

The Myth of the "Missing" Third Volume of *The Secret Doctrine*

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In 1897, Annie Besant published what she called the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, which had been announced by H. P. Blavatsky but left unpublished during the author's life. Received opinion at the present time is that what Besant published was not Blavatsky's third volume, but instead something assembled out of various documents left by HPB.

Some examples of the received opinion are as follows:

Volume III of The Secret Doctrine... was published in London in 1897 with a preface written by Annie Besant. It should be understood, however, that this volume is not the third volume contemplated by H.P.B. [Geoffrey A. Barborka, *H. P. Blavatsky, Tibet and Tulku*, 159]

A spurious "Third Volume"... [was] issued in 1897, six years after the death of H. P. Blavatsky. Compiled from miscellaneous papers found among her effects, this volume forms no part of the original SECRET DOCTRINE written by H.P.B. [publishers' preface (1947) to the Theosophy Company's facsimile reprint of the 1888 edition of *The Secret Doctrine*]

The real Volume III... vanished without a trace." [Boris de Zirkoff in *CW* 7: 226fn]

The prospective Volume III... never saw the light. [de Zirkoff in *SD* 1: 679]

It is possible that H.P.B. had in mind an additional [third] volume of *The Secret Doctrine* which was never actually found among her papers. [de Zirkoff in *CW* 14: 1]

In volume 1, Blavatsky had promised a third volume and projected a fourth. That promise was repeated at the end of volume 2... There was some material left over from volume 1 as she had originally conceived it... but relatively little seems to have been actually written down... When Annie Besant tried to find the unpublished material, she was able to locate very little that seemed to belong to what HPB had intended for the continuation of the book. The little which Besant found, she combined with some instructions Blavatsky had written for members of the Esoteric Section... and that material, admittedly a hodgepodge, was published... as the "third volume" of HPB's work. The "third volume" undoubtedly contains some material—that on the lives of

famous occultists—which had been rejected from the first volume of the original work. But it also contained a good deal of material which certainly was never intended to be a part of *The Secret Doctrine*. [John Algeo, *Getting Acquainted with The Secret Doctrine: A Study Course*, 1990 ed., 23–4]

H. N. Stokes, editor of *The O. E. Library Critic* (Washington, D.C.), held the view that the real Volume III manuscripts vanished and were never published. He wrote about seventeen articles analyzing the evidence concerning the Volume III manuscripts. To the list of those holding similar views, we can add many other distinguished names: Alice Cleather, Basil Crump, Charles J. Ryan, Victor Endersby, Walter A. Carrithers, Jr., Kirby Van Mater, Ted G. Davy, Richard Robb, Dara Eklund, and several more.

This received view was also my initial opinion. But after a great deal of study of the Wurzburg MSS of *The Secret Doctrine* and all the other relevant primary source documents (1886–1897) on the subject, I am no longer certain that the Theosophical writers mentioned above are correct in their views concerning Volume III. In fact, I am inclined to believe that pages 1–430 of Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* published in 1897 was the real third volume intended by HPB. (Pages 433–594 of that published volume consist of H. P. Blavatsky's esoteric teachings given to members of her Esoteric Section or School during the years 1889–1891 and are not at issue.) The evidence and reasoning to support this position follow.

MANUSCRIPT VOLUME ONE AND THE WURZBURG MANUSCRIPT

Writing only six years after the events he describes, Bertram Keightley tells us that upon her arrival in London in May, 1887, Madame Blavatsky "placed the whole of the so-far completed MSS. [of *The Secret Doctrine*] in the hands of Dr. [Archibald] Keightley and myself... We both read the whole mass of MSS.—a pile over three feet high—most carefully

through" (in *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine*, by Countess Constance Wachtmeister et al., cited in de Zirkoff's "Historical Introduction" to *The Secret Doctrine*, 41).

Bertram goes on to say that this original manuscript was divided into three parts or volumes:

Volume I: History of some great Occultists

Volume II: Evolution of Cosmos

Volume III: Evolution of Man

Bertram's reference to "the whole of the so-far completed MSS." is, of course, to the original *Secret Doctrine* manuscript, written during the period 1884 through April, 1887, which was in HPB's own handwriting.

What were the arrangement and contents of Volume I—the volume dealing with the history of some great occultists, which Bertram and Archibald Keightley read in May, 1887? In a letter dated September 23, 1886 (only eight months before the Keightleys read the three volumes in London), HPB wrote to Colonel Henry S. Olcott:

I send you the MSS. of *Secret Doctrine*. ... Now I send only 1st volume of *Introduct. Section*. ... There are in the 1st *Introductory Vol. Seven Sections* or Chapt. § and 27 Appendices, several App. attached to every Section from 1 to 6, etc. Now all this will make either more or at any rate one volume and it is not the S.D. but a Preface to it. ... Now, it is so arranged that the Appendices can either go as attached to the Sections or be taken out and placed in a *separate Vol.* or at the end of each. ... If you take out the App. then there will not [be] 300 pages printed in *Int. Sections*, but they will lose in interest. [de Zirkoff in *SD Intro.*, 30–1]

This manuscript to be sent to Colonel Olcott was not the original manuscript in HPB's own handwriting but a copy made by Countess Constance Wachtmeister and Mrs. Mary Gebhard. This "1st volume" manuscript is part of the "Wurzburg Manuscript" now preserved in the Archives of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras,

India. Volume I of the Wurzburg Manuscript consists of only five sections and one appendix. (See the accompanying table for the contents of Volume I of the Wurzburg Manuscript.) HPB's letter to Olcott (quoted above) indicates that the extant Wurzburg Manuscript is incomplete and probably represents only a third of the original first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*.

