

**THE WRITING OF  
THE SECRET DOCTRINE**  
*A Chronology*



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**A Chronology**

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# Introduction

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During the late 19th century, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) wrote about the Ancient Universal Wisdom Tradition and gave to it the Greek name *Theosophia* or *Theosophy* ("Divine Wisdom" or "the wisdom of the gods"). She stated that there is an ancient school of Adepts or Masters who know directly, inwardly and truly this Divine Wisdom. H.P. Blavatsky said that she was taught Theosophy by some of these Adepts.

Madame Blavatsky was the chief founder of the modern Theosophical Movement which was established to form the nucleus of a worldwide association of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.

She promoted a greater Western acquaintance with Eastern religions and philosophies and brought the teachings of reincarnation and karma into common knowledge in the Western world.

In order to present Theosophy to the world, Madame Blavatsky wrote *Isis Unveiled* (1877), *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), *The Key to Theosophy* (1889), *The Voice of the Silence* (1889) and other works.

What did H.P. Blavatsky teach? She outlined the fundamental principles of Theosophy which deal with (1) the unity of **LIFE**, (2) the law of cycles, and (3) the progressive unfoldment of consciousness in all kingdoms of nature (both visible and invisible).

Madame Blavatsky taught the origin and development of the universe and the origin and evolution of humanity. She described the birth, growth and death of planets and solar systems, and set forth humanity's evolution and history on this planet.

H.P.B. outlined the tree and its branches: the original ancient Esoteric Teaching or Primordial Wisdom Tradition and some of its branches extant in the various world religions, ancient mythologies, and metaphysical philosophies.

She gave out the truth in detail about the complex sevenfold nature (spiritual and psychological) of a human being and about life after death. She taught the twin doctrine of karma and reincarnation. Madame Blavatsky also set forth a clear and comprehensive rationale for psychic and spiritualistic, mystical and spiritual phenomena and experiences.

Madame Blavatsky taught that self-responsibility, ethics and altruism (service to others) are essential to true spiritual unfoldment. She pointed towards humanity's future destiny and evolution and showed the Path which each of us must travel in order to awaken our latent spiritual powers and abilities and to realize our essential identity with the **UNIVERSAL OVERSOUL**.

She is best known as the author of *The Secret Doctrine*, the great sourcebook on Theosophy. This work in three large volumes shows the universality and the great age of the Theosophical system of thought.

*The Secret Doctrine* was the crowning achievement of H.P. Blavatsky's literary career. Volume I is concerned mainly with the evolution of the Universe. The skeleton of

this volume is formed by seven Stanzas, translated from the *Book of Dzyan* with commentary and explanations by H.P.B. Volume II contains a further series of Stanzas from the *Book of Dzyan*, which describe the evolution of humanity. Both volumes contain an extended elucidation of the fundamental archetypal symbols and myths found in the various religions and mythologies of the world. A third volume deals with the histories of various adepts and initiates down through the centuries.

All in all, H. P. Blavatsky was one of the most extraordinary figures of the 19th century. The influence of her life, writings and teachings on world thought has been significant.

In the following pages, you will read about how Madame Blavatsky actually wrote the various volumes of her greatest work. Dozens of primary sources have been consulted in order to present the following fascinating story of the writing of *The Secret Doctrine*.

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[**Note:** In compiling this “Chronology,” I have used material provided by Boris de Zirkoff in his book *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition* and some of his other writings, as well as material provided me by Henk J. Spierenburg plus material I have gathered over the years through my own study and research.—D.H.C.]

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## 1884

**January 1884**—H. P. Blavatsky at the Theosophical Society headquarters at Adyar, Madras, India writes to A.P. Sinnett in London:

“ . . . 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.”

(Source: *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 64.)

**January 1884**—In the Supplement to *The Theosophist* for this month, a Publisher’s Notice with the title **THE SECRET DOCTRINE: A New Version of “Isis Unveiled”** is printed:

“Numerous and urgent requests have come from all parts of India, to adopt some plan for bringing the matter con-

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tained in *Isis Unveiled*, within the reach of those who could not afford to purchase so expensive a work at one time. On the other hand, many, finding the outlines of the [Esoteric] doctrine given too hazy, clamoured for 'more light,' and necessarily misunderstanding the teaching, have erroneously supposed it to be contradictory to later revelations, which in not a few cases, have been entirely misconceived. The author [H. P. Blavatsky], therefore, under the advice of friends, proposes to issue the work in a better and clearer form, in monthly parts. All, that is important in *Isis* for a thorough comprehension of the occult and other philosophical subjects treated of, will be retained, but with such a rearrangement of the text as to group together as closely as possible the materials relating to any given subject. Thus will be avoided needless repetitions, and the scattering of materials of a cognate character throughout the two volumes."

"Much additional information upon occult subjects, which it was not desirable to put before the public at the first appearance of the work, but for which the way has been prepared by the intervening eight years, and especially by the publication of [A.P. Sinnett's two books] *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism* and other Theosophical works, will now be given. Hints will also be found throwing light on many of the hitherto misunderstood teachings found in the said works. A complete Index and a Table of Contents will be compiled. It is intended that each Part shall comprise seventy-seven pages in Royal 8vo. . . . to be printed on good paper and in clear type, and be completed in about two years. . . . the first Part will be issued March 15<sup>th</sup>."

**February 20, 1884**—Leaving on their European tour of France, England and Germany, H.P.B. and Colonel Henry Olcott sail from Bombay, India for Marseilles, France.

(Source: *The Theosophist*, March 1884, p. 154.)

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**April 25, 1884**—H.P.B. in Paris, France writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“I thank you *for the intention* you had of writing the Preface for *Secret Doctrine*—I did not ask you to do it but the Mahatmas and Mohini here, and Subba Row *there* [at Adyar T.S. headquarters] are quite sufficient for the task of helping me. If you *do not* think that ‘the scheme is feasible as announced’ [in *The Theosophist*] I am sorry for you and your intuition. Since the Guru thinks it otherwise I will take my chance of following rather his order and advice than yours. This, in sincere friendship, but in as great a determination. To say that I ‘would do *wisely* to direct the repayment of subscriptions and withdraw the announcement’ is to talk sheer flapdoodle. I did not undertake to rewrite and bother myself with that infernal book for my own sweet pleasure. Could I annihilate it by hurling the accursed work into the 8<sup>th</sup> sphere I would. But my own predilections or wishes have naught to do with my duty. MASTER orders and wills it be rewritten and rewrite it *will*; so much the better for those who will help me on the tedious task, and *so much the worse for those* who do not and will not. Who knows but with God’s blessing and help the thing may turn out ‘a splendid piece of work’ anyhow. Nor will I ever, with your permission and begging your pardon, of course, agree with you that ‘it is madness to try and write such a book for monthly parts’ *once that the Guru so ordains it*. For, notwithstanding the remarkable respect I feel for your western wisdom and business like talents, I would never say of anything my Master (in particular) and *the Masters* (in general) tell me to do—that it is sheer *madness* to do their bidding.

“One chapter at any rate, ‘on the Gods, Pitris, the Devas and Daimonia, Elementaries and Elementals, and other like spooks’ is finished. I have found and followed a very easy method given me, and chapter after chapter and part after part will be rewritten very easily. Your

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suggestion that it must not ‘look like a mere reprint of Isis’ is nowhere in the face of the announcement (which please see in *The Theosophist* last page). Since it promises only ‘to bring the matter contained in Isis’ within the reach of all; and to explain and show that the ‘later revelations,’ i.e. *Esot[eric] Buddhism* for one, and other things in the *Theosophist* are not contradictory to the outlines of the doctrine given — however *hazy* the latter is in that *Isis*, and 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[umes] as they are now — then it follows that I am bound to give *whole pages* from ‘Isis’ only amplifying and giving additional information. And unless I do give numerous reprints from *Isis*, it will become *Osiris* or *Horus* — never what it was originally promised in the ‘Publisher’s Notice’ which — please read.”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 88-89.)

[This chapter by H.P.B., “on the Gods, Pitris, the Devas and Daimonia, Elementaries and Elementals, and other like spooks” was finally published after H.P.B.’s death in *Lucifer*, August, September, and October, 1893 issues. In this chapter, H.P.B., writing about Lunar Devas and Rounds, says: “Let the student consult *The Secret Doctrine* on this matter, and he will there find full explanation.” —D.H.C.]

**May, 1884**—William Q. Judge writes:

“. . . At Enghien [France] 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. . . .”

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(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 102.)

**June 1884**—In *The Theosophist* (p. 232) a notice is published about *The Secret Doctrine*:

“We regret to announce that, owing to unavoidable causes, the publication of the *Secret Doctrine* has to be delayed for two months more. The first Number will therefore be out on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, instead of 15<sup>th</sup> of June as originally announced.”

