “planet” instead of “cycle” and “personality,” shows the author (a professed Buddhist) speaking as though Buddha had never taught the doctrine of reincarnation!! The sentence ought to read that the “*former life* believed in by Buddhists is not a life in the same cycle and personality,” as no one appreciates more than they do “the great doctrine of cycles.” As it reads now, however, namely that “this *former life* believed in by the Buddhists is not a *life on this planet*,” and this sentence on page 347 just preceded by that other (§ 2 on page 346), “Thus, like the revolutions of a wheel, there is *a regular succession of death and birth*,” etc. — the whole reads like the raving of a lunatic, and a jumble of contradictory statements. If asked why the error was permitted to remain and run through ten editions, it is answered:

1. That the attention of the author was drawn to it only in 1882; and
2. That the undersigned was not in a position to alter it from stereotyped plates which belonged to the American publisher and not to her.

The work was written under exceptional circumstances, and no doubt more than one great error may be discovered in *Isis Unveiled*.

Mme. Blavatsky’s footnote concerning “the three parts of the triune man” says:

“The three parts” are Atman, Buddhi-Manas, which this condition of perfect union entitles to a rest in Devachan¹ which cannot be less than 1,000 years in duration, sometimes 2,000, as the “cycle of rest” is proportioned to the merits and demerits of the *Devachanī*.

She also points out, as she did elsewhere, that the word “immediate” should be inserted before reincarnation, making the sentence on page 351 of *Isis* to run thus:

. . . there is no immediate reincarnation on this earth . . .

The various contributions from Mme. Blavatsky’s pen mentioned above, together with her essay on “My Books,”² copious excerpts from which have already been made, give all the necessary information concerning certain aspects of the doctrine barely hinted at in Mme. Blavatsky’s first great work.



¹ [Consult “Devachan, dream realm where pure souls are rewarded,” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Consult “Blavatsky defends Isis Unveiled,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

“Isis Unveiled” was a tentative effort to divert the attention of the Spiritualists from their hard-crusted preconceptions to the true state of post-mortem existence. However, “Isis” was not entirely unveiled, but rents sufficiently large were made to afford flitting glances by the student’s spiritual insight.

Mme. Blavatsky’s immediate superiors, the Adept-Brothers M. and K.H., were themselves keenly aware of the imperfections and particularly of the incompleteness of *Isis Unveiled*, and frankly said so. Writing to A.P. Sinnett. K.H. warned him that he

[49]

. . . must not trust *Isis* literally. The book is but a tentative effort to divert the attention of the Spiritualists from their preconceptions to the true state of things. The author was made to hint and point out in the true direction, to say what things *are not*, not what they are. Proof-reader helping, a few real mistakes have crept in as on page 1, chapter I, Volume I, where divine Essence is made emanating from Adam instead of the reverse.¹

And again:

“Isis” was *not* unveiled but rents sufficiently large were made to afford flitting glances to be completed by the student’s own intuition. In this curry of quotations from various philosophic and esoteric truths purposely veiled, behold our doctrine, which is now being partially taught to Europeans for the first time.²

In the course of an explanation concerning certain passages in *Isis*, the same writer states:

. . . for its *incompleteness* no one but we, her inspirers are responsible . . .³

There is no contradiction between a passage referred as the “Trinity Doctrine” (man’s imperishable monas, i.e., Atman-Buddhi-Manas) and the later theosophical teachings, simply because the Septenary Constitution of Man⁴ had not been divulged at the time when “Isis” was written.

In the course of several explanations written to A.P. Sinnett, in connection with various criticisms from C.C. Massey on passages in *Isis Unveiled*, mainly pertaining to the subject of reincarnation and the division of the human constitution, Master K.H. wrote:

Don’t you see that everything you find in *Isis* is delineated, hardly sketched — nothing completed or fully revealed . . .⁵

¹ *The Mahātma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Letter No. IX, p. 45. Received at Bombay, July 8th, 1881.

² *ibid.*, Letter No. XVIII, p. 121. Received at Śimla, June 1882.

³ *ibid.*, Letter No. XXIII-B, p. 173. Received at Śimla, October 1882.

⁴ [Refer to Semi-Exoteric Constitution of Man (Table), on page 74 of this study. — ED. PHIL.]

⁵ *ibid.*, Letter No. XX-C, p. 131. Received August 1882.

Many are the subjects treated upon in *Isis* that even H.P.B. was not allowed to become thoroughly acquainted with; yet they are not contradictory if — “misleading” . . . the “septenary” doctrine had not yet been divulged to the world at the time when *Isis* was written . . . ¹

In *reality*, there is no contradiction between that passage in *Isis* and our later teaching; to anyone, who never heard of the [50] *seven* principles — constantly referred to in *Isis* as a trinity, without any more explanation — there certainly appeared to be as good a contradiction as could be. “You will write so and so, give *so far*, and no more” — she was constantly told by us, when writing her book . . . And is it because she obeyed our orders, and wrote, purposely *veiling* some of her facts — that now, when we think the time has arrived to give most of, if not the *whole* truth — that she has to be left in the lurch? . . . ²

The pages from which the above passages are culled would repay closer examination by the student, as they contain pertinent explanations concerning several points of teaching, and references to passages and wording in *Isis Unveiled*, which at the time were questioned.

Most of the errors in the original edition occur in the citations of works quoted or referred to, and in the orthography of foreign words. Master K.H. once said that “Isis” ought to be rewritten for the sake of the family honour.

The whole subject of “contradictions” in the teachings, as given in *Isis*, and as expanded and unfolded in later writings, having exercised Mme. Blavatsky considerably, she forcefully and unequivocally stated:

We may well be taxed with too loose and careless a mode of expression, with a misuse of the foreign language in which we write, with leaving too much unsaid and depending unwarrantably upon the imperfectly developed intuition of the reader. But there never was, nor can there be, any radical discrepancy between the teachings in *Isis* and those of the later period, as both proceed from one and the same source — the ADEPT BROTHERS. ³

Finally, after some explanatory remarks concerning passages found in *Isis Unveiled*, Master K.H. quaintly voiced his feeling that:

It really ought to be *rewritten* for the sake of the family honour. ⁴

The present edition of Mme. Blavatsky’s first monumental work is an attempt to redeem, however imperfectly, the “family honour.” This has been done, however, without any major alteration of Mme. Blavatsky’s language, expressions, style, or punctuation.

¹ *The Mahātma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Letter No. XXIV-B, pp. 182-83. Received Autumn 1882.

² *op. cit.*, Letter No. III, pp. 289-90. Received at Šimla, Autumn 1882.

³ *The Theosophist*, Vol. III, June 1882, p. 226. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, “Seeming ‘Discrepancies,’” pp. 119-22.

⁴ *The Mahātma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Letter XX-C, p. 130. Received August, 1882.

In all fairness, it should be pointed out that the proofreading in *Isis Unveiled*, as far as ordinary typographical errors are concerned, was very good, as common “typos,” to use the printer’s vernacular, are very few in number. Most of the errors in the original edition occur in regard to the titles of works quoted from or referred to, quotation marks dropped, the names of authors, and the references to volume, paragraph or page of [51] various editions. Greek and Hebrew words have also suffered greatly, particularly when given in their original script. The spelling of Sanskrit words in English transliteration is notably bad, and seems to have been adopted mainly from early French sources, so much so that in a great many instances the term or name is unrecognizable. No consistency exists in the manner in which footnote references have been appended, and the frequent use of double quotes for book titles make them appear as titles of articles in a journal, or chapter headings within a book; thus resulting in uncertainty of source. In many instances errors are unquestionably due to illegible handwriting; in other cases to the fact that certain French letters, such as “l” standing for “livre” (book or volume) have been interpreted by the typesetter as being 1 (one or first). Occasionally quotation marks are dropped in quoted material, and suddenly appear in Mme. Blavatsky’s own text. But, to repeat, ordinary mistakes of spelling are very few throughout.

In a brazen and dishonourable move, Mr. J.W. Bouton, the Publisher of “Isis Unveiled,” asserted copyright under his name, instructed Dr. Alexander Wilder (whom he employed as reader) to abridge the text “as much as it would bear,” and refused every proposition afterward to transfer copyright ownership to H.P. Blavatsky, or to drop the price to a reasonable level.

From Dr. Alexander Wilder’s article “How *Isis Unveiled* was Written,”¹ we learn several interesting facts, though it contains a few inaccurate dates. Dr. Wilder was employed for a time by J.W. Bouton, the Publisher, as “reader” of original manuscripts submitted for publication. One day, Col. Olcott called on Dr. Wilder and brought with him the MS. of *Isis Unveiled*, or at least a portion thereof. Bouton had just gone to England and had suggested that Col. Olcott see Dr. Wilder and ask him to read the MS. This seems to have been the circumstance of their first meeting. Dr. Wilder says:

Regarding myself as morally obligated to act for the advantage of Mr. Bouton, I showed no favour beyond what I believed justice to demand. I regarded it a duty to be severe. In my report to him, I stated that the manuscript was the product of great research, and that so far as related to current thinking, there was a revolution in it, but I added that I deemed it too long for remunerative publishing.

Mr. Bouton, however, presently agreed to publish the work. I never learned the terms, but subsequent occurrences led me to presume that they were not carefully considered. He procured the copyright in his own name, which enabled him to control the price, and he refused every proposition afterward to transfer the ownership to the author, or to cheapen the cost. He placed the manuscript

¹ *The Word*, New York, Vol. VII, No. 2, May 1908, pp. 77-87.

again in my hands, with instructions to shorten it as much as it would bear. This was a discretionary power that was far from agreeable. It can hardly be fair that a person acting solely in behalf of the publisher should have such authority over the work of an author. Nevertheless, I undertook the task. While abridging the work, I endeavoured in every instance to preserve the thought of the author in plain language, removing only [52] such terms and matter as might be regarded as superfluous, and not necessary to the main purpose. In this way, enough was taken out to fill a volume of respectable dimensions. In doing all this, I consulted only what I supposed to be Mr. Bouton's advantage, and believed that he so regarded it, as I had only his instructions. But it proved to be only a "labour of love."