How does HPB describe the subject matter of her original Volume I? In her letter of July 14, 1886, to Olcott, she gives the following information:

Now I will send to *your care* and on *your responsibility* the "Preface to the Reader" and the 1st chapter of the *Secret Doctrine* proper. There are 600 pages and more of foolscap as an Introductory Preliminary Book, showing the undeniable historically proven facts of the existence of Adepts before and after the Christian period, of the admission of a double esoteric meaning in the two Testaments by Church Fathers, and *proofs* that the real source of every Christian dogma rests in the Aryan oldest MYSTERIES during the Vedic and Brahmanic period, proofs and evidence for it being shown in the *Exoteric* as well as Esoteric Sanskrit works. . . . In a fortnight I will send you

the Preface and 1st Chapter. [de Zirkoff in *SD Intro.*, 28-9]

In this letter, HPB is describing not only the contents of the original first volume of *The Secret Doctrine* but also the contents of the extant Wurzburg Manuscript. As early as March 3, 1886, in a letter to A. P. Sinnett, HPB described the contents of this same first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*:

I have finished an enormous Introductory Chapter, or *Preamble*, Prologue, call it what you will; just to show the reader that the text

The Wurzburg Manuscript, Volume One: Introduction

CONTENTS OF THE WÜRZBURG MANUSCRIPT	MS PAGES	PUBLISHED VERSIONS	SD VOLUME III (1897)
To the Readers	3-23	<i>Theo</i> , Aug. 1931, 601-7; <i>CW</i> 14: 462-9	
Chapter I			
On Eastern and Western Occult Literature			
Section I			
1. Explanations of the 1st Page of <i>Isis Unveiled</i>	25-41	<i>Theo</i> , Oct. 1932, 27-36	
2. Hermetic and Other Books of Antiquity	41-61	<i>Theo</i> , Nov. 1932, 140-50	Sec. 2, p. 30; Sec. 3, pp. 36-8, 39-43
Section II			
1. White and Black Magic in Theory and Practice	63-73	<i>Theo</i> , Dec. 1932, 265-71	Sec. 6, pp. 67-72, 74-5
2. Hermes and the 32 Ways of Wisdom	73-93	<i>Theo</i> , Jan. 1933, 397-401; <i>Theo</i> , Feb. 1933, 538-42; <i>Theo</i> , Mar. 1933, 623-4	Sec. 9, pp. 91, 47, 48, 92, 93-6
Section III			
1. Mathematics and Geometry— The Keys to the Universal Problems	95-101	<i>Theo</i> , Mar. 1933, 625-7	Sec. 10, pp. 98-104
2. The Key of the Absolute in Magic— the Hexagon with the Central Point—or the Seventh Key	101-11	<i>Theo</i> , Mar. 1933, 628; <i>Theo</i> , Apr. 1933, 9-14	Sec. 11, pp. 105-8
Section IV			
1. Who Was the Adept of Tyana?	115-23	<i>Theo</i> , May 1933, 138-42	Sec. 17, pp. 129-32
2. The Roman Church Dreads the Publication of the Real Life of Apollonius	123-33	<i>Theo</i> , May 1933, 142-3; <i>Theo</i> , June 1933, 263-6	Sec. 17, pp. 133-7
Section V			
1. Confession and Property in Common	135-59	<i>Theo</i> , July 1933, 391-5; <i>Theo</i> , Aug. 1933, 505-9; <i>Theo</i> , Sep. 1933, 633-7; <i>Theo</i> , Oct. 1933, 12-4	Sec. 35, pp. 315-24
2. What the Occultists and Kabalists Have to Say	159-69	<i>Theo</i> , Oct. 1933, 14-6; <i>Theo</i> , Nov. 1933, 143-6	Sec. 23, pp. 211-4
3. The Souls of the Stars—Universal Heliolatry	169-93	<i>CW</i> 14: 334-43	Sec. 37, pp. 332-6
4. The Mystery "Sun of Initiation"	194-201	<i>CW</i> 14: 269-73	Sec. 30, pp. 277-80
5. The Trial of the Sun-Initiate	201-23	<i>CW</i> 14: 259-68	Sec. 29, pp. 270-6
Appendix I			
The Star-Angel Worship in the Roman Church, Its Re-Establishment, Growth and History	225-41	<i>CW</i> 10: 13-32	

as it goes, every Section beginning with a page of translation from the Book of *Dzyan* and the Secret Book of "Maitreya Buddha" *Champai chhos Nga* (in prose, not the five books in verse known, which are a blind) are not fiction. I was ordered to do so, to make a rapid sketch of what was known historically and in literature, in classics and in profane and sacred histories—during the 500 years that preceded the Christian period and the 500 y. that followed it: of *magic*, the existence of a Universal Secret Doctrine known to the philosophers and Initiates of every country and even to several of the Church fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others, who had been initiated themselves. Also to describe the Mysteries and some rites; and I can assure you that most extraordinary things are given out now, the whole story of the Crucifixion, etc. being shown to be based on a rite as old as the world—the Crucifixion on the *Lathe* of the Candidate—trials, going down to Hell etc. all Aryan. The whole story hitherto unnoticed by Orientalists is found even exoterically, in the Puranas and *Brahmanas*, and then explained and supplemented with what the *Esoteric* explanations give. [*Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, ed. A. T. Barker, 195; cited by de Zirkoff in *SD Intro.*, 26]