**September 1884**—In *The Theosophist* (p. 304) another notice is published:

“The delay in the issue of Part I of the *Secret Doctrine* was due to the MSS. not having reached this office in time, from London from Madame Blavatsky, who, besides being in bad health, has a good deal of Society business to do in connection with the European tour. The MSS. have, however, now come and been put in the printer’s hand. The first number is expected to be out by the middle of this month....”

**October 1884**—In *The Theosophist* (p. 143) the reader is informed that:

“... As, in consequence of recent events, Madame Blavatsky’s early return to India is expected, it has been decided to postpone the issue of the first part of the *Secret Doctrine*, so as to insure an uninterrupted succession of numbers after her arrival. . . .”

**November 15, 1884**—Colonel Olcott arrives in Madras, India, back from his European tour. H.P.B. is coming back to India later.

**November 27, 1884**—Colonel Olcott writes:

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“. . . The delays in the appearance of the work [*The Secret Doctrine*] have been mainly due to two causes — Mme. Blavatsky’s almost constant ill-health since her departure [from India] for Europe, in February last; and the interference with her literary labours by her travels and official engagements. The paper for the entire edition was purchased several months ago and is at Adyar; the Introduction and First Chapter are in type; and the two volumes of *Isis Unveiled* have been carefully read and annotated for use in the new book. . . . As Mme. Blavatsky is expected at Adyar during the present month, it is hoped and expected that the work will soon appear, and the monthly parts follow each other uninterruptedly.”

(Source: *The Theosophist*, December 1884, p. 74.)

**December 21, 1884**—Mme. Blavatsky arrives (from Europe via Egypt) back at the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras, India.

**December (late), 1884**—Master K.H. writes to A.P. Sinnett about Sinnett’s *Esoteric Buddhism*:

“. . . no one, so far, has noticed the real vital errors in [your] *Esoteric Buddhism* . . . nor are they likely to. We can give no further information on the subject already approached by you and have to leave the facts already communicated to be woven into a consistent and systematic philosophy by the chelas at the Headquarters. The *Secret Doctrine* will explain many things, set to right more than one perplexed student.”

(Source: *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, chronological edition, Letter 128, p. 428.)

## 1885

**Jan. 9, 1885**—H.P.B. receives from Master M. a new plan for her *Secret Doctrine*. Colonel Henry S. Olcott writes about this as follows:

“...as my Diary entry states — ‘H.P.B. got from her Teacher the plan for her *Secret Doctrine*, and it is excellent. Oakley and I tried our hands at it yesterday, but this is much better.’ Meanwhile, the accumulation of materials for the book had long been going on. It will be news to some that this was not originally intended to be a new book, but only a recasting and amplification of *Isis Unveiled*, with the late T. Subba Row, B.A., B.L., as co-editor with H.P.B. As first advertised in the *Theosophist*, it was to have been issued in monthly parts of 77 pages each, and to have run to about twenty parts. This new scheme, given her by her Teacher, changed this programme, and the gradual building up of the present grand work [as published in 1888] was the result.”

(Source: Henry S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume III, pp. 199-200.)

**March 31, 1885**—In poor health, H.P.B. leaves the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, India, and sails for Naples, Italy, accompanied by Miss Mary Flynn, Bawaji (Dharbagiri Nath), and Franz Hartmann. She will never return to India.

(Sources: Henry S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume III, p. 222; Henry Olcott’s Diaries; *Theosophist*, Volume VI, Supplement, May, 1885, p. 195; letter of H. S. Olcott to Francesca Arundale, April 1, 1885, in *Theosophist*, October, 1932; H.P.B.’s letter to Henry Olcott, April 11, 1885.)

**April, 1885**—While on the voyage to Naples, H.P.B. frequently gets many pages of MSS. for her *Secret Doctrine* in an occult manner. Franz Hartmann writes:

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“...in April, 1885, when I accompanied H. P. Blavatsky from Madras to Europe, while on board the *SS. Tibre* and on the open sea, she very frequently received in some occult manner many pages of manuscript referring to *The Secret Doctrine*, the material of which she was collecting at the time....”

(Source: Letter of Franz Hartmann to Mrs. Vera Johnston, June 2, 1893, in Countess Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 109.)

**April 11, 1885**—H.P.B. on board ship writes to Colonel Olcott back in India:

“...When preparing to go on the steamer, Subba Row told me to write the Secret Doctrine and send to him through you every week what I had written. I promised this to him and will do so....He is going to make notes and commentaries and then the T.S. will publish it....”

(Source: H.P.B.’s letter to Henry S. Olcott, dated April 11, 1885, and quoted in Boris de Zirkoff, *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*, p. 7.)

**April 13, 1885**—H.P.B. reaches Aden.

(Source: H.P.B.’s letter to Colonel Olcott., April 11, 1885; Lloyd’s of London records.)

**April 23, 1885**—H.P.B. and party reach Naples, Italy.

(Source: Lloyd’s of London records.)

**July (end), 1885**—H.P.B. leaves Italy for Würzburg, Germany.

(Source: V. S. Solovyoff, *Modern Priestess of Isis*, 1895 English ed., pp. 132-133.)

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**August (soon after 12th), 1885**—H.P.B. and Bawaji reach Würzburg, Germany and take an apartment at 6 Ludwigstrasse.

(Sources: Countess Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 49; V. S. Solovyoff, *Modern Priestess of Isis*, 1893 Russian ed., pp. 190-91.)

**August (after middle), 1885**—Vsevolod S. Solovyoff arrives in Würzburg to visit H.P.B. and stays at Hotel Rugmer.

(Sources: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 117; V. S. Solovyoff, *Modern Priestess of Isis*, 1895 English ed., p. 144.)

**August (late), 1885**—H.P.B. writes to her sister Vera de Zhelihovsky in Russia:

“I am sitting quietly in Würzburg, waiting for Nadya’s [H.P.B.’s aunt] promised visit, and won’t stir from here. I am writing a new book [*The Secret Doctrine*] which will be worth two such as *Isis*.”

(Source: H.P.B.’s letter to her sister Vera, *The Path*, August, 1895, p. 142.)

**September 1, 1885**—Miss Francesca Arundale and Mohini M. Chatterji come to Würzburg on a visit from London. H.P.B.’s aunt, Nadyezhda A. de Fadeyev, arrives from Russia to visit her.

(Sources: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 119; V. S. Solovyoff, *Modern Priestess of Isis*, 1895 English ed., pp. 172-73.)

**September 21 to October 1, 1885**—A.P. Sinnett and his wife Patience visit H.P.B. at Würzburg. Mr. Sinnett writes:

“The ‘Secret Doctrine’ was still untouched in September 1885, when my wife and I saw her...and some premoni-

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tory symptoms indicated that the preparation of the ‘Secret Doctrine’ might shortly be set on foot.”

(Sources: A.P. Sinnett, *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky*, 1886 edition, pp. 302-03; A.P. Sinnett, *Autobiography of A.P. Sinnett*, p. 32.)

**October (early), 1885**—H.P.B. writes to Mr. Sinnett about the Mahatmas helping her with *The Secret Doctrine*:

“...But Master [Morya] said to me that...He would help and the Mahatma [Koot Hoomi] also, as They are often here now for the Secret Doctrine....”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 253.)

**October (early), 1885**—Franz Hartmann, Prof. C. W. Sellin, Dr. William Hübbe-Schleiden, and Mr. and Mrs. Schmiechen visit H.P.B. at Würzburg.

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, pp. 121, 244.)

**October (early), 1885**—Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden gives the following details of his trip to Würzburg:

“When I visited her in October, 1885, she [Madame Blavatsky] had just begun to write it [*The Secret Doctrine*]....I remained with her in Würzburg about a week or ten days....While I occupied myself chiefly with Babaji, who was then living with her, she was writing at her manuscript almost all day, from the early morning until the afternoon and even until night, unless she had guests. At that time she wrote articles for *The Theosophist* as well....For instance [the article titled]: ‘Have animals souls?’....But she had scarcely any books, not half a dozen, and I had to procure for her an English Bible, either to quote some text correctly or to control the correctness of some quotation....I...saw her write down

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sentences as if she were copying them from something before her....”

(Source: Countess Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 112, 111.)

**October (early), 1885**—H.P.B. writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“Yesterday Franz Gebhard delighted me with his arrival and rejoiced my ears with the following quotation from a letter....

“‘Besides the block of Humanity to which we belong, passing round the chain of planets—as correctly described in E[soteric B[uddhism]—*there are six other similar blocks simultaneously evolving on other parts of the chain.*’

“To this I listened in silent dismay, and would have remained dumb on the subject for ever had not Master’s far away tones struck me . . . on the ear coming from the N.W. direction (for a wonder! He must be roaming somewhere in Europe my Boss) and saying: ‘Now don’t you let Sinnett go off again on the *wrong* track. Explain.’ Just as though *I* had led you deliberately on to wrong tracks and not your own . . . vile curiosity! Easy to say ‘explain,’ I wish *He* would Himself; for if I do and you do not understand me, or—which is as likely I shall not be able to ‘explain’ so that you should understand, I shall be responsible for it and the only one blamed as usual.