It appears that H.P. Blavatsky was highly pleased with Dr. Wilder's work on her manuscript, and their mutual relations were thereby strengthened. Continuing his narrative, Dr. Wilder says:

I had not looked for defects, or found them, but only to ascertain how the manuscript might be "boiled down," without affecting the general purpose . . . I had aimed only to shorten without marring the work. It should be stated, however, as a fact in the publication of this work, that Madame Blavatsky continued to add matter, after Mr. Bouton began the undertaking, and I think that much of the second volume was then written. I have no recollection of much of it except in proof sheets at a later period . . .

I would hesitate, likewise, to be considered in any noteworthy sense as an editor of the work. It is true that after Mr. Bouton had agreed to become the publisher, I was asked to read the proof sheets and make sure that the Hebrew words and terms belonging to other languages were correctly given by the printer, but I added nothing, and do not remember that I ventured to control anything that was contributed to the work. Without her knowledge and approval, such action would have been reprehensible.

In the light of the above statement, it is difficult to say exactly how so many Greek and Hebrew terms became misspelt in the final product, especially as Dr. Wilder was a well-known Greek scholar. It is also to be wondered why Dr. Wilder makes no mention of the fact that it was he who prepared the introductory chapter in *Isis Unveiled* entitled "Before the Veil," as is stated in Mme. Blavatsky's own remarks quoted above.

In concluding his narrative, Dr. Wilder says:

When the printer had placed everything in type, I was employed to prepare the index. Others must judge whether this was done with fidelity. As the author paid for this, and the publisher refrained from advancing a cent for all that I had done in the matter, though careful to make sure of all the proceeds from the sales, it is but just to render the acknowledgement where it is due.

This substantiates Mme. Blavatsky's own later appraisal of Bouton's business methods, and the unfair treatment she received from him. [53]

The publication of "Isis" unleashed petty and virulent criticism regarding the provenance of quotations from, and references to, various authorities. As no accusations could be made against its sublime philosophical concepts, bringing out to everyone (whether profane or profound) Occult Knowledge and Truths, we can safely conclude that the sole aim of the ruthless and opinionated "literary criticism" was to discredit Mme. Blavatsky.

A very pointed and somewhat virulent criticism was made many years ago by Wm. Emmette Coleman of the manner in which H.P. Blavatsky used quoted material in *Isis Unveiled*. He pointed out a considerable number of instances where quotations from, and references to, various writers, classical and otherwise, were not actually taken from their original works but from the works of other writers who themselves quoted such passages or referred to them. But it has never been shown on what ground this is to be considered wrong, unethical, or misleading.

No careful student, however, will dismiss the allegation of Coleman, at least in its general aspect. It is perfectly true that H.P. Blavatsky brought into the pages of her work many passages from, and references to, both ancient and contemporary writers which she had found in reading other works. And if we are to accept Col. Olcott's first-hand account of the manner in which certain portions of *Isis* were written, we will have to accept also the fact that H.P. Blavatsky's superiors who were dictating to her, or writing through her intermediary, as the case may be, did exactly that in many instances also. It is somewhat difficult to understand what is wrong in quoting St. Jerome or Josephus, for instance, and giving correct references to their writings, by taking these passages and references from the works of, let us say, de Mirville, without necessarily stating each time where such were found. As the same passages or references occur in dozens of other writers, should an author be asked to make references to all of them? The subject is rather fulsome and the accusation does not seem to have much point except as an effort to discredit H.P. Blavatsky.

Ingratitude brings about its own demise and irrelevancy.

No amount of scholarly criticism can justify the unsubstantiated accusations of "wholesale plagiarism," especially when the sincerity of purpose and noble objective of "Isis Unveiled" have been acclaimed by independent thinkers, and highly esteemed by those who read it.

In addition to direct quotations from various works, first or second hand, *Isis Unveiled* does contain a number of paragraphs which summarize the ideas of certain authors, give the general trend of their arguments about this, that and the other, but without indicating specifically where these arguments have been found. This has to be acknowledged as a fact, and therefore criticism may be justifiable, although it must of course be borne in mind that no attempt to mislead can possibly be read into this. It is likely that greater care and adherence to accepted and acceptable editorial practice would have supplemented the required references in pertinent footnotes.

That this was not done, cannot justify the accusation of wholesale plagiarism, especially when the sincerity of purpose and noble objective of the work as a whole is recognized.

In January 1884, Mme. Blavatsky began rewriting and amplifying "Isis Unveiled", expanding it like the bud of the lotus, and calling it "The Secret Doctrine" — unquestionably the magnum opus of the modern age; Vol. I was published in October 1888.

There is ample evidence to the effect that when Mme. Blavatsky undertook her second large work, it was intended to be a rewriting of *Isis Unveiled*. Entries about a "new book on Theosophy" and a "skeleton outline" thereof, and even mention of a Preface, occur in Col. Olcott's *Diaries* as early as May 23rd, 24th, 25th, and June 4th, 1879, barely three months after [54] the Founders arrived in India.¹ No further work appears to have been done on this venture for several years, and it was not until January 1884, that Mme. Blavatsky, writing to Sinnett from Adyar, told him:

And now the outcome of it is, that I, crippled-down and half dead, am to sit up nights again and rewrite the whole of *Isis Unveiled*, calling it *The Secret Doctrine* and making three if not four volumes out of the original two, Subba Row helping me and writing most of the commentaries and explanations . . . ²

The first announcement of her intended work appears in the *Journal of The Theosophical Society* (Supplement to *The Theosophist*), Vol. I, No. 1, January 1884, and speaks of it as "A New Version of *Isis Unveiled*."

When William Q. Judge stopped in Paris to see Mme. Blavatsky in 1884, on his way to India, he became involved in this new venture.³ He writes:

At Enghien especially, H.P.B. wanted me to go carefully through the pages of her copy of *Isis Unveiled* for the purpose of noting on the margins what subjects were treated, and for the work she furnished me with what she called a special blue and red pencil. I went all through both volumes and made the notes required, and of those she afterwards wrote me that they were of the greatest use to her . . . ⁴

And again:

It is quite a task, this selecting and collating from the matter of *Isis* so that all may be preserved and, all useless matter expunged . . . ⁵

For a time then, Mme. Blavatsky was ostensibly rewriting *Isis*. She was doing so on orders from her Teacher. She was given a simple method of achieving this result. The matter contained in *Isis* was to be brought "within the reach of all," and explanations

¹ *Old Diary Leaves, op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 89-90, and original *Diaries*.

² *Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, No. XXVIII, p. 64.

³ In the middle of May 1884, they were both the guests of Count and Countess d'Adhemar de Cronsac in their Château Écossais at Enghien.

⁴ C. Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences, etc.*, p. 102.

⁵ Excerpt from Letters of W.Q. Judge in: *The Word*, Vol. XV, April 1912, pp. 19-21.

were to be added so that later instalments of teachings would not appear to contradict those given in *Isis*. Mme. Blavatsky was going to “give in the *Secret Doctrine* all that is *important* in ‘Isis’, grouping together the materials relating to any given subject, instead of leaving them scattered throughout the 2-vol[s]. as they are now.”¹ In doing so, she was [55] “bound to give *whole pages* from ‘Isis’ only amplifying and giving additional information.”

This is conclusively corroborated by her lengthy essay entitled “Elementals,” which the Editors of *Lucifer* published after her passing,² and which is clearly a compilation made by Mme. Blavatsky from various portions of *Isis Unveiled*, with but minor alterations, but with connecting passages and additional explanations written specifically for this purpose. Mme. Blavatsky refers to this essay and speaks of it as a chapter “on the Gods and Pitris, the Devas and the Daimonia, Elementaries and Elementals, and other like spooks,” which, she says, is now finished.³

Back in October 1885, Mme. Blavatsky said that the new “Isis” was an entirely new work, freed from useless stuff, and without even twenty pages imported from the old “Isis:” Dogmas and doctrines, laws secular and divine, myths and mysteries, signs and symbols,⁴ are now expounded in the light of the perennial fountainhead of Ageless Wisdom, whose eloquence flows from the heart not the lips.

As late as October 28th, 1885, Mme. Blavatsky wrote to Col. Olcott:

I take from *Isis* only facts, leaving out everything in the shape of dissertations, attacks on Christianity and Science — in short, all the useless stuff, and all that has lost its interest. Only myths, symbols and dogmas explained from an *esoteric* point of view. It is actually and *de facto* a new work entirely . . . ⁵

Writing to Dr. Franz Hartmann, in December 1885, she speaks of her work as “a completely new work,” which will contain “hardly here and there a few lines of dry facts from *Isis*.”⁶

In January 1886, writing to Col. Olcott, Mme. Blavatsky said that *The Secret Doctrine* was “entirely new,” and that there would not be even twenty pages quoted from *Isis*. She suggested that the Colonel condense *Isis* to one volume and get it out, mainly for Indian trade, which would raise money for the Society.⁷

¹ *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, No. XXXVI, p. 89; dated April 25th, 1884.

² *Lucifer*, Vol. XII, August 1893, pp. 537-48; Vol. XIII, September & October 1893, pp. 30-39 & 111-21, respectively. It may be found, together with a comprehensive explanatory Note by Boris de Zirkoff, in his *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VI, pp. 184-201. [Consult “Blavatsky on Elementals and Elementaries,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 88.

⁴ [Consult “Keys to the Mystery Language,” in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. — ED. PHIL.]

⁵ *Old Diary Leaves*, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 317.

⁶ *The Path*, Vol. V, pp. 299-300.

⁷ *The Theosophist*, Vol. LII, August 1931.