Boris de Zirkoff and Geoffrey Barboika (*SD Intro.*, 68–70) believe that this March letter describes material no longer extant. There are reasons for a contrary view. De Zirkoff (69) says that HPB in her letter of March 3 describes "an enormous Introductory Chapter" and that "every Section thereof is said to begin with 'a page of translation from the Book of *Dzyan*.'" This, I believe, is a mistaken interpretation of what HPB wrote and was quoted just above:

I have finished an enormous Introductory Chapter, or *Preamble*, Prologue, call it what you will; just to show the reader that the text as it goes, every Section beginning with a page of translation from the Book of *Dzyan* and the Secret Book of "Maitreya Buddha" *Champai chhos Nga* (in prose, not the five books in verse known, which are a blind) are not fiction.

The key to understanding this passage is the phrase "the text as it goes," which refers, I believe, to the main text in the second volume of *The Secret Doctrine* (dealing with cosmogony), in which every section begins with a page of translation from the Book of *Dzyan*. In other words, HPB had written an enormous "Introductory Preliminary Book," "Introductory Chapter, or *Preamble*, Prologue, call it what you will" (Volume I) in order to

show the reader that the main text in Volume II on cosmogony was "not fiction." Then HPB goes on to explain what was in that original first volume: "I was ordered. . . to make a rapid sketch of what was known."

Boris de Zirkoff (in *SD Intro.*, 69) says Geoffrey Barboika points out that HPB's "Prologue" is not the "Introductory" (or any other section) in Volume I of *The Secret Doctrine* as published in 1888. That is true. But what is HPB referring to in her letter? Missing text no longer extant? No, what she is talking about is Volume I of the Secret Doctrine manuscript (as described in her letters of 1886, as partially found in the extant Wurzburg Manuscript, and as read by the Keightleys in May 1887). Boris de Zirkoff continues:

It is also important to remember that H.P.B.'s description of this material in her letter to Sinnett does not tally with any of the miscellaneous material gathered together and published in 1897 under the rather misleading title of "Secret Doctrine, Volume III."

However, as far as I can ascertain, HPB's description to Sinnett of her "enormous Introductory Chapter" does tally quite well not only with the 1897 volume but also with the contents of Volume I of the Wurzburg Manuscript. For example, "the Crucifixion on the *Lathe* of the Candidate" is covered in the Wurzburg Manuscript (*CW* 14: 261–2, "The Trial of the Sun Initiate"). The "lathe" was also specifically mentioned in Volume III, published in 1897, but those pages also contain a gap in the manuscript. Annie Besant says: "There is a gap in H.P.B.'s MS." (Vol. III, 1897 ed., 272). L. H. Leslie-Smith later provided the missing part from the Wurzburg Manuscript (Quest edition of Vol. III, entitled *Esoteric Writings*, 466–7).

But what happened to the original page in HPB's handwriting that was missing from the 1897 volume and constituted "a gap"? I suggest that this page somehow got disconnected from the manuscript of the third volume but was found and published as a "Fragment" in *Lucifer*, August 1896 (*CW* 7: 275–6). Also the "whole story of the Crucifixion, etc., being shown to be based on a rite as old as the world—the Crucifixion on the *Lathe* of the Candidate—trials, going down to Hell etc.," about which HPB wrote in her letter to Sinnett, is also covered in the 1888 *Secret Doctrine* 1: 543, 559, 558, 560–2.

Therefore, HPB's description of an "enormous Introductory Volume" does not indicate "lost material," as de Zirkoff and Barboika believed. Instead, HPB's description is of her original Volume I manuscript. The same material can be found in Volume I of the Wurzburg Manuscript and in Volume III of 1897.

So far we have determined, based upon HPB's own words, that the original first volume consisted of seven sections and twenty-seven appendices. We have also estimated that the extant Volume I of the Wurzburg Manuscript gives us the text of approximately one-third of the original Volume I that the Keightleys read in May, 1887. Can we determine the contents of the rest of this Volume I?

Following is a partial list of material not extant in the Wurzburg Manuscript but probably to be found in the original Volume I manuscript in HPB's own handwriting:

1. In *CW* 14: 342, HPB wrote: "turn to the 'Appendix' of this INTRODUCTION and read *On Jesuits and their Policy*." The *Collected Writings* editors have added a footnote: "Untraced under this title. Possibly re-titled *Theosophy or Jesuitism?*; see *B.C.W.*, IX."