“However, listen, and you may perhaps realise also what led even Mohini *off* the right mechanical track and made him write the unutterable flapdoodle he has in *Man* [an 1885 book written by Mohini M. Chatterji and Laura C. Holloway]—from the simply mechanical-*cosmos*-arrangement standpoint and tolerably correct one, if understood as applying to the ‘simultaneous evolution’ of

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the *six races* you are talking about, in a Socrates-like way, with your DAIMON whispering it in your ear. For I don't see *how* you could have got the idea in any other way.

“There are six races besides our own, which makes seven races, if you please. Seven upper ones and seven *nether*, or lower ones which make in all the 14 Brahmanical *lokas* spoken about in the *Vedanta*. This is the *exoteric* text: ‘From the *five quintuplated elements* (the five quintuplated Buddhas of Rhys Davids and *exoteric* Buddhism)—proceed or spring, one above the other, the worlds *Bhur, Bhuvan, Swar, Mahar, Janas, Tapas* and *Satya*; and *one below the other*, the nether worlds called *Atula, Vitala, Sutala, Rusatala, Talatala, Mahatala* and *Patala*.’ Now all the Orientalists have made a worse mess of it than you would, had I not been ordered to come benevolently to your rescue. Wilson makes of it in *Vishnu Purana* (pp. 209, 225 Vol ii) a regular *olla podrida*. Nor shall your great mathematician Elliot do you any good in the calculation of *duration* as you want him for he has not the ROOT number which cannot be given. So ‘Boss’ says, not I. However.

“What I give you now—please do not use it before it comes out in SECRET Doctrine—for it is from there as Master gave me.”

I have only given above the beginning part of H.P.B.'s letter to Mr. Sinnett in which she apparently copies for Mr. Sinnett's benefit a portion of her *Secret Doctrine* manuscript. See complete letter for all the quoted material from the S.D.

This quoted portion from the S.D. manuscript may have been from the portion dealing with cosmogony. Nevertheless, this quoted material is NOT found anywhere in the published *Secret Doctrine*, Volumes I and II (1888)

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or in Volume III (1897). This material is therefore missing and unaccounted for to the present day.

See also a followup letter that H.P.B. wrote to Mr. Sinnett in which she continues her explanations. In this letter, she writes:

“Well you say you got that ‘impression’ while reading some matter among the *Secret Doctrine* (in Dharbagiri’s writing). I looked over carefully page by page and found nothing in D. N.’s writing, but in Damodar’s which you probably mistook. It is about what the Earth (and other planets) does during ‘obscuratation’? Is it this? For if so, then I can tell you that Damodar wrote it *under dictation*—but you have not understood the meaning quite correctly. It *does* refer to the ‘worlds’ I speak of and says (restoring it in its *full* sense) the following:—

“‘It (the planet) cannot be resting for such a length of time. The fact is, that after our exit from here, the Planet gets ready to receive another group of Humanity coming after us. On the Planetary chain there are *seven groups* of Humanity simultaneously evolving; each Planet receiving *another group*, after one has passed away to the next Planet. These seven are distinct groups and do not intermingle with each other.’ (But some of them do with *us* or our planet, as I shall show). Then, he goes on talking of *natural* and artificial Fifth Rounders. Is it this? I take it to be what you found among my papers and as there is nothing else so I shall talk on this.

“No your theory *does not* conflict so far, with facts; but then they must be shown to you in their correct position, not in a fanciful one like Mohini’s theory of *Rings* and *Rounds*. The conversation you had with me referred in *my* mind only to the *surplus* of Humanity or of the ‘family’ left over when partial obscuratation came, not to the *nature* of that family. I shall try to explain as well as

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I can. By the bye. Dharbagiri says that he never meant anything but the 14 Brahma lokas.”

I will not quote any more from this followup letter but again it appears that we have here material never published by H.P.B.

Both letters from which I have quoted above contain important information and esoteric teaching for readers and students of *The Secret Doctrine*.

(Source: *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, Letter CXVIII, pp. 244-248; Letter CXIX, pp. 248-254.)

**October 10 (est.), 1885**—H.P.B. has a bad time with her heart. A doctor is called in to see H.P.B.’s condition.

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 133.)

**October 28, 1885**—H.P.B. writes to Colonel Olcott:

“I have not much time now with the *Secret Doctrine*. I am only at the middle of Part I, but shall in a month or two send you the first six sections.

“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.

“Cycles are explained, along with everything else, from their occult bearings....”

(Source: Henry S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume III, p. 317.)

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**November—(sometime during the month), 1885**—H.P.B. writes to Mr. Sinnett about her writing of *The Secret Doctrine*:

“...The thing at N[ew] Y[ork] is repeated—only far clearer and better. I begin to think it shall vindicate us. Such pictures, panoramas, scenes *antediluvian* dramas with all that! Never saw or heard better.”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 244.)

**November 25, 1885**—H.P.B. in a letter to Colonel Olcott tells him:

“...I have three Chap[ters] ready, the *fourth* nearly finished and the S.D. shall be another, quite another kind of hair-pin than *Isis*....if he [Subba Row] is willing to be looking over the MSS and correct them or add, or take out—then *I am willing by return post* to send what I have to Adyar.

“...Well, say the word—by return post and I shall send what I have already. But you must be very careful that there should be no repetitions in such case as I shall have no MS. to refer to....”

(Source: Letter of H.P.B. to Henry S. Olcott, unpublished letter in Adyar Archives, quoted in Boris de Zirkoff, *The Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*, pp. 10-11.)

**November (last part of month), 1885**—Countess Constance Wachtmeister joins H.P.B. at Würzburg. She writes:

“In the month of November, 1885, I went to Würzburg to visit Madame Blavatsky...Madame Blavatsky was settled in comfortable apartments with lofty rooms and with the quiet surroundings she so much needed for the stupendous work in which she was engaged....”

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“...It was evening when I reached Madame Blavatsky’s lodgings, and as I mounted the stairs my pulse was a little hurried while I speculated upon the reception which awaited me. Madame Blavatsky’s welcome was a warm one....

“I remember very well that it was then, on going into the dining room together to take some tea, that she said to me abruptly, as of something that had been dwelling on her mind.

“ ‘Master says you have a book for me of which I am much in need.’ ”

“ ‘No, indeed,’ I replied, ‘I have no books with me.’ ”

“ ‘Think again,’ she said, ‘Master says you were told in Sweden to bring a book on the Tarot and the Kabbalah.’ ”

“Then I recollected the circumstances...From the time I had placed the volume in the bottom of my box it had been out of my sight and out of my mind. Now, when I hurried to the bedroom, unlocked the trunk, and dived to the bottom, I found it in the same corner I had left it when packing in Sweden, undisturbed from that moment to this. But this was not all.

“When I returned to the dining room with it in my hand, Madame Blavatsky made a gesture and cried, ‘Stay, do not open it yet. Now turn to page ten and on the sixth line you will find the words . . . .’ And she quoted a passage.

“I opened the book which, let it be remembered, was no printed volume of which there might be a copy in H.P.B.’s possession, but a manuscript album in which had been written notes and excerpts by a friend of mine

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for my own use; yet, on the page and at the line she had indicated, I found the very words she had uttered.

“When I handed her the book I ventured to ask her why she wanted it. ‘Oh,’ she replied, ‘for *The Secret Doctrine*. That is my new work that I am so busily engaged in writing. Master is collecting material for me. He knew you had the book and told you to bring it that it might be at hand for reference.’

“...At this time I learned little more concerning *The Secret Doctrine* than that it was to be a work far more voluminous than *Isis Unveiled*, that it would consist when complete of four volumes....Soon, however, I was entrusted with the task of making fair copies of H.P.B.’s manuscript, and then of course I began to get some glimpses of the subject matter of *The Secret Doctrine*....”

“...Every morning at 6 a.m. she used to rise, having a good hour’s work before her breakfast at 8 a.m., then, after having read her letters and newspapers she would again settle to her writing [of *The Secret Doctrine*], sometimes calling me into the room to tell me that references from books and manuscripts had been given to her by her Master with the chapter and page quoted, and to ask me whether I could get friends to verify the correctness of these passages in different Public Libraries: for as she read everything reversed in the Astral Light, it would be easy for her to make mistakes in dates and numbers—and in some instances it was found that the number of the page had been reversed, for instance 23 would be found on page 32, etc.”