After this, *Isis Unveiled* was no longer spoken of in connection with the new work, and Mme. Blavatsky's *magnum opus*, *The Secret Doctrine*, went on as an entirely new and separate literary effort, to its consummation in the Fall of 1888.

The original edition of *Isis Unveiled* — most likely the first impression of it only — is bound in red with the title and the figure of Isis in gold on the spine. Several copies of it have been preserved; none of them show any Table of Contents. Yet we know from Col. Olcott's account that it had been prepared ahead of time by himself and Miss Kislingbury. Such an oversight is hard to explain at this late date; nor is it possible to determine whether it applies to the first impression as a whole, or has merely occurred in a few copies in the process of binding. [56]

"Isis Unveiled," the bestseller in 1877, went through at least twelve reprints, each deceptively marketed as new edition by Mr. J.W. Bouton, the assumed copyright owner. But as all such "editions" came from the same printer's plates, they perpetuated the same errors and, while the print quality kept fading away, Bouton's earnings became blessed beyond measure.

In the years following its publication, *Isis Unveiled* went through many new impressions, which, as is often the case, are incorrectly referred to as "editions." All such impressions have been printed from the same type plates and contain the same errors. It is believed on good ground, that Bouton issued as many as twelve impressions of this work. Writing to Peary Chand Mittra under date of April 10th, 1878, Mme. Blavatsky states that not a single copy remains then at Bouton's of the "3rd edition." The 4th impression of 1878 has, as frontispiece in Vol. I, the reproduction of E. Wimbridge's pen-and-ink drawing of Mme. Blavatsky, signed "E. Wimbridge sc. 1878." The "Fifth Thousand" — so marked on title page — is dated 1882, and has, as frontispiece of Vol. I, a photograph of Mme. Blavatsky with a Spanish comb in her hair, looking *en face*, resting her chin on her left hand and showing a signet ring on her right hand — a ring which, according to available evidence, was later lost and was not replaced until 1884 when Mme. Blavatsky was in London. In her Letter to the Second American Convention,¹ held in 1888, Mme. Blavatsky speaks of nine editions issued to date. Another one is known to have been printed by the Caxton Press in 1901.²

The First Point Loma Edition was published in 1906; the Second, in 1910.

The original type plates, together with the copyright in the work were purchased from Bouton by the Theosophical Publishing Company, September 23th, 1902, for the sum of \$2,000. This Company, originally organized as a corporation under the Laws of the State of New York, was eventually moved to Point Loma, California, where two more impressions or "editions" were published from the same plates. The First Point Loma Edition appeared in 1906³ with a portrait of Mme. Blavatsky and a Preface signed by

¹ [Consult Mme. Blavatsky's "Open Letters to the American Convention," in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² In *The Path* of New York, Vol. VII, November 1892, p. 265, it is stated that Mme. Blavatsky had willed her interest in the copyright of *Isis Unveiled* to Col. Henry S. Olcott, who was then giving one-half of the accruing profits to Adyar, and the other half to the American Headquarters, keeping nothing for himself.

³ Noticed in the *New Century Path*, January 7th, 1906, p. 18.

Dr. Henry Travers Edge, one of Mme. Blavatsky's personal pupils during her London days. This Edition includes, immediately following the Preface, Mme. Blavatsky's two essays which have a bearing upon *Isis Unveiled* and her writings in general, namely, "Theories About Reincarnation and Spirits"¹ (originally published in *The Path*, Vol. I, November 1886) and "My Books" (originally published in *Lucifer*, Vol. VIII, May 15th, 1891).² The Second Point Loma Edition appeared in 1910 and is identical with the First. In all of these editions or impressions prepared from the same plates, the pagination is identical.

The First Revised Edition was published in 1910 by the Theosophical Publishing Society of London and Benares; and London, in 1923.

The first Revised Edition with corrections by Miss Edith Ward was published in 1910 by the Theosophical Publishing Society of London and Benares. The Foreword of this edition states that "obvious orthographical and grammatical errors" have been corrected, and "Greek and Hebrew [57] phrases" have been revised. It was set from new type, but preserved the same type area and pagination. This edition was reprinted in London in 1923, and has been out of print for many years.

The Third and Revised Point Loma Edition was published in 1919. It was reset on monotype and bound in four volumes preserving the original pagination.

Next in sequence was the Third and Revised Point Loma Edition, entirely reset on the monotype and published in 1919, the old type plates having become worn out. It was bound in four volumes and preserved the original pagination. Mme. Blavatsky's articles mentioned above were included again, and the General Index was considerably improved and enlarged to 80 pages. In addition to this, the last volume contains a comprehensive Bibliographical Index arranged alphabetically according to titles, and with an Author and Title Key. The work of revision was done by Fred J. Dick, M. INST. C.E., Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy at the School of Antiquity, Point Loma, Calif., and William E. Gates, Professor of Archæology and a noted authority on the Mayan civilization.

The labour involved in the preparation of this edition was very great, and students have ample reason to be indebted to the two above-mentioned scholars for their untiring efforts at verification of quotations and references contained in *Isis Unveiled*. However, upon close examination, it appears that special attention had been given to verification of titles, spelling of proper names, correct references as to volume, section or page, and not to the actual *text* of quoted material, which contains a great many errors in the original edition. The spelling of Sanskrit and Hebrew terms in English transliteration was corrected to conform with accepted Western standards, and words in Greek and Hebrew letters have been in many instances revised. This edition has been out of print for many years.

¹ [Consult "Post-mortem wanderings of the wicked soul," in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Consult "Blavatsky defends *Isis Unveiled*," in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

The First Facsimile Edition of the original edition was published by The Theosophy Company of Los Angeles, in 1931. It was printed on bible paper with both volumes under one binding. A second edition was published in 1945, and a third, from new plates, in 1968.

The first *facsimile* edition or photographic reproduction of the original edition was published by The Theosophy Company of Los Angeles, Calif., in 1931. This edition was printed on thin paper and contains both volumes of the work under one binding. The original Index is followed by a "Supplemental Index" of considerable value. A second printing of this edition was produced in 1945, and a third one, from new plates, in 1968. Theosophical University Press of Covina, Calif. (formerly of Point Loma, Calif.) bought copies of the 1945 edition for resale with its own title page. Being a *facsimile* of earlier impressions, the type face looks somewhat worn, which obviously could not be avoided. It also perpetuates all the errors in the original edition.

Another Facsimile Edition of the original edition was published by Rider & Co. of London, in 1936, as part of the "Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky."

Another *facsimile* edition was made by Rider & Co. of London, who issued in 1936 a photographic reproduction of the original edition as part of the *Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky*. It has a short Preface by A. Trevor Barker, Mme. Blavatsky's above-mentioned articles, the new 80-page Index, and is bound in one bulky volume. It does not contain Prof. Dick's Bibliographical Index, however. One thousand copies of this edition were bought by [58] the Theosophical University Press at Point Lorna, and sold with their own title page.

In January 1950, the Theosophical University Press at Covina published a new two-volume edition, reset in a larger and more readable type face, while retaining the original pagination and style.

In January 1950, the Theosophical University Press at Covina, Calif. published a new two-volume edition of *Isis Unveiled* which was completely reset in a larger and more readable type face, retaining the original pagination and style. It is bound in red and includes Prof. Dick's Bibliographical Index and Author and Title Key, and its Appendix contains Mme. Blavatsky's articles mentioned previously. It has the new 80-page Index, and 32 portraits of historic personages referred to by Mme. Blavatsky. in the text, although the choice of these portraits in some instances shows poor judgment. In appearance this edition is very attractive and reflects the careful and artistic work developed years before at Point Loma by volunteer craftsmen. Unfortunately, however, apart from a very few typographical errors corrected here and there throughout the two volumes, it completely disregards all the painstaking work of both Dick and Gates, ignoring their corrections of spelling, titles and references, and perpetuates hundreds of the original errors, some of which are quite obvious.

The present Centennial Edition, published to coincide with The Theosophical Society's Centennial in 1975, is a heartfelt tribute of gratitude to the Masters of Wisdom behind "Isis Unveiled," by those whose eyes have since opened to new vistas of cosmic splendour and inspiration, above and beyond the narrow horizons of crystallized and despotic faiths.

The present edition, being published on the eve of The Theosophical Society's Centennial in 1975, and within sight, as it were, of the year 1977 which marks the hundredth anniversary of the original publication of *Isis Unveiled*, might very appropriately be called the Centennial Edition of that work. With this end in view, it has been thought advisable to outline above the entire historical background against which Mme. Blavatsky's first great work is to be projected a background, which the present Introductory essay is intended to provide.

The editorial work in the present edition of *Isis Unveiled* is as follows:

- 1 There has been no editing of Mme. Blavatsky's literary style or grammar.
- 2 Obvious typographical errors have been corrected throughout, as well as the wording of a few passages, in accordance with Mme. Blavatsky's own corrections and emendations thereof, when she quoted them in the text of *The Secret Doctrine*.
- 3 Correct systemic spelling has been adopted for all technical terms and proper names, according to current scholastic standards.
- 4 A systematic and comprehensive effort has been made to verify the text of the many quotations introduced by Mme. Blavatsky from various works, and the references indicated by her. Original sources have been consulted whenever possible, and if any departures from the original text were found, these were corrected. In some cases, passages quoted by other writers, whom [59] Mme. Blavatsky quotes in her turn, have been left to stand unaltered, particularly in cases where such works were very difficult to find.
- 5 No attempt has been made to check quotations from current newspapers and journals, except in the case of those few, in which the importance of the subject matter warranted it.
- 6 Practically all words or expressions found in square brackets within the main text or the text of the footnotes are by Mme. Blavatsky herself, who often interpolates her own remarks in passages quoted. To this there are only a very few exceptions, where a word which seems to have been dropped has been reinserted by the Compiler within square brackets.
- 7 All *additional* references to authors and their works appearing as footnotes in square brackets are by the Compiler.
- 8 Any other explanatory remarks, notes, or additional information by the Compiler appear in an Appendix at the end of each volume. *The superior figures appended here and there throughout the text correspond to those in the Appendix.*
- 9 The General Index, as well as the Bibliographical Appendix are entirely new.