2. In *CW* 7: 190, HPB wrote: "explained in our Appendices on 'Egyptian Magic' and 'Chinese Spirits' (*Secret Doctrine*)." The *Collected Writings* has two contradictory editorial notes on these two articles (7: 104, 190–1).

3. In *CW* 7: 226, HPB says: "I have tried to explain and have given the collective and individual opinions thereon of the great philosophers of antiquity in my *Secret Doctrine*." In an editorial note, de Zirkoff says: "By turning to pages 234–240 of the Volume [III] published in 1897. . . the student will find a brief essay on 'The Idols and the Teraphim.'" That essay is precisely the material spoken of by HPB in her comment just quoted.

4. In Volume II of the Wurzburg Manuscript, dealing with the Stanzas of *Dzyan* and HPB's commentaries thereon, the following reference is found: "(See 'A Mystery about Buddha,' App. to Sect. VI.)" I interpret this to mean that the article "A Mystery about Buddha" was an appendix to section six of the first volume of the Secret Doctrine manuscript of 1886–1887. The original Volume II (dealing with the Seven Stanzas of *Dzyan* and HPB's commentaries) had numerous ap-

pendices, at least seventeen, if not more. These appendices are not extant in the Wurzburg Manuscript but are referred to by HPB in the course of her commentaries. For example, HPB wrote: "See Divine Dynasties, App. XII" or "App. VII, 'Primordial Substance'," and so on.

5. Another reference to the contents of the original Volume I is possibly made in Volume II of the Wurzburg Manuscript, where HPB refers to "App. in Prel. Sect. 'Kuan-Shai-Yin'."

All these references give us some indication as to what additional material was in the original Volume I of the Secret Doctrine (1886-1887).

MANUSCRIPT VOLUME ONE BECOMES VOLUME THREE

Returning to Bertram Keightley's account of the editing of *The Secret Doctrine*, he wrote:

A day or two after our arrival at Maycot [in May, 1887], H.P.B. placed the whole of the so far completed MSS. in the hands of Dr. [Archibald] Keightley and myself. . . . We both read the whole mass of MSS.—a pile over three feet high—most carefully. . . . and then, after prolonged consultation, faced [HPB]. . . . with the solemn opinion that the whole of the matter must be re-arranged on some definite plan. . . .

Finally we laid before her a plan, suggested by the character of the matter itself, viz.; to make the work consist of four volumes. . . . Further, instead of making the first volume to consist, as she had intended, of the history of some great Occultists, we advised her to follow the natural order of exposition, and begin with the Evolution of Cosmos, to pass from that to the Evolution of Man, then to deal with the historical part in a third volume treating of the lives of some great Occultists; and finally, to speak of Practical Occultism in a fourth volume should she ever be able to write it.

This plan was laid before H.P.B., and it was duly sanctioned by her.

The next step was to read the MSS. through again and make a general re-arrangement of the matter pertaining to the subjects coming under the heads of Cosmogony and Anthropology, which were to form the first two volumes of the work. When this had been completed, and H.P.B. duly consulted, and her approval of what had been done obtained, the whole of the MSS. so arranged was typewritten out by professional hands. [de Zirkoff in *SD* Intro., 41]

So as Bertram Keightley tells us, the order of the volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* was rearranged. Volume I became

Volume III. Were the contents of the new and unpublished Volume III kept intact? No. For example, HPB decided to take out one of the appendices ("Star-Angel Worship in the Roman Church") and publish it as an article in *Lucifer* (*CW* 10: 13-32). Another example: The appendix entitled "Kuan-Shai-Yin" was apparently taken out and published in Volume I of 1888, pp. 470-3. Some other portions of the reordered third volume were also incorporated into Volume I as published in 1888: Part of the section "To the Readers" and part of "Explanations of the 1st Page of *Isis Unveiled*" (see the table for the contents of Vol. 1) were incorporated into the "Introductory" (xvii-xxi and xlii-xlvii) of the published Volume I of 1888. But by and large the material that was in Volume I of the original Secret Doctrine manuscript of 1886-1887 remained in the manuscript of what became Volume III.

We can now trace the history of the third volume from 1888 to HPB's death in 1891 by citing various published documents.

April 3, 1888, HPB wrote to the Second American Convention: "The MSS. of the first three volumes is now ready for the press" (*CW* 9: 247).

1888, HPB wrote about the third volume in Volumes I and II of *The Secret Doctrine* (1888):

Even the two volumes now issued do not complete the scheme, and these do not treat exhaustively of the subjects dealt with in them. A large quantity of material has already been prepared, dealing with the history of occultism as contained in the lives of the great Adepts of the Aryan Race, and showing the bearing of occult philosophy upon the conduct of life, as it is and as it ought to be. Should the present volumes meet with a favourable reception, no effort will be spared to carry out the scheme of the work in its entirety. The third volume is entirely ready; the fourth almost so. [1: vii]

But if the reader has patience, and would glance at the present state of beliefs and creeds in Europe, compare and check it with what is known to history of the ages directly preceding and following the Christian era, then he will find all this in Volume III. of this work.