(Sources: Collated from Countess Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 23, 18; and <http://blavatskyarchives.com/wacht1891b.htm>)

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**December (some time after the 5<sup>th</sup>), 1885**—In a letter to Franz Hartmann, H.P.B. writes:

“The dear Countess Wachtmeister is with me, and copies for me, and does what she can in helping....Now, as you know, I...am occupied with my book....I have written in a fortnight more than 200 pages (of the *Isis* shape and size). I write day and night...I am permitted to give out for each chapter a page out of the Book of Dzyan—the oldest document in the world, of that I am sure—and to comment upon and explain its symbology. I think really it shall be worth something, and hardly here and there a few lines of dry facts from *Isis*. It is a completely new work.”

(Source: Letter from H.P.B. to Franz Hartmann, quoted from *The Path*, January, 1896, p. 299.)

**December 28, 1885**—Countess Wachtmeister writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“...No news to give you, the days glide away very smoothly and Madame says the *S.D.* goes on wheels. Madame [Blavatsky] would be very glad if Mr. Sinnett would kindly begin to make enquiries about publication [*of The Secret Doctrine*], etc., with prices, she would like the pamphlet to be about the size of the *Platonist*, different from ordinary magazines—there will be two chapters each month every chapter containing about 90 of her written sheets. She wishes the type to be a large and distinct one.

“Madame hopes shortly to send the Preface with 1st Chapter to Mr. Sinnett. I am very glad to be here with Madame for I feel that I am a comfort and of use to her. I also consider it a great privilege to be allowed to witness the marvellous way in which this book is being written.”

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(Source: Letter from Countess Wachtmeister to A.P. Sinnett, *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 268.)

**December 29, 1885**—Again Countess Wachtmeister writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“Watching Madame as I do every day writing her *S.D.* and seeing how thoroughly absorbed she is in her work, it seems to me a sad pity that anything should come to disturb her.... You see Madame must have peace of mind to enable her to write this book and it is only by ignoring or crushing scandals that this can be done.... she is in a calm and peaceful frame of mind and is perfectly happy writing the *S.D.*.... Madame supposes that there will be about 100 printed pages every month in the *S.D.*”

(Source: Letter from Countess Wachtmeister to A.P. Sinnett, *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, pp. 268-269.)

**December 31, 1885**—“On New Year's Eve,” Prof. Sellin comes to visit H.P.B. He brings with him the Society for Psychical Research Report in which H.P.B. is declared a fraud and Russian spy.

(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 25; letter from H.P.B. to H. S. O. dated Jan. 6, 1886.)

## 1886

**January 4, 1886**—Countess Wachtmeister writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“Madame is delighted with your proposition about the *S.D.* She thinks it is a most favourable and satisfactory arrangement for herself, but she says the journal must come out every month or if you think it better every

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three months, for if she lives she believes so much will be given to her that it will last 3 years or more. The size of the Journal you can arrange as you think best. There will be no regular preface, only about 6 or 7 pages addressed to the Reader to give them an idea of what the book will contain, for otherwise they would be plunging wholesale into matter entirely unknown to them.

“Madame will send you shortly the Title pages, and in a week or so the address to the Reader with first two chapters. From this you will be able to judge of the general purpose of the whole work. I wish myself that some clever theologian could be found who would read and criticise before the book is put into print....”

“Thank you very much for sending *Phallicism*. . . . Madame is much interested to find that ‘Phallicism’ contains a few of the things which she has *already* written out in the *S.D.*, only given in a Jesuitical point of view, and she intends to cut them up finely; it was in reading her manuscripts that I saw the resemblance in some points and so was anxious that she should see the book. Again another curious fact. Madame had written many pages on the signification of numbers, and that the words Jehovah and Cain are simply algebraical numbers, when she receives by post a book from Arthur Gebhard which he has found in America and sends it to her as he thinks it so interesting, it corroborates and confirms all that she has previously written, only from a mathematical point of view. The book is by Skinner....”

(Source: Letter from Countess Wachtmeister to A.P. Sinnett, *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, pp. 271-72.)

**January (early), 1886**—Dr. William Hübbe-Schleiden comes on a second trip to Würzburg. He receives on this visit two important letters from Masters K.H. and M., concerning the authorship of *The Secret Doctrine*. Dr. Schleiden writes:

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“...I saw...[Madame Blavatsky]...one afternoon and night...early in January, 1886....she had finished about a dozen chapters [of *The Secret Doctrine*]. She was writing at her manuscript almost all day, from the early morning until the afternoon and even until night, unless she had guests....

“...I also saw her write down sentences as if she were copying them from something before her, where, however, I saw nothing....I saw a good deal of the well-known blue K.H. handwriting as corrections and annotations on her manuscripts as well as in books that lay occasionally on her desk.

“...on the night of my last parting from H.P.B., the two...[letters from Masters KH and M] were given to me. At least I found them in my copy of Hodgson's *S.P.R. Report* after I had left her....”

(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 111, 113.)

**January (early), 1886**—Master M.'s letter to Dr. Hübbschleiden reads:

“If this can be of any use or help to Dr. Hübbschleiden—though I doubt it—I, the humble undersigned Fakir, certify that the ‘Secret Doctrine’ is dictated to Upasika [H.P.B.] partly by myself & partly by my Brother K.H.”

(Source: *Letters from the Masters of Wisdom*, Volume II, Letters 69 and 70.)

**January (early), 1886**—Master K.H.'s letter to Dr. Hübbschleiden reads:

“I wonder if this note of mine is worthy of occupying a select spot with the documents reproduced [in Hodgson-

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S.P.R. Report], and which of the peculiarities of the ‘Blavatskian’ style of writing it will be found to most resemble? The present is simply to satisfy the Dr. that ‘the more proof given the less believed.’ Let him take my advice and not make these two documents public. It is for his own satisfaction that the undersigned is happy to assure him that *The Secret Doctrine* when ready, will be the triple production of M., Upasika and the Doctor’s most humble servant [K.H.]”

(Source: *Letters from the Masters of Wisdom*, Volume II, Letters 69 and 70.)

**January 6, 1886**—H.P.B. writes to Colonel Olcott:

“...[*The*] *Secret Doctrine* is *entirely* new. There will not be there 20 pages quoted by bits from *Isis*. New matter, occult explanations....In *four* Parts—Archaic, Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Periods. Each Part 12 chapters, with Appendices and a Glossary of Terms at the end.

“Countess [Wachtmeister is] here, and she sees I have almost *no books*. Master [Morya] and Kashmiri [Master Koot Hoomi] dictating [to me] in turn. She copies all....

“Now listen. Secure the help of Subba Row for *Secret Doc*. Lots there of Adwaitism or *old* Aryan Religion occult....If he promises faithfully and you think he will do it I shall send you...two or three chapters at once; if not—I begin publishing here. Let him see first five or six chapt[ers] and judge....Answer at once....”

(Source: Letter of H. P. Blavatsky to H.S. Olcott, *The Theosophist*, August, 1931, p. 667.)

**January 6, 1886**—H.P.B. writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“Now I am here alone with the Countess for witness. I have no books, no one to help me. And I tell you that

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the *Secret Doctrine* will be 20 times as learned, philosophical and better than *Isis* which will be *killed* by it. Now there are hundreds of things I am permitted to say and *explain*. It will show what a Russian *spy* can do, an alleged *forger plagiarist* etc. The whole Doctrine is shown the *mother stone* the foundation of all the religions including Xty, and on the strength of *exoteric* published Hindu books, with their symbols explained *esoterically*. The extreme lucidity of ‘Esoteric Buddhism’ will also be shown and its doctrines proven correct mathematically, geometrically logically and scientifically. . . .”

(Source: *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Chronological Edition, p. 456.)

**January 11, 1886**—Countess Wachmeister writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“Not a word has been added to the S[ecret] D[octrine] since the 31st Dec., but if we can only get a few days of calm and quiet I hope Madame [Blavatsky] will be able to begin writing again.”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 273.)

**January 15, 1886**—The Countess writes to Sinnett again:

“...At last Madame has settled down again to [work on] the S.D., *a whole fortnight lost*.”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 273.)

**January 19, 1886**—Henry Olcott in India writes to H.P.B.:

“You may send the MSS. in installments: Subba Row will go over it with Oakley and it will be returned to you. He asked if he should be free to add or amend, to which I answered of course, it was for that he was requested to edit it. He then consented....Send the S.D.

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MSS. to Oakley's address, as I sail for Colombo on the 25th and shall be absent 3 months....”

(Source: Letter from Henry S. Olcott to H.P.B., *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, pp. 326, 328.)

**Jan. 27, 1886**—Col. Olcott sails for Ceylon [Sri Lanka] on a prolonged lecture tour.

(Source: Henry S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume III, pp. 351-52).

**January, 1886**—H.P.B. writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“I will send to you two or three chapters of S.D. before I send them to Subba Row to India. I want you to see and read it for yourself before it [is] passed through the hands of S.R....”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 197.)