Superbly written, and in defiance of its literary shortcomings, the authoritative character of "Isis Unveiled" has never been questioned, and its intrinsic value has not been superseded or duplicated by "The Secret Doctrine."

In spite of its many imperfections and shortcomings, as a literary production which we have examined on the basis of facts and quoted statements by the author herself — *Isis Unveiled* remains to this very day the most astounding compendium of occult facts and doctrines in the Theosophical Movement. Its contents are of the most varied kind, its array of evidence has never been surpassed, its authoritative character has never been questioned, and its intrinsic value has not been superseded or duplicated by *The Secret Doctrine*.

The appeal of this work to readers and students has hardly ever slackened, and edition after edition has been exhausted no matter by whom published. To those who are fairly well acquainted with the later writings of Mme. Blavatsky, but who have neglected to look into the pages of *Isis Unveiled*, this work contains priceless revelations of natural facts, and illuminating thoughts and sidelights on the mysteries of Nature never suspected before. The facts described in it can be ignored and set aside by non-believers, but they cannot be successfully challenged and shown to be false. Therefore the work stands even today as a living challenge to all those whose minds are self-imprisoned within the walls of denial, and whose spiritual sight is impeded by homemade blinkers.

Where can we find passages as authoritative in their bearing and as eloquent in their purport and language as those, for instance,

Which deal with the ancient Egyptian civilization and its unique achievements, or those [60] which outline the fundamental propositions of Oriental philosophies and of genuine Magic?

Where else can we find the sweeping view of the endless horizon which discloses in broad outline, supported by astounding facts, the universal character of the Occult Tradition, the immense antiquity of true Magic, its noble origin and transcendent power, and the fathomless and unquenchable springs from which it flows?

In many instances, however, Mme. Blavatsky, acting on instructions from her Superiors, merely hinted at certain occult teachings, in this first work from her pen. Their elaboration was reserved for later years.



The aim and plan of “Isis Unveiled” was three-fold:

- * To exhume the primeval strata of man’s being.
- * To lay bare the archaic records of man’s divine ancestry and heritage.
- * To throw down the gauntlet to those who appropriated it for their own benefit and power, in the hope that their crime will remain undetected by posterity.

Some have declared *Isis Unveiled* to be without definite plan. Consider the evidence: *Isis Unveiled* proclaims the fact[s]:

- 1 That there were ancient Mystery-Schools in the guardianship of men who knew and who were servants of truth;
- 2 That these Mysteries existed in periods of history which were fit for them to exist in;
- 3 That some two thousand years ago, a wall was built to shut them off from the knowledge of men, while some of the ancient lore was incorporated in a twisted and distorted form into a religio-political system which eventually became known as the Christian Church;
- 4 That as this was done, no effort was spared to root out and destroy the traces of the action;
- 5 That at the same time, along with efforts to stem the tide as far as possible, a parallel movement was set on foot to preserve and protect the ancient truths, until in later times, they would again become known for the benefit of all men; and
- 6 That they *were* so preserved, partly in places inaccessible to us now, and partly in the fragments of ancient literature which had been saved and had survived, and which are being gradually rediscovered today and reinterpreted by scholars all over the world.

If this is not a definite literary plan, what is it? Mme. Blavatsky conclusively proved that *the record was there*, and explained what that record was, at least partially so. Can anyone conceive a better *plan* for this sort of work than just that, to strike again the keynote of man’s forgotten heritage, and throw down the gauntlet to those who appropriated it for their own personal benefit and power?



Stirring up man's latent potentialities, "Isis" dilates the most exalted aspirations of Spirit, expands man's consciousness and, by providing a sound basis for elevated morality and tenderness, it kindles the flame of brotherly love and sympathy with every living creature — whether human or animal — for none of us live for ourselves, we all live in and for each other.

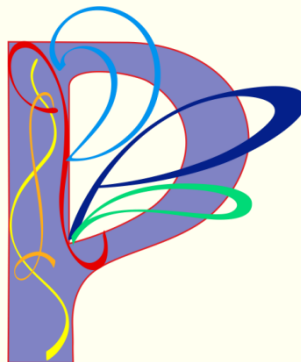
Consider also the spiritual message which forms the backdrop of the work as a whole. To quote Col. Olcott's words:

"None of us live for ourselves,¹ we all live for humanity." This was the spirit of all my instructions, this is the idea inculcated throughout *Isis Unveiled*. Let the literary faults of that book be what they may; let its author be charged with plagiarism or not; the sum and substance of its argument is that man is of a complex nature, animal at one extreme, divine at the other; and that the only real and perfect existence, the only one that is free from illusions, pain and sorrow, because [61] in it, their cause — Ignorance — does not exist, is that of the spirit, the Highest Self. The book incites to pure and high living, to expansion of mind and universality of tenderness and sympathy; it shows there is a Path upwards, and that it is accessible to the wise who are brave; it traces all modern knowledge and speculation to archaic sources; and, affirming the past and present existence of Adepts and of occult science, affords us a stimulus to work and an ideal to work up to.²

Against the array of facts and the vast background of universal tradition, no hostile criticism and no puny fault-finding on the part of narrow minds can ever prevail, or throw the slightest slur upon a work from the pages of which breathe unquestioned authority and unequivocal challenge.

BORIS DE ZIRKOFF

Compiler and Editor of H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings



¹ [Romans xiv, 7; KJV]

² *Old Diary Leaves, op. cit.*, I, p. 294.

Acknowledgements.

The Editor wishes to express his gratitude to all those who have helped in the preparation of this edition of *Isis Unveiled*, especially the following friends and associates:

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- Dara R. Eklund, whose knowledge of Library Science and procedure helped very considerably in tracing many obscure passages and references throughout the work. [62]
- Clarence Q. Wesner, now deceased, whose thorough familiarity with the writings of the Church Fathers and the early history of Christianity helped to trace and check a large number of quotations, and to clarify various points of uncertainty.
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- Geoffrey A. Barborka, who checked a number of Sanskrit and Tibetan terms and offered valuable suggestions in regard to the editorial material.
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Other friends, from time to time, have contributed in various ways to the success of this literary work. Their assistance has been greatly valued and is hereby acknowledged.



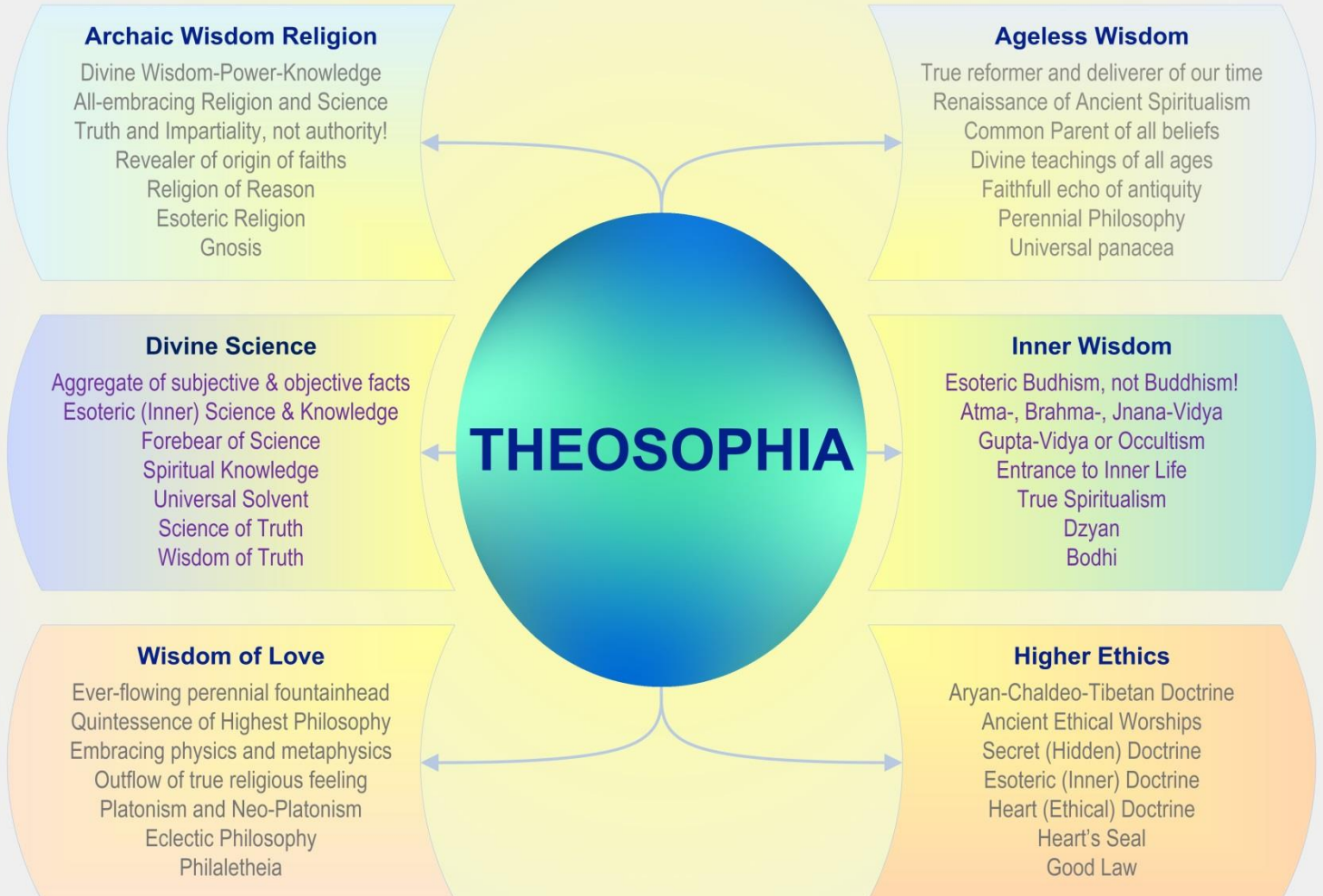
Theosophia: Fountain, Perspectives, Practice (Diagram).