In that volume a brief recapitulation will be made of all the principal adepts known to history, and the downfall of the mysteries will be described; after which began the disappearance and final and systematic elimination from the memory of men of the real nature of initiation and the Sacred Science. From that

time its teachings became Occult, and Magic sailed but too often under the venerable but frequently misleading name of Hermetic philosophy. As real Occultism had been prevalent among the Mystics during the centuries that preceded our era, so Magic, or rather Sorcery, with its Occult Arts, followed the beginning of Christianity. [1: xxxix-xl]

Read by the light of the Zohar, the initial four chapters of Genesis are the fragment of a highly philosophical page in the World's Cosmogony. (See Book III., "*Gupta Vidya and the Zohar*.") [1: 10-1]

The explanation with regard to the "Anupadaka" given in the Kala Chakra, the first in the Gyu(t) division of the Kanjur, is half esoteric. It has misled the Orientalists into erroneous speculations with respect to the Dhyani-Buddhas and their earthly correspondencies, the Mânushi-Buddhas. The real tenet is hinted at in a subsequent Volume, (see "The Mystery about Buddha"), and will be more fully explained in its proper place. [1: 52n]

Therefore the meaning of the "fairy tale" translated by Chwolson from an old Chaldean MSS. translated into Arabic, about Qû-tâmy being instructed by the *idol* of the moon, is easily understood (*vide* Book III.) Seldenus tells us the secret as well as Maimonides. . . . The worshippers of the *Teraphim* (the Jewish Oracles) "carved images and claimed that the light of the principal stars (planets) permeating these through and through, the angelic VIRTUES (or the regents of the stars and planets) conversed with them, teaching them many most useful things and arts." [1: 394]

If one studies comparative Theogony, it is easy to find that the secret of these "Fires" was taught in the *Mysteries* of every ancient people, pre-eminently in Samothrace. . . . There is no space to describe these "fires" and their real meaning here, though we may attempt to do so if the third and fourth volumes of this work are ever published. [2: 106]

In Volume III. of this work (the said volume and the IVth being almost ready) a brief history of all the great adepts known to the ancients and the moderns in their chronological order will be given, as also a bird's eye view of the Mysteries, their birth, growth, decay, and final death—in Europe. This could not find room in the present work. Volume IV. will be almost entirely devoted to Occult teachings. [2: 437]

These two volumes should form for the student a fitting prelude for Volumes III. and IV. Until the rubbish of the ages is cleared away from the minds of the Theosophists to whom these volumes are dedicated, it is impossible that the more practical teaching contained in the Third Volume should be understood.

Consequently, it entirely depends upon the reception with which Volumes I. and II. will meet at the hands of Theosophists and Mystics, whether these last two volumes will ever be published, though they are *almost* completed. [2: 797-8]

These descriptions by HPB of what was in the unpublished Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* correspond fairly well with what she says in her letters of 1886 in describing the original Volume I.

April 29, 1889, Archibald Keightley was quoted in an interview in the *New York Times*: "The third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* is in manuscript ready to be given to the printers. It will consist mainly of a series of sketches of the great occultists of all ages, and is a most wonderful and fascinating work. The fourth volume, which is to be largely hints on the subject of practical occultism, has been outlined, but not yet written."

November 21, 1889, HPB wrote in a letter to N. D. Khandalavala (*Theosophist*, August 1932, 626): "[I] have been able to write my *S.D.*, "Key," "Voice," and prepared two more volumes of the *S. Doctrine*."

February 1890, HPB wrote in a letter to her sister Vera (*Path*, December 1895, 268): "I must put the third volume of the [*Secret*] *Doctrine* in order, and the fourth—hardly begun yet, too."

December 1890, a report (*Theosophist*, July 1891, 586-7) of Bertram Keightley's lecture "Theosophy in the West" to the annual convention at Adyar, Madras, India, included the following:

H.P.B. handed over to him [B. Keightley] the manuscript of the "Secret Doctrine," with a request that he should read it through. He read through the substance of the two volumes published, and the third still unpublished. . . . what would now be the 3rd volume of the history of Occultism was to have been the first volume, while the treatises on Cosmogony and the Genesis of Man were to form a later series. . . . He then drafted a scheme with the natural and obvious order, namely, the Evolution of the Universe and the Evolution of man, &c., &c. The next thing. . . was to re-arrange . . . the manuscript according to the [new] scheme.

January 7, 1891, Claude Falls Wright wrote (*Path*, February 1891, 354): "H.P.B. has within the last week or so begun to get together the MSS. (long ago written) for the Third Volume of *The Secret Doctrine*; it will, however, take a

good twelve months to prepare for publication."

February 1891, Alice Leighton Cleather wrote (*Theosophist*, April 1891, 438): "H.P.B. has already started on Vol. III."

February 18, 1891, Countess Wachtmeister wrote in a letter to W. Q. Judge (cited in *Report of Proceedings, Secret Doctrine Centenary, October 29-30, 1988, 1989, 86*): "When Volume 3 [of *The Secret Doctrine*] comes out this summer I expect there will be a fresh demand for the earlier [two] volumes."