**March 3, 1886**—H.P.B. writes to A.P. Sinnett and tells him that she has finished an “enormous Introductory Chapter” of *The Secret Doctrine*:

“There’s a new development and scenery, every morning. I live two lives again. Master finds that it is too difficult for me to be looking consciously into the astral light for my S.D. and so, it is now about a fortnight, I am made to see all I have to as though in my dream. I see large and long rolls of paper on which things are written and I recollect them.

“Thus all the Patriarchs from Adam to Noah were given me to see—parallel with the Rishis; and in the middle between them, the meaning of their symbols—or personifications. Seth standing with Brighu for first sub-race of the Root race, for inst: meaning, anthropo-

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logically—first speaking human sub-race of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Race; and astronomically—(his years 912 y.) meaning at one and same time the length of the solar year in that period, the duration of his race and many other things—(too complicated to tell you now). Enoch finally, meaning the solar year when our present duration was settled, 365 days—(‘God took him when he was 365 years old’) and so on. It is very complicated but I hope to explain it sufficiently clear.

“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 [on Cosmogogenesis], every Section beginning with a page of translation from the Book of *Dzyan* and the Secret Book of ‘Maytreya Buddha’ *Champai chhos Nga* (in prose, not the five books in verse known, which are a blind) are no 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[ears] 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. How the Orientalists have failed to notice it passes comprehension.

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“Mr. Sinnett, dear, I have facts for 20 Vol[umes] like *Isis*; it is the language, the cleverness for compiling them, that I lack.

“Well you will soon [receive] this Prologue, the short survey of the forthcoming Mysteries in the text—which covers 300 pages of foolscap....”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, pp. 194-195.)

**March 12, 1886**—Countess Wachtmeister writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“In reading the first chapter I got so confused over the ‘Stanzas’ and the ‘Commentaries’ that I could make nothing of them. Madame then wrote the former in *red ink*, the latter in *black ink*, and now they are far easier to comprehend as confusion of ideas is avoided....”

(Source: Letter from Countess Wachtmeister to A.P. Sinnett, *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 294.)

**March 24, 1886**—H.P.B. writes to William Q. Judge:

“...I want you badly for the arrangement of *Secret Doctrine*. Such facts, *such facts*, Judge, as Masters are giving out will rejoice your old heart....”

(Source: Constance Wachtmeister’s *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 101.)

**April, 1886**—William Q. Judge in the very first issue of his new Theosophical journal *The Path* includes the following notice about Madame Blavatsky and her writing of *The Secret Doctrine*:

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“...Madame H. P. Blavatsky is now engaged upon this work, in Germany, where she went last year for her health. The subject is interesting, and the result of the author's endeavors will mark an era. It will not only be an amplification and explanation of *Isis Unveiled*, but will contain mines of further information. There will be in it verbatim passages from the Book of Dzyan and Limri [Lam-rim] of Tsong-Kha-pa, and old commentaries, to which, hitherto, access has not been possible, and great attention will be paid to the doctrine of Human Evolution, to Divine or White Magic, and Human or Black Magic. The portion in which the subject of the Divine Hermaphrodite is considered, should be of absorbing interest. It will be divided into four parts: Archaic, Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern, presenting the complete sequences of the development of Occultism and Magic in their religious and anti-religious aspects.”

(Source: *The Path* (New York), April 1886, p. 29.)

**April (before 20th), 1886**—Miss Emily Kislingbury visits H.P.B. at Würzburg.

(Sources: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 59; *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 302.)

**May 1 (or a few days before), 1886**—Marie Gebhard and Gustav Gebhard come to visit H.P.B. at Würzburg.

(Sources: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 59; *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 207.)

**May 5, 1886**—H. S. Olcott returns to Adyar after trip to Ceylon and has long talk with T. Subba Row on May 6th. Subba Row is in a very inimical state of mind and objects to H.P.B.'s return to India.

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(Sources: Henry S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume III, pp. 359-60; Josephine Ransom, *Short History of the Theosophical Society*, p. 232.)

**May 8, 1886** (estimated)—H.P.B. leaves Würzburg for Ostende, Belgium, accompanied by Miss Kislingbury. Countess Wachtmeister leaves with Marie Gebhard to visit Austria. The Countess plans to return to her home in Sweden.

Having arrived at Cologne, Germany, H.P.B. is persuaded by Gustav Gebhard to go to Elberfeld, Germany, for a visit with the Gebhard family.

(Sources: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 60-61; *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 302.)

**May 10, 1886**—H.P.B. slips on the parquet of her bedroom at Elberfeld. She sprains her ankle and hurts her leg.

(Sources: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 61; *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 213; letter from H.P.B. to Olcott, dated Ostende, July 14, 1886, published in *The Theosophist*, May, 1908.)

**May (middle), 1886**—Vera de Zhelihovsky (H.P.B.'s sister) and her daughter Vera arrive at Elberfeld on a visit.

(Sources: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 61, 105, 107; *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 213.)

**June 3, 1886**—Still at Elberfeld, H.P.B. writes Colonel Olcott:

“My foot has turned a more serious matter than was first thought. The sprain has held me already over 3 weeks in bed and armchair motionless and heaven knows whether in a fortnight I will be able to go to Ostende where I

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mean to settle and try to finish my unfortunate *Secret Doctrine*.

“That it is an *extraordinary* work and revelation I am now sure. A learned Occultist, an Englishman (one who is a man of exact science but whose name I cannot give, though he is known to the Countess and Mme. Gebhard) has proclaimed it a wonderful work, ‘full of the most important revelations and secrets’....Moreover, he has not found three words to correct in its English in the two enormous chapters he has seen, and that’s *flattering*....”

(Source: Letter of H.P.B. to Henry S. Olcott, dated “Elberfeld, June 3,” published in *The Theosophist*, August, 1931, p. 673.)

**June, 1886**—H.P.B. writes the Countess Wachtmeister:

“My old leg goes a little better, pain gone, but it is entirely helpless, and heaven alone knows when [I] will be able to walk with it even as superficially as I did before.

“Dear Mrs. Gebhard! She does nurse me....

“Manuscript of *The Secret Doctrine* came back from our Revd. friend; he finds it far superior to the introductory—but not even half-a-dozen words corrected. He says it is *perfect*....”

(Source: Letter of H.P.B. to Constance Wachtmeister, quoted in Countess Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 49.)

**June, 1886**—Vera Johnston, H.P.B.’s niece, writes the following about her stay with H.P.B. at Elberfeld, Germany:

“In June, 1886, I stayed with my aunt in Elberfeld and then in Ostend. It was her habit to read out in the afternoon what was written of *The Secret Doctrine* in the

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preceding night. Not knowing much English then I am sorry to say I was seldom present at these readings and only half understood the conversations that ensued...

“Generally on coming down in the morning from the bedroom I occupied in the house of Madame Gebhard together with my mother, I found my aunt deep in her work. So far as I know, she never wrote at that time in the morning, but carefully went over what was written the previous night. One day I saw evident traces of perplexity written on her face. Not wishing to disturb her I sat down quietly and waited for her to speak. She remained silent a long time with her eyes fixed on some point on the wall, and with a cigarette between her fingers, as was her custom. At last she called out to me:

“ ‘Vera,’ she said, ‘do you think you could tell me what is a pi?’ ”

“Rather astonished at such a question, I said I thought a pie was some kind of an English dish.

“ ‘Please don’t make a fool of yourself’ she said rather impatiently, ‘don’t you understand I address you in your capacity of a mathematical pundit. Come and see this.’ ”

“I looked at the page that lay before her on the table, and saw it was covered with figures and calculations, and soon became aware that the formula  $\pi = 3.14159$  was put down wrongly throughout them all. It was written  $\pi = 31.4159$ . With great joy and triumph I hastened to inform her of her mistake.

“ ‘That’s it!’ she exclaimed. ‘This confounded comma bothered me all the morning. I was rather in a hurry yesterday to put down what I saw, and to-day at the first glance at the page I intensely but vaguely felt there was something wrong, and do what I could I could not re-

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member where the comma actually was when I saw this number.’ ”

“Knowing very little of Theosophy in general and my aunt’s ways of writing in particular at that time, I of course was greatly struck with her not being able to correct such a slight mistake in the very intricate calculations she had written down with her own hand.

“ ‘You are very green,’ she said, ‘if you think that I actually know and understand all the things I write. How many times am I to repeat to you and your mother that the things I write are dictated to me, that sometimes I see manuscripts, numbers, and words before my eyes of which I never knew anything.’ ”

“On reading *The Secret Doctrine* several years later I recognised the page. It was one of the pages which discuss Hindu astronomy....”

(Source: Countess Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 107-109.)

**July 8, 1886**—H.P.B. leaves Elberfeld for Ostende accompanied by her sister and niece. Upon arrival at Ostende, she stays at Villa Nova, 10, Boulevard Van Isgham.

(Source: H.P.B.’s letter to Henry Olcott (dated July 14, 1886), published in *The Theosophist*, May, 1908.)