From our Theosophy and Theosophists Series, overleaf.

Semi-Exoteric Constitution of Man (Table).

From the “Constitution of Man – Overview.” Full text in our Constitution of Man Series, on page 74. — ED. PHIL.

Irrigated by Compassion and Charity Immortal, there is a constant outpouring of Spiritual Knowledge, Love, and Guidance for the Great Orphan. It emanates from the Highest Noëtic Realms of the Universe, from Regents of Rounds and Races, Higher and Lower Avatars, Gautama Buddha and his Incarnations, Rishis and Mahatmas.



Practical Theosophia is far more important than Esoteric Knowledge.

BEHOLD THE TRUTH BEFORE YOU: A CLEAN LIFE, AN OPEN MIND, A PURE HEART, AN EAGER INTELLECT, AN UNVEILED SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION, A BROTHERLINESS FOR ONE'S CO-DISCIPLE, A READINESS TO GIVE AND RECEIVE ADVICE AND INSTRUCTION, A LOYAL SENSE OF DUTY TO THE TEACHER, A WILLING OBEDIENCE TO THE BEHESTS OF TRUTH, ONCE WE HAVE PLACED OUR CONFIDENCE IN, AND BELIEVE THAT TEACHER TO BE IN POSSESSION OF IT; A COURAGEOUS ENDURANCE OF PERSONAL INJUSTICE, A BRAVE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, A VALIANT DEFENCE OF THOSE WHO ARE UNJUSTLY ATTACKED, AND A CONSTANT EYE TO THE IDEAL OF HUMAN PROGRESSION AND PERFECTION WHICH THE SECRET SCIENCE (GUPTA-VIDYĀ) DEPICTS — THESE ARE THE GOLDEN STAIRS UP THE STEPS OF WHICH THE LEARNER MAY CLIMB TO THE TEMPLE OF DIVINE WISDOM.

Blavatsky Collected Writings XII, (E.S. INTRODUCTION) p. 503; [quoting from a Master of Wisdom's Letter.]



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Semi-Exoteric Constitution of the Microcosm or Man, Citizen of the Universe and Telesphoros.

Immortal Higher Triad, the Divine Self

- True individuality, the Sutratman of the Upanishads.
- The Imperishable Monas, i.e., Atman–Buddhi–Manas, permeated by the One Universal Life, or Breath.
- Spiritual Self dying (**Death 4**), so that Its Ideation can live.

Mortal Lower Tetrad, overshadowed by the Divine Self

- False individuality of the common man, who identifies with the personal and the transient.
- Other ephemeral aspects of the quaternary personality.
- The heart, being the organ of Spiritual Consciousness, represents the Higher Triad. The liver and spleen represent the quaternary, taken as a whole.

Macrocosmic planes	ADI-BUDDHA	MAHA-BUDDHI	MAHAT, COSMIC INTELLIGENCE		FOHAT	JIVA	ASTRAL	PRAKRITI
Microcosmic planes	Atman	Buddhi	Manas or Dual Mind		Kama (Manas)	(Kama) Prana	Linga-Sharira	Sthula-Sharira
Consciousness' virtual foci	Universal Self	Spiritual Ego	Higher Ego	Lower Ego	Animal Desires	Life Force	Astral Body	Visible Body
Auric Egg (Atmic Aura)	Principle ②: Auric Egg, monadic envelope and amnion of the physical man. Auric Egg and Prana are essentially the same.							
Auric Egg dynamics	Periphery of the Auric Egg and our point of communication with Universal Planes.		The two are bridged by Antahkarana. When Ahamkara (selfish Self) is strong, Antahkarana is said to be “drunk or insane.”		Vital Animal, Living Soul, Nephesh.		Transitory emanation of the Auric Egg.	
Three? Five? Seven?	Higher Principles			Middle Principle		Lower Aspects		
	Potency of the spiritual man: divine, higher manas-mind, nous or noetic intelligence, the reincarnating ego.			Potential of the worldly man: animal, astral, lower mind or soul; psyche-périsprit.		Physical man is the musical instrument; his Higher Ego, the performing artist.		
Pauline ternary	Spirit (Plato's λόγον, ideal life or ζωή)		Soul (Plato's ἄλογον)		(Physical life or βίος)		Body	
Platonic terms	Agathon	Nous	Phren	Thymos		Eidolon	Soma	
Principles and aspects	Principle ①, Universal, not individual. I-ness	Principle ③ Spiritual Soul. I am, That I am	Principle ④ Enduring Individuality.	Aspect ③ I am I	Permeates every principle & aspect.	Aspect ① vitalising aspects ③ and ②.	Aspect ②	Medium of every principle & aspect.
Faculties, fields, and forte	The Will to Be, and to Become. The Amaranthine Dream.	Spiritual intelligence, discrimination, intuition by inner sight.	Abstract, impersonal, noble thoughts, and ideals.	Concrete, personal, selfish thoughts, and “realistic” interests.	Worldly desires, lust (επιθυμία), propensities, and proclivities.	Individualised breath of the One Life, electromagnetic vitality.	Protean model of the gross physical body; and its subtle counterpart.	Gross, bulky, living substance, the physical body.
Radiation and emanations	Radiation of the Ineffable One Pure Spirit. (First Logos)	Emanation of Alaya (Anima Mundi), Ray and Vehicle of Atman.	First emanation of Pradhana, or unevolved cause.	Reflection or shadow of Buddhi plus Higher Manas, having potentialities of both.	Closely linked with Lower Manas, the Green-Red animal monster in us.	Closely linked with Kama-Manas. Prana has no number, as it pervades every other principle.	Closely linked with Kama-Prana, and inseparable from it.	
Other terms and allegories	A Ray of Paramatman (Uncreated Ray) Jivatman.	Sophia-Wisdom, Beautiful Helena, Chase Penelope.	Manasaputras, Breaths or Principles.				Vehicle (Vahan) of Prana, Astral, Etheric Double.	
Metaphorical gender	Sexless	Female	Sexless	Male	Male	Sexless	Male	Male
Apparitions to distant places	Adepts can project consciously, and dying persons unconsciously, an illusory form or phantom of their personality to any distant location — while their physical body is left “entranced.” This double is termed Mayavi-Rupa.							
Deaths and post-mortem states	After Death 2 the purified mind enters Devachan, a long period of personal “bliss during the interim between two incarnations, as a reward for all the unmerited suffering he has endured” and where unfulfilled aspirations are enacted subjectively.			Death 2. Kama-manas becomes a distinct body of ante-mortem desires (Kama-Rupa) and remains in “desire world” (Kama-Loka) until its final dissipation. Attempts to delay death, e.g., by necromancy, is Black Magic.		Eventually, Kama-Prana is released and re-becomes Jiva.	Death 3. Clinging to the physical body, it dissipates only with the disappearance of its last atom.	Death 1. Attempts to preserve death, e.g., by taxidermy, is Black Magic.

Part 2.

Preface to "Isis Unveiled."

By Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.

Founder and leading exponent of the modern Theosophical Movement, great noetic radiance of our epoch, acclaimed philosopher and mystic, indefatigable servant of humanity.

From Isis Unveiled, Vol. I, pp. v-viii.

The work now submitted to public judgment is the fruit of a somewhat intimate acquaintance with Eastern adepts and study of their science. It is offered to such as are willing to accept truth wherever it may be found, and to defend it, even looking popular prejudice straight in the face. It is an attempt to aid the student to detect the vital principles which underlie the philosophical systems of old.

The book is written in all sincerity. It is meant to do even justice and to speak the truth alike without malice or prejudice. But it shows neither mercy for enthroned error, nor reverence for usurped authority. It demands for a spoliated past, that credit for its achievements which has been too long withheld. It calls for a restitution of borrowed robes, and the vindication of calumniated but glorious reputations. Toward no form of worship, no religious faith, no scientific hypothesis has its criticism been directed in any other spirit. Men and parties, sects and schools are but the mere ephemera of the world's day. TRUTH, high-seated upon its rock of adamant, is alone eternal and supreme.

We believe in no Magic which transcends the scope and capacity of the human mind, nor in "miracle" whether divine or diabolical, if such imply a transgression of the laws of nature instituted from all eternity. Nevertheless, we accept the saying of the gifted author of *Festus*¹ that the human heart has not yet fully uttered itself, and that we have never attained or even understood the extent of its powers. Is it too much to believe that man should be developing new sensibilities and a closer relation with nature? The logic of evolution must teach as much, if carried to its legitimate conclusions. If, somewhere, in the line of ascent from vegetable or ascidian to the noblest man a soul was evolved, gifted with intellectual qualities, it cannot be unreasonable to infer and believe that a faculty of perception is also growing in man, enabling him to descry facts and truths even beyond our ordinary ken. Yet we do not hesitate to accept the assertion of Biffé, that: →

¹ [Philip James Bailey, 1816–1902]

. . . the essential is forever the same. Whether we cut away the marble inward that hides the statue in the [vi] block, or pile stone upon stone outward till the temple is completed, our NEW result is only an *old idea*. The latest of all the eternities will find its destined other half-soul in the earliest.

When, years ago, we first travelled over the East, exploring the penetralia of its deserted sanctuaries, two saddening and ever-recurring questions oppressed our thoughts: *Where, WHO, WHAT is GOD? Who ever saw the IMMORTAL SPIRIT of man, so as to be able to assure himself of man's immortality?*

The perennial outflow of Eastern Philosophy has room for no other faith than absolute trust and reliance in the omnipotence of Man's Divine Self.