April 1891, HPB wrote in *Lucifer* (*CW* 13: 145-6):

Two years ago, the writer promised in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 798, a third and even a fourth volume of that work. This third volume (now almost ready) treats of the ancient Mysteries of Initiation, gives sketches—from the esoteric stand-point—of many of the most famous and historically known philosophers and hierophants (everyone of whom is set down by the Scientists as an *impostor*), from the archaic down to the Christian era, and traces the teachings of all these sages to one and the same source of all knowledge and science—the esoteric doctrine or WISDOM-RELIGION. No need our saying that from the esoteric and legendary materials used in the forthcoming work, its statements and conclusions differ greatly and often clash irreconcilably with the data given by almost all the English and German Orientalists. . . . Now the main point of Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* is to prove, by tracing and explaining the *blinds* in the works of ancient Indian, Greek, and other philosophers of note, and also in all the ancient Scriptures—the presence of an uninterrupted esoteric allegorical method and symbolism; to show, as far as lawful, that with the keys of interpretation as taught in the Eastern Hindoo-Buddhistic Canon of Occultism, the *Upanishads*, the *Puranas*, the *Sutras*, the Epic poems of India and Greece, the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, the *Scandinavian Eddas*, as well as the *Hebrew Bible*, and even the classical writings of Initiates (such as Plato, among others)—all, from first to last, yield a meaning quite different from their dead letter texts.

May 4, 1891, Annie Besant gave testimony in HPB's case against Elliott Coues and the *New York Sun* (Michael Gomes, ed., *Witness for the Prosecution: Annie Besant's Testimony on Behalf of H. P. Blavatsky in the N. Y. Sun/Coues Law Case*, 1993, 23):

There is one other work of hers [HPB's], which I have seen in manuscript, still unpublished; a third volume of "The Secret Doc-

trine" which is now being got ready for the press under my own eyes. Madame Blavatsky has also in preparation a glossary of Sanscrit and Eastern tongues; those are both in preparation; one of them is already in type and the other is nearly ready for type.

May 8, 1891, H. P. Blavatsky died in London.

From the above 1890-1891 statements (either written by HPB herself or by her London students) a reasonable conclusion can be drawn that HPB had finally decided to publish the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* and was, in fact, working on the third volume manuscript during the months preceding her death.

In light of this conclusion, it is difficult to understand what Boris de Zirkoff meant when he wrote (in *SD* Intro., 71) that "no outright positive or negative answer can be made to the oft-repeated question whether a completed Manuscript of Volumes III and IV ever existed."

Setting aside de Zirkoff's reference to Volume IV, there is no reason to doubt that a manuscript of Volume III existed during the last years of HPB's life. Furthermore, had she lived, HPB would probably have added and deleted material from the manuscript; she would probably have rewritten and re-edited the material even more. But at the time of her death, this manuscript was as "complete" as HPB could make it. What more could be expected?

In the twentieth century, many Blavatsky students have chosen to believe that the real unpublished Volume III manuscript of 1887-1891 (the former Volume I of 1886-1887) somehow vanished. Some have suggested that the manuscript was either destroyed by HPB before her death, or—after HPB's death—suppressed by Besant, "dematerialized" by the Masters, or otherwise disappeared.

Let us now follow the history of the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* from May 1891 to its publication in June-July 1897.

October 1891, Isabel Cooper-Oakley wrote (*Path*, December 1891, 295): "The H.P.B. Press. . . is developing into a regular printing office. . . . A new edition of *The Secret Doctrine* is to lead the van, and last but not least the third volume is to be published."

October 29, 1891, Dr. Archibald Keightley wrote in a letter to Bertram

Keightley (cited by C. Jinarajadasa in "Dr. Besant and Mutilation of the Secret Doctrine," *Messenger*, January 1926, 166): "There is some talk of entirely reprinting *Secret Doctrine* [Volumes I and II] and of correcting errors when the Third Volume is issued."

December 1891, a notice was published in *The Path*, *The Vahan*, and *The Theosophist* by Annie Besant and G. R. S. Mead:

The second edition of H.P.B.'s masterpiece being exhausted, a third edition has to be put in hand immediately. Every effort is being made to thoroughly revise the new edition, and the editors earnestly request all students who may read this notice to send in as full lists of ERRATA as possible. . . . It is important that the ERRATA of the first part of Volume I should be sent in IMMEDIATELY.

January 1894, a notice appeared in *The Path* (323): "Volume one of the new edition of *The Secret Doctrine* is now ready, and a copy has been sent, charges paid, to all subscribers. . . . Volume two, it is now thought, can be sent out in January."

January 1894, a statement was published in *Lucifer* (354): "The third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* is being typewritten from the MS."

May 1895, Annie Besant wrote in *Lucifer* (188): "The third volume of *The Secret Doctrine*. . . was placed into my hands by H.P.B."

June 1895, the first pages of Volume III went to the printer (*Lucifer*, June 1895, 271).

June 1896, an editorial note appeared in *Lucifer* (265): "In the course of preparing the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* for the press, a few manuscripts were found mixed with it that form no part of the work itself, and these will be published in [*Lucifer*]."

September 1896, Volume III was completed (*Lucifer*, September 1896, 271).

June 1897, Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* was published (*Theosophist*, September 1897, 766).

CONCLUSIONS

Is Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* as published in 1897 the same (more or less) as the manuscript originally known as Volume I in 1886-1887 and later re-ordered and known as Volume III from 1887 to 1891?