**July (before the 12<sup>th</sup>), 1886**—H.P.B. writes to the Countess Wachtmeister about her arrival in Ostende and also about *The Secret Doctrine*:

“Here I am [in Ostende]...For one night at the Continental [Hotel] I had to pay 117 francs for our rooms. Then in despair my sister rose in the morning and felt herself drawn to a certain part of the Boulevard on the sea shore, and in a side street she found an apart-

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ment...three splendid rooms on the left and two on the right of the passage, or five rooms and a kitchen downstairs....Result your legless friend established in a suite of rooms on the left, and my sister has two rooms, a bedroom, an elegant one, and a parlor or dining room on the right side of the passage. When she goes away, which will be in ten days, that suite remains empty.

“But then, perhaps Mr. Sinnett will come....

“Yes, I will try and settle once more at my *Secret Doctrine*. But it is hard. I am very weak, dear, I feel so poorly and legless as I never did when you were there [in Würzburg] to care for me....”

(Source: Letter from H.P.B. to Countess Wachtmeister, quoted in Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 50.)

**July 12 (est.), 1886**—A.P. Sinnett arrives in Ostende to visit H.P.B. Mrs. Patience Sinnett does *not* come with her husband to see H.P.B. Mr. Sinnett writes about this trip as follows:

“We [Sinnett and his wife Patience] spent the...holidays this year at Ventnor...But before joining my wife at Ventnor I...paid a visit to Madame Blavatsky at Ostende whither she had migrated....[A]ssisted by the diary...I find a reference to my departure for Ostende and for the rest, I well remember being for a time with the O[ld]L[ady] at Ostende where she was busy writing the Secret Doctrine....”

(Source: A. P. Sinnett, *The Autobiography of A. P. Sinnett*, p. 33.)

**July, 1886**—H.P.B. writes another letter to Countess Wachtmeister:

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“I am trying to write *The Secret Doctrine*. But Sinnett, who is here for a few days, wants all my attention directed to the blessed Memoirs [Mr. Sinnett’s forthcoming book titled *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky*]. Mrs. Sinnett was unable to come....”

(Source: Letter of H.P.B. to Countess Wachtmeister, quoted in Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 51.)

**July 14, 1886**—Vera de Zhelihovsky and her daughter leave H.P.B. at Ostende and go back to Russia. H.P.B. writes to Henry Olcott in India:

“....on the 8th of July....I had to leave Elberfeld. I did so with my sister and niece....Then...my sister had to go (they have left for [St.] Petersburg this morning)....The Countess [Wachtmeister] will come I suppose, to pass the winter with me in October or November....

“Well, about the *S.D.*....Of course, Subba Row’s advice will be priceless; if you can make him keep the MSS. no longer than a month it will be excellent. But suppose he keeps it an indefinite time....

“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.

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“This I will send after, if Subba Row approves of Chap. I, which consists of Seven Stanzas taken from the Book of Dzan (Dzyan) and is commented and glossed upon, as in the three glossaries upon it—in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan. I cannot part with it without having a copy, for, if lost on the way [to India], or otherwise mutilated, I cannot rewrite it. Now I am alone; no one to copy [the remaining S.D. manuscript] or help me.

“In a fortnight I will send you the Preface and 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter. But you must force S.R. to read and not to put it...aside, leaving it at his leisure and pleasure as he always does....”

(Sources: H.P.B.’s letter to Henry Olcott is dated July 14, 1886 and is published in *The Theosophist*, May, 1908, pp. 753-756; some of this text is also quoted by Boris de Zirkoff in his *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*, pp. 28-29.)

**August (early), 1886**—H.P.B. writes again to Colonel Olcott:

“Sinnett has left, after stopping with me three weeks, and Mrs. . . . [possibly Mrs. Mary Emily Bates, the future wife of Elliott Coues] remains for ten days more. She is very kind, and copies for me *The Secret Doctrine*.

“The enormous (volume) of Introductory Stanzas, the first chapter on the Archaic Period and Cosmogony, with numberless appendices, is ready; but how to send it to Adyar? Suppose it is lost! I do not remember one word of it, and so we would be cooked!

“...Z. has read it through twice and begun again for the third time. He has *not found one part to be corrected* in the English, and he is amazed, he says, at the ‘gigantic erudition and the soundness of reasoning in its showing of the esotericism of the Bible and its incessant parallels with the Vedas, Brahmanas, etc.’ This is a little more

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wonderful yet than *Isis*. Then you corrected, and [Alexander] Wilder suggested.

“Now, I am absolutely alone, with my arm-chair and inkstand before me, and no books to speak of.

“I wrote a whole section and the interpretation of a whole stanza (about 40 pages), without any books around me, and without stopping, for about four hours, simply listening....”

Colonel Olcott writes the following about the above letter:

“...H.P.B. cites the fact of Mr. Z. having sat with her for hours while she was transcribing what was spoken to her clairaudient sense by a Master, invisible to him but seen by herself.”

(Source: Quoted from Henry S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume III, pp. 379 & 383.)

**August 26th, 1886**—H.P.B. writes to A. P. Sinnett about a visit from Mary Gebhard:

“Mad[ame] Gebhard...is now here with me....”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 219.)

**September 21, 1886**—H.P.B. writes to Mr. Sinnett about the Secret Doctrine:

“Mme. G[ebhard] is gone [back home to Elberfeld]; I am alone, and I have profited by my isolation to think over a good deal....I saw Them [the Masters] and talked to and with Them, the whole evening and night yesterday....

“...I have sent Vol. I of the S.D. [via Madame Gebhard] to Adyar and am now on Vol. II—the *Archaic*. This

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alone with the new information in it will be more than you will be able to digest in 25 years with *the explanations promised....*”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 221-222.)

**September 23, 1886**—H.P.B. writing to Colonel Olcott says she is sending him First Volume of SD MSS through Madame Gebhard, who had just gone back home to Elberfeld:

“I send you the MSS. of *Secret Doc[trine]* through Mrs. Gebhard who will insure the thing for 3 or 4,000 marks. She took them with her to Elberfeld whither she returned.

“Now I send only 1st volume of *Introduct.* Section, and in a fortnight [I] will send the real pukka *S.D.*, *Archaic* Period [Volume 2 on Cosmogogenesis], the 7 Stanzas, from Book of *Dzyan* commented upon.

“There are in the 1st *Introductory* Vol[ume] *Seven Sections* (or Chapt[ers] §.) and 27 Appendices, several App[endices] attached to every *Section* from 3 to 6, etc. Now all this will make either more or at any rate one volume and *it is not the S.D.* [proper] but [only] a Preface to it.

“It [Volume I] is an absolutely necessary one, otherwise if they begin reading [first] the *Archaic* Vol[ume] on Cosmogogenesis] the public would get crazy before reading five pages, *too metaphysical.*

“Now, it is so arranged that the Appendices [in Volume I] can either go as attached to the [seven] Sections or be taken out and placed in a *separate Vol[ume]* or at the end of each, but you cannot put the App[endices] from the *Vol[ume]* of Preliminary Sections in Vol. II or Book I the *Archaic*; I have been careful to

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mark every page of App[endices] with title, number and to what Sect[ion] or Chap[ter] it belongs to. If you take out the App[endices] then there will not [be] 300 pages printed in Int. Sections, but they will lose in interest.

“Do, however, as you please, but do not lose pages and do not allow the thing to be mutilated. If you or S. Row find anything too much, cross it out lightly; and if you want to add, write the addition on a page and pin it to the page you add to....”

(Source: Letter of H.P.B. to Henry Olcott, dated Sept. 23, 1886, published in *The Theosophist*, March 1925, pp. 789-790, also quoted in Boris de Zirkoff, *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*, pp. 30-31.)

**[Note: These two manuscripts to be sent (one at a time) to Colonel Olcott in India were *not* the *original* manuscripts in H.P.B.'s own handwriting but copies made by Countess Wachtmeister, Mrs. Gebhard, and Mrs. Bates. Of course H.P.B. kept the originals with herself and later in May 1887 took these originals to England.**

Furthermore, the “1st volume” manuscript mentioned above by H.P.B. (as the first package going to India) is *only part* of the so-called “Würzburg Manuscript” now preserved in the Archives of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai, India.

This Volume I of the *extant* Würzburg Manuscript consists of only *five* sections and *one* appendix.

**Therefore, this letter from H.P.B. to Olcott indicates that the *extant* Volume I of the Würzburg Manuscript is *incomplete* and probably represents *only a quarter to a third* of the original first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*. In other words, the *extant* Volume I of the Würzburg Manuscript is missing two-thirds to three-quarters of what was sent to Adyar.—D. H. Caldwell]**

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**October (early), 1886**—Countess Wachtmeister joins H.P.B. at Ostende. The Countess writes:

“In October, 1886, I joined H.P.B. in Ostende, and found her settled in comfortable enough quarters....We recommenced our monotonous but interesting life, the thread being taken up from where it was last broken, and I watched with delight how the piles of manuscript for the *S.D.* were increasing. Our near vicinity to England caused people once more to come buzzing round H.P.B., and we received several visitors....”