It was while most anxious to solve these perplexing problems that we came into contact with certain men, endowed with such mysterious powers and such profound knowledge that we may truly designate them as the sages of the Orient. To their instructions we lent a ready ear. They showed us that by combining science with religion, the existence of God and immortality of man's spirit may be demonstrated like a problem of Euclid. For the first time we received the assurance that the Oriental philosophy has room for no other faith than an absolute and immovable faith in the omnipotence of man's own immortal self. We were taught that this omnipotence comes from the kinship of man's spirit with the Universal Soul — God! The latter, they said, can never be demonstrated but by the former. Man-spirit proves God-spirit, as the one drop of water proves a source from which it must have come. Tell one who had never seen water, that there is an ocean of water, and he must accept it on faith or reject it altogether. But let one drop fall upon his hand, and he then has the fact from which all the rest may be inferred. After that he could by degrees understand that a boundless and fathomless ocean of water existed. Blind faith would no longer be necessary; he would have supplanted it with KNOWLEDGE. When one sees mortal man displaying tremendous capabilities, controlling the forces of nature and opening up to view the world of spirit, the reflective mind is overwhelmed with the conviction that if one man's spiritual *Ego* can do this much, the capabilities of the FATHER SPIRIT must be relatively as much vaster as the whole ocean surpasses the single drop in volume and potency. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*,¹ prove the soul of man by its wondrous powers — you have proved God!

"Isis Unveiled" shows that Mysteries are no mystery,² save the idle speculations of the twittering mystery-mongers.

In our studies, mysteries were shown to be no mysteries. Names and places that to the Western mind have only a significance derived from Eastern fable, were shown to be realities. Reverently we stepped in spirit within the temple of Isis, to lift aside the veil of "the one that is and was and shall be" at Saïs; to look through the rent curtain of the Sanctum Sanctorum at Jerusalem; and even to interrogate within the crypts

¹ [*i.e.*, nothing comes from nothing.]

² [Consult "Mysteries are Sacred Truths, hidden from the sight of the profane," in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. When the veil of Isis is finally lifted, the Spirit of Truth (Christos) will inspire audibly the pure in heart (Theopneusty), paving the Royal Road to Divine Magic (Theurgy). — ED. PHIL.]

which once existed beneath the sacred edifice, the mysterious Bath-Kōl. The *Filia Vocis* — the daughter of the divine voice — [viii] responded from the mercy-seat within the veil,¹ and science, theology, every human hypothesis and conception born of imperfect knowledge, lost forever their authoritative character in our sight. The one-living God had spoken through his oracle — man, and we were satisfied. Such knowledge is priceless; and it has been hidden only from those who overlooked it, derided it, or denied its existence.

The drift of modern thought is palpably in the direction of liberalism in religion, and is poised to seize from theology and sceptical science the lawful domains of cosmogonical doctrine and metaphysical philosophy.

The far-right conservatives must surrender their despotic authority over the public conscience, which they have for so long enjoyed with impunity, by enforcing their lofty infallibility under the penalty of opprobrium.

From such as these we apprehend criticism, censure, and perhaps hostility, although the obstacles in our way neither spring from the validity of proof, the authenticated facts of history, nor the lack of common sense among the public whom we address. The drift of modern thought is palpably in the direction of liberalism in religion as well as science. Each day brings the reactionists nearer to the point where they must surrender the despotic authority over the public conscience, which they have so long enjoyed and exercised. When the Pope can go to the extreme of fulminating anathemas² against all who maintain the liberty of the Press and of speech, or who insist that in the conflict of laws, civil and ecclesiastical the civil law should prevail, or that any method of instruction solely secular, may be approved;³ and Mr. Tyndall, as the mouth-piece of nineteenth century science, says:

. . . the impregnable position of science may be stated in a few words: we claim, and we shall wrest from theology, the entire domain of cosmological theory . . .⁴

the end is not difficult to foresee.



¹ Lightfoot assures us that this voice, which had been used in times past for a testimony from heaven, "was indeed performed by magic art" (*Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ*, Vol. II, p. 82; Oxford 1859). This latter term is used as a supercilious expression, just because it was and is still misunderstood. It is the object of this work to correct the erroneous opinions concerning "magic art."

² [Consult "Papal dispensation for murder and mayhem," in our Black versus White Magic Series, and "Blavatsky on a Heavy <Papal> Curse," in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ Encyclical of 1864.

⁴ Fragments of Science, "Belfast Address," 1874.

Faith is the key of Christendom, and when that key is broken and lorn, verily Christendom is lorn, and stands vain and without fruit.¹

Long centuries of ecclesiastical oppression, inquisition, and papal dispensation for murder and mayhem have not quite congealed the life-blood of men into crystals around a blind spot of delusion overpowering the intellect.

Centuries of subjection have not quite congealed the life-blood of men into crystals around the nucleus of blind faith; and the nineteenth is witnessing the struggles of the giant as he shakes off the Lilliputian cordage and rises to his feet. Even the Protestant communion of England and America, now engaged in the revision of the text of its *Oracles*, will be compelled to show the origin and merits of the text itself. The day of domineering over men with dogmas has reached its gloaming.

The Wisdom-Religion of Theosophy is the once Universal Religion of Reason, and Mother-parent of all religions, harmonizing the divine with the human in man, and unifying the great diversity of beliefs, creeds, and opinions.²

Our work, then is a plea for the recognition of the Hermetic philosophy, the anciently universal Wisdom-Religion, as the only possible key to the Absolute in science and theology. To show that we do not at all conceal from ourselves the gravity of our undertaking, we may say in advance that it would not be strange if the following classes should array themselves against us: [viii]

The enemies of Truth, and those for whom the price of a paragraph is more than the value of sincerity, are now arraigned for all to see.

- The Christians, who will see that we question the evidences of the genuineness of their faith.
- The Scientists, who will find their pretensions placed in the same bundle with those of the Roman Catholic Church for infallibility and, in certain particulars, the sages and philosophers of the ancient world classed higher than they.
- Pseudo-Scientists will, of course, denounce us furiously.
- Broad Churchmen and Freethinkers will find that we do not accept what they do, but demand the recognition of the whole truth.
- Men of letters and various *authorities*, who hide their real belief in deference to popular prejudices.
- The mercenaries and parasites of the Press, who prostitute its more than royal power, and dishonour a noble profession, will find it easy to mock at things too

¹ [Geoffrey Chaucer, 1343–1400, *The Canterbury Tales*, “The Parson’s Tale,” Fragment X, ¶ 82. And the penalty for lacking faith is clearly stated in *St. Mark’s Gospel*, xvi, 16; KJV: “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” — *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE ESOTERIC CHARACTER OF THE GOSPELS – III) VIII pp. 205-6.]

² [Refer to “Theosophia - Fountain, Perspectives, Practice” diagram, from our Theosophy and Theosophists Series, on page 73 of this study. — ED. PHIL.]

wonderful for them to understand; for to them the price of a paragraph is more than the value of sincerity. From many will come honest criticism; from many — cant.¹ But we look to the future.

The contest now going on between the party of public conscience and the party of reaction, has already developed a healthier tone of thought. It will hardly fail to result ultimately in the overthrow of error and the triumph of Truth. We repeat again — we are labouring for the brighter morrow.

And yet, when we consider the bitter opposition that we are called upon to face, who is better entitled than we upon entering the arena to write upon our shield the hail of the Roman gladiator to Cæsar: MORITURI TE SALUTANT!²

[H.P. BLAVATSKY]

New York, September 1877.



¹ [Singing in a whining way, from the Latin *cantare*, to sing. Cant was at first a beggar's whine, hence hypocritical and sanctimonious talk, typically of a moral, religious, or political nature. Cf. W.W. Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary of English*, 1835-1912. — ED. PHIL.]

² [*Avē Imperātor, moritūri tē salūtant, i.e.*, Hail Emperor, those who are about to die salute you. Painting by Léon Gérôme (1859), Yale University Art Gallery.]

Appendix. The vacillations and volte-face of Dr. G. Bloede.

Dr. Bloede, an ardent Spiritualist, warned people against joining the newly-formed Theosophical Society, and accused Madame Blavatsky of being the paid tool of the Jesuits to pull down Spiritualism.

[In Mme. Blavatsky's *Scrapbook*, Vol. I, p. 67, there is a cutting from the *Spiritual Scientist* of October 21st, 1875, which deals with remarks made by a certain Dr. G. Bloede, who went to the trouble of warning people against the newly-formed Theosophical Society, and the work of Mrs. Emma Hardinge-Britten, entitled *Art Magic*, as enemies of Spiritualism. Mme. Blavatsky appended in pen and ink the following side-remark:]

And now I am accused by Dr. Bloede, an ardent Spiritualist, of being the *paid tool of the Jesuits* to pull down *Spiritualism!!!*¹



¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings* (THE SCIENCE OF MAGIC) I, p. 143.

He was then turned into a cat by Mr. Home,¹ his mediumistic monkey, to draw the chestnuts for him out of the fire.

[In Mme. Blavatsky's *Scrapbook*, Vol. I, p. 124, there is a cutting from the Boston *Sunday Herald* of March 1876. It is a letter from Dr. G. Bloede to the Editor of the paper. Under the subtitle of "Home's Doubts of the Mediumship of Mme. Blavatsky," the writer quotes from Col. Olcott's *People from the Other World*, in which he speaks of Mme. Blavatsky as

. . . one of the most remarkable mediums in the world, [but adds that] at the same time her mediumship is totally different from that of any person I ever met, for, instead of being controlled by spirits to do their will, it is she who seems to control them to do her bidding.

Dr. Bloede comments on this by saying:

If we find that Mr. Home's opinion of that eminent foreigner essentially differs from that of Col. Olcott, in regard to her supposed mediumship as well as otherwise, we must not disregard the fact that he knew her as early as 1858.

To this Mme. Blavatsky appended the following remarks in pen and ink:]

Home doubting my mediumship proved that he is a genuine and even a reliable medium. H.P. Blavatsky was NEVER a medium except, perhaps, in her earliest youth.