A most telling piece of information to

help us answer this question concerns the extant Volume I of the Wurzburg Manuscript. Most of the material in this extant Volume I is also to be found in Volume III of 1897. And the material from Volume I of the Wurzburg Manuscript left out of Volume III of 1897 either was incorporated into Volume I of *The Secret Doctrine* as published in 1888 or was published in the pages of *Lucifer* during HPB's lifetime or soon after her death.

Furthermore, since it was discovered from primary source documents of 1886 that the original Volume I contained the articles "Egyptian Magic," "The Idol and the Teraphim," and "A Mystery About Buddha," is it not of some significance that these three articles also turn up in Volume III of 1897?

But what happened to the two sections of essays and twenty-six appendices (missing in the extant Wurzburg Manuscript) but certainly an integral part of HPB's original Volume I manuscript of 1886-1887? If most of the extant Volume I Wurzburg Manuscript ended up in Volume III of 1897, is it not reasonable to suggest that the remaining two sections and twenty-six appendices (with several exceptions) probably also ended up in Volume III of 1897?

Also consider the following fact. Both H. P. Blavatsky and Bertram Keightley described the third volume as dealing with the lives of great occultists. A considerable amount of material in Volume III of 1897 deals with the lives of Simon Magus, St. Paul, Peter, Apollonius of Tyana, St. Cyprian of Antioch, Gautama the Buddha, and Tsong-kha-pa. And one of the essays in Volume III of 1897 is entitled "Facts underlying Adept Biographies."

Let us review two of HPB's descriptions of the contents of the third volume. First, in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888, 2: 437), HPB wrote:

In Volume III. of this work. . . a brief history of all the great adepts known to the ancients and the moderns in their chronological order will be given, as also a bird's eye view of the Mysteries, their birth, growth, decay, and final death—in Europe. This could not find room in the present work.

Also in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888, 1: xl), HPB pens the following:

In that [third] volume a brief recapitulation will be made of all the principal adepts known to history, and the downfall of the mysteries

will be described; after which began the disappearance and final and systematic elimination from the memory of men of the real nature of initiation and the Sacred Science. From that time its teachings became Occult, and Magic sailed but too often under the venerable but frequently misleading name of Hermetic philosophy. As real Occultism had been prevalent among the Mystics during the centuries that preceded our era, so Magic, or rather Sorcery, with its Occult Arts, followed the beginning of Christianity.

With those lists of content, compare the descriptions given by HPB in her letters of 1886, cited above, with the most relevant parts recapitulated here:

the undeniable historically proven facts of the existence of Adepts before and after the Christian period, of the admission of a double esoteric meaning in the two Testaments by Church Fathers, and *proofs* that the real source of every Christian dogma rests in the Aryan oldest MYSTERIES during the Vedic and Brahmanic period, proofs and evidence for it being shown in the *Exoteric* as well as Esoteric Sanskrit works. [July 14, 1886, to Olcott]

a rapid sketch of what *was* known historically and in literature, in classics and in profane and sacred histories—during the 500 years that preceded the Christian period and the 500 y. that followed it: of *magic*, the existence of a Universal Secret Doctrine known to the philosophers and Initiates of every country and even to several of the Church fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others, who had been initiated themselves. Also to describe the Mysteries and some rites; and I can assure you that most extraordinary things are given out now, the whole story of the Crucifixion, etc. being shown to be based on a rite as old as the world—the Crucifixion on the *Lathe* of the Candidate—trials, going down to Hell etc. all Aryan. The whole story hitherto unnoticed by Orientalists is found even exoterically, in the Puranas and *Brahmanas*, and then explained and supplemented with what the *Esoteric* explanations give. [March 3, 1886, to A. P. Sinnett]

These various excerpts from HPB describe fairly well some of the material in Volume III of 1897 as the title headings of the following essays from that volume show:

3. The Origin of Magic
4. The Secrecy of Initiates
5. Some Reason for Secrecy
13. Post-Christian Adepts and Their Doctrines
14. Simon and his Biographer Hippolytus
15. St. Paul—The Real Founder of Present Christianity

16. Peter—A Jewish Kabbalist, not an Initiate
17. Apollonius of Tyana
18. Facts Underlying Adept Biographies
19. St. Cyprian of Antioch
28. The Origin of the Mysteries
30. The Mystery "Sun of Initiation"
31. The Objects of the Mysteries
32. Traces of the Mysteries
33. The Last of the Mysteries in Europe
34. The Post-Christian Successors to the Mysteries
43. The Mystery of Buddha
44. "Reincarnations" of Buddha
49. Tsong-kha-pa; Lohans in China

I will conclude these remarks with a relevant quotation from a letter of Bertram Keightley (written from Lucknow, India, on December 6, 1922, and addressed to Charles Blech, a French Theosophist):

As regards the matter intended by H.P.B. for future volumes—besides the two first published under her own supervision—all this material has been published in the *third* volume which contains absolutely *all* that H.P.B. has left in manuscript. [quoted in the *O. E. Library Critic*, July 4, 1923]

If any Theosophist was knowledgeable about the contents of HPB's third volume, it was Bertram Keightley.