(Source: Quoted from:

<http://blavatskyarchives.com/wacht1891b.htm>)

**October 1886**—H.P.B. writes the following to Mr. Sinnett about some of her SD commentaries on the Stanzas of Dzyan:

“Thanks for . . . Mr. [William] Crookes’ chemical speculations. He is a dear man who has all my respect, admiration and sympathy....Mrs. Countess has and says she understands nothing. Nor will I of course; we are ignorant fools she and I...Mr. Crookes...preaches and teaches a very old occult Doctrine. I will of course lay his work and new discovery before the Master [M.] and Mah[atma] K.H. and will let you have Their opinions.

“Meanwhile I am impressed to send you a few pages that I have unhooked from my Book I, Archaic Period [the SD manuscript on Cosmogogenesis] the beginning of which you have seen [in Ostende] and beg you to read them carefully....This [part of the SD manuscript] was written at Villa Nova when you left and the Countess has copied it all long ago. Only for mercy’s sake do not lose those 8 pages or you will ruin me in time lost and other things. If you find it answers please show to Mr. Crookes; if not—...then send back...those 8 pages....”

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(Source: *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 224-25.)

**October (three days later), 1886**—H.P.B. writes more to Mr. Sinnett about Professor Crookes and *The Secret Doctrine*. In this letter she also mentions in passing “the Comm[entary] on Stanza VI....”

“I doubt whether the news I have to give you will be found satisfactory by yourself or Mr. Crookes. I have heard from Master and—Masters. It appears (as I have thought from the first) that he is on the orthodox occult path, in his general method. ‘No one went nearer than he did to the laya region’ I am told. The laya is the Nirvana of all organic (we have no inorganic) Substance, the zero point or ‘neutral centre’ where all differentiation ceases....

“Well today Dj. Khool put in an [astral] appearance...he told me that Master sent in a word for you...: ‘Sinnett has evidently forgotten what he had read in the Comm[entaries] on the 7 Stanzas (Book II Archaic period). Otherwise he would have known that out of what is plainly stated there, seven such pamphlets (as about protyle) could be written by Mr. Crookes if he only knew it. No such scientific orthodox terms used in the S.D. but all that can be given out in this century is there and about chemistry and physics more than anything else. If Mr. Sinnett is willing to read those portions to Mr. Crookes—or Mr. Crookes wants to read them himself—send the MSS. to them by all means. . . . Anything that will appear hazy, incomprehensible or too grotesque I (Master) am willing to explain and even to be corrected if I fail to do so.’

“On my kicking against the idea of sending you the MSS. which I want all the time for reference...—Dj. Khool said that if I had any regard for yourself and

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Mr. Crookes I better do so, or else never ask Master to help anyone again....

“It is true that ever since you left [me at Ostende in July], Master has made me add some thing daily to the old [Secret Doctrine] MSS. so that much of it is new and much more that I do not understand myself. So that with God’s help you may find in it something to attract the attention of even such an eminent [scientific] man as Mr. Crookes. I never thought he was so learned—till I heard Masters’ opinions about him and his aura. Master says...there is no one higher than him in chemistry in England...”

(Source: *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 225-226.)

**October 18, 1886**—Mme. Blavatsky writes to G. Subbiah Chetty in India:

“... I am generally in poor health and my *Secret Doctrine* absorbs all my attention and takes up all my time. . . . Please tell Olcott that if as he thinks Subba Row has no time to go through the S.D. I better not send it to Adyar. . . .”

(Source: Boris de Zirkoff, *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*, pp. 31-32.)

**October 21, 1886**—Upon receiving a letter from Colonel Olcott, H.P.B. writes the following to him about the *Secret Doctrine* manuscript:

“Just a month ago, I gave to Mme. Gebhard the MSS. of S.D. [Volume I] to post [to India] from Elberfeld—insuring it for 3,000 marks. Well, last night as you wrote to me that it had not been received till now, I telegraphed to her to ask whether she had not sent it....and she answered she *was going to*.

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“Well after what you say of S[ubba] R[ow] that he won’t look at it even, of course it is better it should be printed without his approbation; for I want to begin [publishing] this spring and will go to London for it. *Have to* [go to London]—because of the proofreading, and the British Museum, and books.

“But now what shall I do for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Volume [on Cosmogogenesis], the beginning of the true Archaic Doctrine—where I have any number of Sanskrit words and sentences, and the esoteric meaning of any number of exoteric Hindu allegories from their Cosmogony and Theogony?

“Can you ask Shrinivas Row and Bhavani Row to help me? Then I could send you the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vol[ume] consisting of Books 1, 2 and 3. Unless someone helps I do not know what to do. And who will make the glossary? I can’t and have no time....Please answer immediately.

“The whole almost is given by the ‘old gentleman’ [Master Narayan] and Master [Morya] and there *are* wonderful things there I tell you. But someone must see to the Sanskrit and the corrections of the *exoteric* rendering. This book *will* make our future (yours and mine) see if it won’t.

“Meanwhile I have written to Mme. Gebhard to send the MSS. of Vol. I back here [to me] and not to send it to Adyar. It does seem useless since Subba R[ow] is no more to be hoped for....

“Rev. A. Ayton is on a visit now here to us and living in a room of mine upstairs, and the Countess takes care of him....

“...I am always thinking how to send to you Bhavani’s ring and what I promised to Babula....”

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(Source: Letter (dated Oct. 21, 1886) from H.P.B. to Colonel Olcott, quoted in Boris de Zirkoff, *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*, p. 33.)

**November (first part of), 1886**—H.P.B., writing to Mrs. Patience Sinnett, says:

“The Countess [Wachtmeister]...[a] few days or a fortnight ago...asked me whether I would not like to go for a week to London with her....I said I would think [about it]; finally [when] she asked again yesterday, I told her decidedly that I had neither time, wish, nor money to travel....Of course I have to go to London and am decided, but in two or three months, when I have matter enough ready and after I find what I need in London in the shape of a *flat*...I need two rooms for myself and a spare bedroom and kitchen.

“I have Louise’s husband, a Dane, coming to live with her without wages and promising to do what he can in the house, since she has to support him he being very delicate—simply for board and lodging....

“...What about the 8 pages from S.D. sent by me to Mr. Sinnett. Surely he has read them and either has found therein the spirit of Mr. Crookes’ *protyle* or has not. In either case do let him forward them [back] to me....”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 234-35.)

**November (middle of), 1886**—H.P.B. writes to Colonel Olcott:

“The Countess [Wachtmeister] who goes for a week to London will send from there three things in a box—

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“(1) The Saptapurna ring for Bhawani Rao. It is the seven-leaved mystical leaf, made of seven stones all consecrated to planets and *now* strongly magnetized....

“(2) The Mohur, I had for years, as you know—for Tookaram Tatya as he asks always for something magnetized by Master and myself. I have worn it for years. Please send to him or keep till he comes to Adyar [in December] for [the Theosophical Society] Anniversary....

“(3) A sovereign for poor Babula. It is little but I can give no more, being very poor as you know. If I make money this year with my work then will I give him £5. He is a good boy—give him my blessing and love....

“I will see what I can do to review...Pratt’s book. It is very *occult* no doubt, quite esoteric ideas some, yet terribly heretical and materialistic, these ‘New Aspects of Life.’ I hope the O[ld] Gentleman [Master Narayan] will help me.”

(Source: Letter of H.P.B. to Henry Olcott, undated, published in *The Theosophist*, August 1931, pp. 684-85.)

**November (middle of), 1886**—H.P.B. writes to Mr. Sinnett:

“Please...as soon as Mr. Crookes finishes that archaic stuff...send it back, as I have to send it [S.D.] to Subba Row who seems to lose patience now he is ordered [by Master Morya] to look it over....”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 236.)

**November (before the 18th), 1886**—H.P.B. writes to Countess Wachtmeister who was then in London for a week:

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“I sent a telegram yesterday asking whether I could send you . . . my MSS [of the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*], as I have to forward it without delay to Madras. It is all splendidly packed up by Louise’s husband, corded and sewn in oil cloth, all secure for the journey, so you will have no trouble with it, but [be sure] to have it insured. Please do this yourself. You are the only one in whom I have absolute faith.

“Olcott [now] writes that Subba Row is so anxious about the MSS. that he is enquiring daily when it comes, etc. and Master [Morya finally] ordered him, it appears, to look it over.

“Please send it on by this mail and do insure it for no less than £150 or £200, for if lost—well good-bye!—so I send it to you to-day to your address and do answer immediately [when] you receive it....”