¹ [Biographical notes:

① From *Wikipedia*.

Daniel Dunglas Home, 1833–1886, Scottish physical medium with the reported ability to levitate to a variety of heights, to speak with the dead, and to produce rappings and knocks in houses at will. His biographer Peter Lamont says that he was one of the most famous men of his era. Harry Houdini described him as "one of the most conspicuous and lauded of his type and generation" and "the forerunner of the mediums, whose forte is fleecing by presuming on the credulity of the public." Home conducted hundreds of séances, which were attended by many eminent Victorians. There have been eyewitness accounts by séance sitters describing conjuring methods and fraud that Home may have employed.

② From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (BIBLIOGRAPHY) I p. 469, by Boris de Zirkoff.

Daniel Dunglas Home, Scottish Spiritualistic medium born near Edinburgh, March 20th, 1833. When nine years old, he was taken by aunt to the USA, converted to Spiritualism in 1850, and for the next five years gave *séances* in New York and elsewhere; sent to Europe, in 1855, by friends who provided the means for it; his *séances* in Europe aroused very considerable interest and were attended by a great many notables. Home subsisted until 1858 on the bounty of his friends. In August 1858, he married Alexandrine (Sasha) de Kroll and settled in Russia with wealthy relatives. His wife, however, died in 1862 and Home's finances became again unsettled. In 1866 he was adopted by a wealthy widow, Mrs. Lyon, who provided him with money; she got tired of him after a while and sued him for the recovery of her "gifts." The Court gave judgment in her favour. In 1870-72, Home had a series of sittings with Sir Wm. Crookes. He married in 1871 another Russian woman of means, and spent a number of years on the European continent. He died at Paris, June 2nd, 1886 after a long and painful illness. As a medium, he was connected with all known forms of manifestation, and was never detected in any fraud. His phenomena are the best attested in the history of Spiritualism. His two works are: *Incidents in My Life*. Series 1 & 2. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1863-72. 8vo.; 2nd ed., Series 1. London 1864. 8vo.; 5th ed., with Introduction by Judge Edmonds. Series 1. New York 1864. 8vo. — *Light and Shadows of Spiritualism*. London & New York: G.W. Carleton & Co., 1877. 483pp (pp. 301-28 concerning H.S. Olcott); 2nd ed. London, 1878.

In spite of some statements to the contrary, Mme. Blavatsky did not know Home personally and never met him. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VI, pp. 73 & 289-90; also *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 37, where it says that ". . . Home, the medium . . . He is the bitterest and most cruel enemy O. and Mad. B. have, though he has never met either of them . . ."

For further information about Home, consult the following works: — Madame D. Home. *D.D. Home. His Life and Mission*. London: Trübner & Co., 1888. 8vo. viii, 428. Also, Dutton & Co., 1921. — *The Gift of D.D. Home*, by the same author. London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1890. 8 vo. viii, 388. — Horace Wyndham, *Mr. Sludge, The Medium*. London 1937. xii, 307. — Jean Burton, *Heyday of a Wizard*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944.]

[The next paragraph of the same article deals with the burying of Russian dignitaries (in this case Mme. Blavatsky's father) with their decorations, Dr. Bloede quoting Col. Olcott again on this subject. He also quotes D.D. Home who provides the testimony that no such custom exists in Russia. The decorations are carried as far as the tomb, and are later returned to the Government. At this point, Mme. Blavatsky added the following in pen and ink:]

And who ever thought or said they were! It is *not* a decoration but a *buckle*, you Spiritualistic fool. It ought to be remembered also, that Mr. D.D. Home who was twice tried for swindling (Mrs. Lyon once) never — knew or even saw me in his whole life, but, has certainly gathered most carefully the dirtiest gossip possible about Nathalie *Blavatsky*. Home is a liar and poor Dr. Bloede was turned into a cat by this mediomistic monkey to draw the chestnuts for him out of the fire, as the *Sp. Scientist* says.



[In connection with another cutting on the subject of D.D Home and his relation to Spiritualism, Mme. Blavatsky makes the following brief remark in her *Scrapbook*:]

. . . and Mr. Home is an irresponsible medium.¹



[In Mme. Blavatsky's *Scrapbook*, Vol. IV, p. 79, there is a cutting from the *Banner of Light* of September 8th, 1877. It is a very appreciative review by Dr. G. Bloede of some advance sheets of *Isis Unveiled*. Mme. Blavatsky wrote at the bottom of the first column:]

This is the same Dr. Bloede who a year before abused us & Theosophy & then made my acquaintance, begged my pardon & joined us, and ever remained a friend.



¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings* (D.D. HOME AND H.P. BLAVATSKY) I, pp. 203-4.

Once a fierce antagonist to me, says Madame Blavatsky, Dr. Bloede made all the amends befitting a scholar and a gentleman, and now he does me the honour to call me friend.

[First published in the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*. Chicago, Vol. XXIV, July 6th, 1878, p. 2. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (PARTING WORDS FROM MADAME BLAVATSKY) I pp. 393-95.]

Dear Sir,

So far, as I can at present foresee, this will be the last time I shall ask you to print anything over my — to many Spiritualists — loathed signature, as I intend to start for India very soon. But I have once more to correct inaccurate statements. If I had had my choice, I would have preferred almost any other person than my very esteemed friend, Dr. Bloede, to have last words with. Once an antagonist — a bitter and unjust one to me, as he himself admits — he has since made all the amends I could have asked of a scholar and a gentleman, and now, as all who read your valuable paper see, he does me the honour to call me friend. Honest in intent he always is, I am sure, but still a little prejudiced. Who of us but is [not] so, more or less? Duty, therefore, compels me to correct the erroneous impression which his letter on “Secret Societies” (*Journal* of June 15th) is calculated to give about the Theosophical Society. How many “Fellows” we have, how the society is flourishing, what are its operations or how conducted, no one knows or can know, save the presidents of its various branches and their secretaries. Therefore, Dr. G. Bloede, in saying that it has “failed in America, and will fail in Europe,” speaks of that of which neither he nor any other outsider has knowledge. If the Society’s only object were the study of the phenomena called Spiritual, his strictures would be perfectly warranted; for it is not *secrecy* but *privacy* and exclusiveness that are demanded in the management of circles and mediums. It would have been absurd to make [a] secret society expressly for that purpose. At its beginning the Theosophical Society was started for that sole study, and therefore, was, as you all know, open to any respectable person, who wished to join it. We discussed “Spiritual” topics freely, and were willing to impart to the public the results of all our experiments, and what [394] ever some of us might have learned of the subject in the course of long studies. How our views and philosophy were received — no need to recall the old story again. The storm has hardly subsided; and the total of billingsgate¹ poured upon our devoted heads is preserved in three gigantic scrapbooks whose contents I mean to immortalize some day. When, through the writing and noble efforts of the *Journal* and other spiritual papers, the secret of these varied and vexing phenomena indiscriminately called spiritual will be snatched at last, when the faithful of the Orthodox church of Spiritualism will be forced to give up — partially at least — their many bigoted and preconceived notions, then the time will have come again for Theosophists to claim a hearing. Till then, its members retire from the arena of discussion and devote their whole leisure to the fulfilment of other and more important objects of the Society.

¹ [Alluding to the infamously coarse language of the fishmongers of the riverside Billingsgate Fish Market in 19th century London, the largest fish market in the world at that time. Billingsgate is now a by-word for crude or vulgar language. One of its earliest uses can be seen in a 1577 chronicle by Raphael Holinshed, where the writer makes reference to the foul tongues of Billingsgate oyster-wives. — ED. PHIL.]

You perceive, then, that it is only when experience showed the necessity for its work to be enlarged, and its objects became various, that the T.S.¹ thought fit to protect itself by secrecy. Since then, none but perjured witnesses, and we know of none, can have told about what we were doing, except as permitted by official sanction and announced from time to time. One of such objects of our society, we are willing to publicly announce.

Alas, one of our most esteemed and valued members was ensnared by the evil fluid of Jesuits.

It is universally known that this most important object is to antagonize Christianity and especially Jesuitism. One of our most esteemed and valued members — once an ardent Spiritualist, but who must for the present be nameless — has but recently fallen a victim to the snares of this hateful body. The nefarious designs of Jesuitism are plotted in secret and carried out through secret agencies. What more reasonable and lawful, therefore, than that those who wish to fight it should keep their own secret, likewise, as to their agencies and plans? We have among us persons in high positions — political, military, financial and social — who regard Christianity as the greatest evil to humanity and are willing to help pull it down. But for them to be able to do much and well, they must do it anonymously. The church — “Triple-headed Snake,”² as a well-known writer calls it — can no longer burn [395] its enemies, but it can blast their social influence; can no longer roast their bodies, but can ruin their fortunes. We have no right to give our enemy, the Church, the names of our “Fellows” who are not ripe for martyrdom, and so we keep them secret. If we have an agent to send to India, or to Japan, or China, or any other heathen country, to do something or confer with somebody in connection with the Society’s general plans against missionaries, it would be foolish, nay, criminal, to expose our agent to imprisonment under some malicious pretext, if not death, and even the latter is possible in the far-away East, and our scheme is liable to miscarry by announcing it to the dishonourable company of Jesus.

Dr. Bloede erred considerably in maintaining that the Theosophical Society was a “failure.”