For the various reasons outlined in this paper, I am inclined to believe that Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* as published in 1897 was the *real* Volume III intended by HPB during her lifetime.

AFTERWORD

The focus of this article has been on primary source documents (various letters, articles, and the Wurzburg Manuscript) written during the years 1885–1897. Most of these testimonies were given either during the same time HPB was writing and editing *The Secret Doctrine* or within several years of the events narrated, when we would still expect the participants to remember accurately various details and the true course of events. An attempt has also been made to present the evidence in chronological order so that the reader might discern the natural flow of events related to the writing and editing of *The Secret Doctrine* manuscript.

The reader should also be aware that there are testimonies that give accounts conflicting with the ones cited in this article. Most of the contrary evidence was given either by individuals who were not

directly involved in the writing and editing of the *SD* manuscript or by witnesses writing in the 1920s and 1930s (some thirty or forty years after the actual events). It is not surprising that a person's recollection of events several decades earlier would contain contradictions and inconsistencies. The reader who would like to examine these conflicting accounts should consult Boris de Zirkoff's "Historical Introduction" to *The Secret Doctrine* (especially pp. 61, 63–6, 71) as well as his survey of the third volume (1897) in *CW* 14 (especially pp. xxxi–xxxii, xxxiv–xl).

One correspondent, reading the first draft of this article, wrote to me in reply: "In view of the inconsistency of the statements made by those who were familiar with HPB's work at the time; also the contradictory—even self-contradictory—nature of some of them, I do not see how it is possible to reach a conclusion on Vol. III on the strength of these statements, as you and Boris [de Zirkoff] have attempted to do."

In reply, I would ask what historical event of any importance does not involve contradictory and inconsistent testimonies? Consider the contradictory (pro and con) statements of people who knew HPB personally and made statements about her psychic powers and the existence of her Masters. Emma Coulomb, Richard Hodgson, Vsevolod Solovyov, and others gave very different, contradictory, and negative accounts about HPB compared to those of Henry Olcott, Constance Wachtmeister, William Judge, Annie Besant, and others who testified to the genuineness of HPB's claims. Do these contradictions mean that one cannot reach a reasonable conclusion concerning the genuineness or not of HPB's psychic powers and the existence of her Masters? Historical research is undertaken, at least in part, to try to sift through the evidence (pro, con, and neutral) of an event or series of events, to scrutinize the primary sources, to weigh the evidence (including contradictions), and to attempt to reach reasonable conclusions as to what most probably happened or did not happen.

Another topic not considered in this article has been the "editing" of HPB's manuscript of the third volume for publication. Annie Besant in her preface to the third volume clearly stated: "With the exception of the correction of grammatical errors and the elimination of obviously

un-English idioms, the papers are as H.P.B. left them, save as otherwise marked. In a few cases I have filled in a gap, but any such addition is enclosed within square brackets, so as to be distinguished from the text."

Nevertheless, some students of HPB's writings have voiced concern about how much Besant and her assistants may have edited the manuscript. James M. Pryse in a review of the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* (*Theosophy*, New York, September 1897, 314–6) wrote: "If it had been printed as H.P.B. wrote it, then Theosophists generally would have prized it; but Mrs. Besant and others having edited it, they will regard it with a just suspicion." (It should be noted that, some thirty years later, Pryse reversed his view on this subject.)

Another personal student of HPB's, Alice Leighton Cleather (*H. P. Blavatsky: A Great Betrayal*, 1922, 75), testified: "It so happens that while it [Volume III] was being set up [for publication] I was able actually to peruse one or two of the familiar long foolscap sheets which H.P.B. always covered with her small fine handwriting. They were mutilated almost beyond recognition, few of her sentences remaining intact; and there were 'corrections'."

More recently, Nicholas Weeks, who has helped in the preparation of the manuscripts of volumes 13, 14, and 15 of HPB's *Collected Writings*, has expressed similar concerns to me (private correspondence):

When we were working on *BCW* 14 we found many differences or changes between the "First Draft" [the Wurzburg Manuscript] and "SD III" [1897]. Some of the most radical are included in the Index to 14, see "Wurzburg MS Interpolations." On pp. 104 & 266–67 of *BCW* 14 are two examples of HPB's typically sharp criticisms of the Roman Catholic Church that *did not* appear in "SD III" [1897]. I find it impossible to believe that HPB deleted them, or approved of their removal. Thus the question arises, how many other "corrections" and "innovations" were made that HPB would not have permitted? . . . Without the "Wurzburg MS" there would have been not even a clue as to any tampering having occurred.

The issue of the editing of the manuscript of Volume III (1897) needs to be carefully researched in the future.

For those interested in the Wurzburg Manuscript, most of Volume I of the man-

uscript was published serially in the pages of *The Theosophist* (August 1931 and October 1932 to November, 1933; vol. 52, pt. 2, pp. 601-7; vol. 54, pt. 1, pp. 27-36, 140-50, 265-71, 397-401, 538-42, 623-8, and pt. 2, pp. 9-14, 137-43, 263-6, 391-5, 505-9, 633-7; vol. 55, pt. 1, pp. 12-6, 143-6). Also consult the index to *CW* 14 for more excerpts from the Wurzburg Manuscript. See the table for an identification of the contents.

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