So, Sir, to sum up in a word, Dr. Bloede has made a great mistake in supposing the Theosophical Society a “failure” in this or any other country. When the society counted three years ago its members by the dozens, it now counts them by the hundreds and thousands. And so far from its threatening in any respect the stability of society, or the advancement of spiritual knowledge, the Theosophical Institution which now bears the name of the “Theosophical Society of the Ārya Samāj of India,” being regularly chartered by and affiliated with that great body in the land of the Āryas, will be found some day by the Spiritualists, and all others who claim the right of thinking for themselves, to have been the true friend of intellectual and spiritual liberty — if not in America, at least in France and other countries, where an infernal priesthood thrusts innocent Spiritualists into prison by the help of a subservient judiciary and the use of perjured testimony. Its name will be respected as a pioneer of

¹ [Theosophical Society]

² [Cf. the triple-headed snake of the *Rig-Veda* with seven tails that split the rocks in which the dæmons had hidden the cows of heaven. — ED. PHIL.]

free thought and an uncompromising enemy of priestly and monkish fraud and despotism.

H.P. BLAVATSKY

New York, June 17th, 1878.



Suggested reading for students.



- BLAVATSKY ABOUT TO UNVEIL ISIS
- BLAVATSKY DEFENDS ISIS UNVEILED
- PAGES FROM ISIS UNVEILED
— *in our Blavatsky Speaks Series.*
- ISIS UNVEILED IS THE MAJESTY OF TRUTH UNVEILED
— *in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series.*



From our Theosophy and Theosophists Series.

- A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO LORD LYTTON
- A LAY CHELA ON OCCULT STUDY
- A LAY CHELA ON THE SECRET DOCTRINE
- A THEOSOPHICAL LOVE FEAST IN FRANCE
- A THIRSTY HORSE-LEECH PLEADING ADMISSION TO THE T.S.
- ALETHEIA IS OUR GOD AND DOGMA
- ANCIENT ETHICAL WORSHIPS
- ARCHAIC THEOSOPHY IS PRE-BUDDHIST WISDOM-RELIGION
- BLAVATSKY DEFENDS BLAVATSKY
- BLAVATSKY DEFENDS THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY
- BLAVATSKY ON ANNA KINGSFORD

THEOSOPHY AND THEOSOPHISTS SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- BLAVATSKY ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOUL AND SPIRIT
- BLAVATSKY ON THE ORIGIN AND SOURCE OF THE SECRET DOCTRINE
- BLAVATSKY ON THE THEOSOPHY OF DR. N.I. PIROGOV
- BLAVATSKY ON THE TRAVELLING TRUTHSEEKER
- BLAVATSKY ON THE VEILED PHRASEOLOGY OF THE PURANAS
- BLAVATSKY REFUTES ARGUMENTS AGAINST THEOSOPHY
- BLAVATSKY REFUTES THE ASSERTIONS OF A FRENCH THEOSOPHIST
- BLAVATSKY'S OPEN LETTER TO FELLOW THEOSOPHISTS
- BUCK ON THE NATURE AND AIM OF THEOSOPHY
- COLD METAPHYSICS VERSUS DIVINE WISDOM
- CONDUCT AND DUTIES OF A TRUE THEOSOPHIST
- CORY'S ANCIENT FRAGMENTS (1832)
- COSMOPOLITANISM IS FAR HOLIER AND NOBLER THAN GRASPING GREEDINESS CLOAKED IN PATRIOTISM
- DE ZIRKOFF ON CHARLES JOHNSTON
- DE ZIRKOFF ON EDWARD DOUGLAS FAWCETT
- DE ZIRKOFF ON FRANZ HARTMANN
- DE ZIRKOFF ON GERALD MASSEY
- DE ZIRKOFF ON HP BLAVATSKY COLLECTED WRITINGS
- DE ZIRKOFF ON SUBBA ROW
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THE COUNTESS OF CAITHNESS
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THE DREAM THAT NEVER DIES
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THE SECRET DOCTRINE
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THE SIBYLLINE ORACLES
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THE THIRD VOLUME OF THE SECRET DOCTRINE
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THREE EMINENT THEOSOPHISTS
- DE ZIRKOFF ON WILHELM HÜBBE-SCHLEIDEN
- DE ZIRKOFF RECALLS HIS FORMATIVE YEARS IN RUSSIA
- EARLY THEOSOPHICAL DOCTRINES EXPOUNDED BY H.P. BLAVATSKY
- EASTERN LIGHT SHINES ON WESTERN MINDS
- EASTERN THEOSOPHY IS NEITHER A CREED, NOR A RELIGIOUS BODY
- ESOTERIC BUDDHISM HAS RENDERED PRECIOUS SERVICE BY POPULARIZING, IN ESOTERIC FORM, ESOTERIC TRUTHS.
- ESSENTIAL THEOSOPHICAL DOCTRINES

THEOSOPHY AND THEOSOPHISTS SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- GLIMPSES OF THE FATHOMLESS MYSTERIES OF ZOROASTER
- HARTMANN ON HOW TO ENTER THE PATH TO INFINITE LIFE
- HARTMANN ON THE HARMONICAL SOCIETY
- HOW THEOSOPHY REKINDLED TRUE BROTHERHOOD IN INDIA
- HUMANITY SEEMS TO PROGRESS BY INVENTING ONE DISCOVERY AFTER THE OTHER
- IMPORT AND POTENCY OF NUMBERS AS SYMBOLS
- IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT
- JUDGE AND DE ZIRKOFF ON GEORGE MEAD
- JUDGE ON THE HEART DOCTRINE
- JUDGE ON THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT
- JUDGE ON THE TRUE THEOSOPHIST'S PATH
- JUDGE ON THEOSOPHICAL STUDY AND WORK
- KEYS TO THE MYSTERY LANGUAGE
- LET THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY PERISH, THAN FORSAKE THE CAUSE OF TRUTH
- MEDITATION ALONE WILL NOT LEAD TO THEOSOPHIC DEVELOPMENT
- MYSTERIES ARE SACRED TRUTHS
- MYSTERY IS NOT UNREVEALED KNOWLEDGE
- NO THEOSOPHICAL JOURNAL CAN SATISFY ALL CREEDS AND BELIEFS
- OCCULT TRUTH IS NATURE WITHOUT THE ILLUSORY VEIL OF THE SENSES
- OUR GOD IS HUMANITY AND OUR CULT THE LOVE OF OUR FELLOW-MAN
- OUR ONLY DELIVERER AND SAVIOUR
- PLEDGED STUDENTS' PRESCRIBED GUIDE FOR CONDUCT
- PREREQUISITES TO MEMBERSHIP OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
- PRESIDENTIAL AUTHORITARIANISM IS AN AFFRONT TO BROTHERHOOD
- SPURNED THE SUBSTANCE AND CLUTCHED THE SHADOW
- STUDENTS HAVE A CHOICE OF TWO PATHS
- SUBBA ROW DEFENDS ESOTERIC BUDDHISM
- SUBBA ROW'S ESOTERIC WRITINGS (1895)
- THAT WHICH IS FALSE CAN ONLY BE KNOWN BY TRUTH
- THE ADYAR THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY BELITTLED THE MASTERS
- THE AIMS AND MISSION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY FULFILLED
- THE BRETHERN OF THE ROSY CROSS NO LONGER EXIST
- THE CROWN JEWELS OF THEOSOPHY (PHOTO ALBUM)

THEOSOPHY AND THEOSOPHISTS SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- THE EMPYREAN PHILOSOPHICAL EXHORTATIONS OF ZOROASTER
- THE POWER OF THE TRINITY OF KOSMOS MANIFESTS THROUGH THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF MAN
- 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
- THEOSOPHIA - FOUNTAIN, PERSPECTIVES, PRACTICE (DRAWING)
- THEOSOPHIA: INNER WISDOM
- THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, THE GREAT MORAL BUT SILENT FORCE
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - ESOTERIC SECTION (LETTERHEAD)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - MISSION AND FUTURE
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - MONOGRAM 1 (LOGOTYPE)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - MONOGRAM 2 (LOGOTYPE)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - OBJECTS AND EARLY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - SEAL 1 (LOGOTYPE)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - SEAL 2 (LOGOTYPE)
- THEOSOPHICAL SYMBOLS (TRUE TYPE FONT)
- THEOSOPHIST IS WHO THEOSOPHY DOES
- THEOSOPHISTS DEFINED ATTITUDINALLY, ETHICALLY, PHILOSOPHICALLY (DRAWING)
- THEOSOPHY AND THEOSOPHISTS
- THEOSOPHY BRINGS THE WISDOM OF LOVE BEFORE THE EYE OF THE SOUL
- THEOSOPHY IS DEEPER MONISM THAN SECULARISM, AND MORE PHILOSOPHICAL
- THEOSOPHY IS RELIGION ITSELF AND SUBLIME CODE OF ETHICS
- THEOSOPHY IS THE PRECIOUS PEARL WITHIN THE SHELL OF EVERY RELIGION
- THEOSOPHY IS THE SCIENCE OF TRUTH AND THE RELIGION OF JUSTICE
- TRIBUTES TO CHARLES SOTHERAN
- TRIBUTES TO DE ROBIGNE MORTIMER BENNETT
- TRIBUTES TO SIR HENRY MORE
- TRIBUTES TO WILLIAM QUAN JUDGE
- TRUE THEOSOPHISTS ARE ALWAYS UNDER THE MASTER'S EYE
- TRUTH IS ALWAYS MIXED WITH ERROR AND HINDERED BY TECHNOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

THEOSOPHY AND THEOSOPHISTS SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- TWO JOURNALS DEVOTED TO THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN
- VERNAL BLOOMS BY WILLIAM QUAN JUDGE
- VISTAS OF VIRTUE AND TRUTH
- WADIA'S RESIGNATION FROM THE TS
- WHAT SORT OF MAN THE REAL PHILOSOPHER SHOULD BE?
- WHEN PURE LOVE IS PERVERTED, HUMANITY QUIVERS
- WHO CAN MEND THE BROKEN SOCIETY?
- WHO CAN READ THE RIDDLE OF THE SERPENT?
- WHO SHOULD BE INVITED TO THEOSOPHICAL MEETINGS?
- WHY A BRAHMIN ABANDONED HIS CASTE
- WHY PAGAN SYMBOLISM IS INDESTRUCTIBLE?