(Source: Letter of H.P.B. to Countess Wachtmeister, undated, quoted in Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 66.)

**November (latter part of month), 1886**—Countess Wachtmeister returns to Ostende from London.

**December 10, 1886**—Colonel Olcott at Adyar, Madras, India, receives Volume I of *The Secret Doctrine* manuscript that had been mailed to him by Countess Wachtmeister when she was in London for a week in November.

In Olcott’s 1886 handwritten diary, the entry for December 10<sup>th</sup> reads in part:

“Rec[eiv]ed. MSS. of Secret Doctrine, Vol. I....”

In his book *Old Diary Leaves*, Olcott writes:

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“By the first week of December [1886]...I received from H.P.B., for reading and revision by T. Subba Row and myself, the MS. of Vol. I of *The Secret Doctrine*....”

(Source: Henry S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume III, p. 398.)

**Dec. 27, 1886**—Colonel Olcott in his Address at the Theosophical Society Annual Convention (Adyar, Madras, India) tells his audience about receiving Volume I of the SD:

“The MSS. of the first volume [of the *Secret Doctrine*] has been sent to me, and is undergoing revision. It will gratify you to learn that it more than maintains her [H.P.B.’s] reputation for learning and literary ability....”

(Source: *The Theosophist*, January 1887, Supplement, pp. xx-xxi.)

**Dec. 28, 1886**—Colonel Olcott also mentions receipt of this Volume I in his closing address about the opening of the Adyar Library. He says:

“...permit me...to announce that the entire MSS. of the first of five volumes that Madame Blavatsky is now writing upon the *Secret Doctrine* is in my hands; and that even a cursory reading has satisfied better critics than myself that it will be one of the most important contributions ever made to philosophical and scientific scholarship, a monument of the learned author, and a distinction to the Adyar Library, of which she is one of the founders.”

(Source: *The Theosophist*, January 1887, Supplement, p. xlvii.)

**December (last week of), 1886**—Countess Wachtmeister at H.P.B.’s request leaves Ostende and goes again to London. The Countess writes:

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“One day H.P.B. called me and asked me whether I could go to London to undertake some private business on her behalf. I told her that I would willingly do so, but felt anxious about leaving her alone. So I started for London with a heavy heart, as I thought of the ‘old lady’s’ loneliness and her look of sad yearning as she gave me a farewell kiss....”

(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 64-65.)

### 1887

**January 4, 1887**—H.P.B. answers a letter she has recently received from Colonel Olcott in India. She writes:

“This is the first time I awoke and passed a New Year *quite alone*, as if I were in my tomb. Not a soul the whole day, as the Countess [Wachtmeister] has gone to London and I have no one but Louise [H.P.B.’s Swiss maid] with me in the big house....

“I had been writing [on the *Secret Doctrine*] the whole day....occupied in finishing the Archaic Period....

“...[O]n the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan....I wrote to [Edward Douglas] F[awcett]....We are making very successful experiments with him in thought-reading, and he is amazed at some things, such a success!...

“I am glad Subba Row [has now read and] likes my *Protem* [first volume of *S.D.*]. But it is *only a Preliminary Vol[ume]* and the real, original doctrine is in the [second] Volume [on *Cosmogogenesis* that] I will send you when F[awcett] comes [to Ostende to visit me] on the

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20<sup>th</sup> and he will take it to England himself—for I cannot send it or rather *ensure it*, from here.

“So keep the other MSS. till you have read both [volumes] and see what changes to make. Let S.R. do what he likes—I give him *carte blanche*. I trust in his wisdom far more than in mine, for I may have misunderstood in many a point both Master and the Old G[entleman Narayan]. They give me facts only and rarely dictate in succession. I am *no maker* of books you know it. But I know that my facts are all original and new. Wait and see....

“...Have you received the three gold things I sent? The Countess sent them [to you from London] on the same day as the MSS. [of the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*]....”

(Source: H.P.B. in a letter dated January 4, 1887 to Colonel Olcott, published in *The Theosophist*, August 1931, pp. 681-683.)

**January, 1887**—H.P.B. writes to Countess Wachtmeister who is in London at this time:

“...After a long conversation with Master [Morya] ...[e]ither I have to return to India to die this autumn, or I have to form between this and November next a nucleus of true Theosophists, a school of my own, with no secretary, only myself alone, with as many mystics as I can get to teach them. I can stop here [in Ostende], or go to England, or whatever I like....

“...Because I wrote twice or thrice to Z. [Fawcett] telling him what he did and thought and read on such and such a day, he is crazy and a full blown mystic.

“Well, may the Master inspire and protect you, for you have to play a part in the coming struggle.

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“I hear the people who subscribed to *The Secret Doctrine* are getting impatient—[but it] cannot be helped. I, *you know*, work fourteen hours a day.

“The last MSS. [of the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*] sent [by you] to Adyar will not be back [with comments and corrections] for three months, but then we can begin publishing. Subba Row is making valuable notes, so Olcott tells me [in his latest letter]. ....

“I wish to goodness you would come back quicker. Your room upstairs with stove is ready, so you will be more comfortable. But you do useful work in London....”

(Source: H.P.B.'s letter to Countess Wachtmeister, quoted in Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 66-67.)

**January 10, 1887**—H.P.B. writes to Mr. Sinnett about *The Secret Doctrine*, etc:

“You want to know what I am doing? Atoning for my sins of having sent to you my *Archaic Doct[rine]* before it was ready. Rewriting it, adding to it, pasting and re-pasting, scratching out and replacing my notes from my AUTHORITIES. I was told to send you the MS.—but not told when. The Countess [Wachtmeister] who is always on the look out for practical things, wanting to profit through [Bernard] Hamilton going back to London—made me send with him the MS....

“...Fawcett is coming to see me on the 21<sup>st</sup>. He will be the first human creature I will talk to since the Countess is gone; for even my doctor is sick and I never saw him but once this month. For three weeks I am practicing the Pythagorean ‘silence-vow’ and see only astrals from morning till night.

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“You know, that young Fawcett is my great friend now. A few experiments having succeeded he sees in me a ‘Magician’! Only because I saw what he thought one or two nights, and described it to him. Well! I hope his enthusiasm will not evaporate....”

(Source: *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 226-227.)

**January 21, 1887**—Approximate date when Edward Douglas Fawcett comes to visit H.P.B. at Ostende.

(Source: *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 227).

**January (sometime after 21<sup>st</sup>), 1887**—H.P.B. writes again to Countess Wachtmeister who was still in London:

“Remember much as I need you (and I need you badly), as I know through Master that you are doing excellent work in London, please stay a week or more even, if you think it right. I feel very miserable, but I can stand it, never mind.

“Z. [Fawcett] is very young and never gets up till 12 or 1 o’clock, but he is doing me good service, finding me a few quotations and correcting the English in some of the appendices [of *The Secret Doctrine*]....”

(Source: H.P.B.’s letter to Countess Wachtmeister, quoted in Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 65-66.)

**February, 1887**—Writing to A. P. Sinnett, H.P.B. tells him:

“I have never read Rhys David’s *Paranibbana* and therefore do not know how far he blunders. But judging by what I have read by him, I should say he blunders all along the line and to set it as all a blunder is the safest.

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“Boar’s flesh eaten by Buddha is of course a very transparent symbology. The first form assumed by Brahma when he arose from primal chaos (water in which the earth was formed, see *Ramayana*), and Manu, was that of a boar who raised the earth out of that water.

“The dish of *rice* and *boar’s* flesh refers to Brahmanism. The Secret Doctrine explains that the legend of the Adepts of the *Left Path*— (whose descendants are now the *Tantrikas*) —Brahmins, had by magical arts, induced Buddha to eat of a meal of boar’s flesh with rice. That rice was, called *tsale rice*—synonymous with the paradise for ‘forbidden fruit’ or apple....

“I am explaining this symbolism in the *Secret Doctrine* along with other things.

“The explanation of it is simply that *left hand* Brahmanism (instead of the *Right Divine Knowledge*) prevailed. The rice is the ‘forbidden fruit’ and boar and *pig’s flesh* is Brahmanical exotericism—Buddha being vowed to secrecy and having compromised between the whole truth and symbolism as much as he dared—that truth choked him and he died of grief for being unable to explain all....

“There is an extraordinary and awful mystery at the bottom of this ridiculous allegory which none but the initiates know. If it had been simple pork and rice—how is it that Buddha compares the ‘pork and rice’ or puts it on the same footing as the delicious *Nogana* he ate on the morning of the day when he reached Buddha-ship? And why should he send Ananda to thank the goldsmith’s son for the exquisite food and promise him great rewards for it *hereafter* in Brahma-loka.

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“I explain it as far as I am allowed in one of the Chap[ters] of *Secret Doctrine* which *grows, grows and grows....*”

(Source: *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 241-242.)

**February, 1887**—H.P.B. writes again to Countess Wachtmeister:

“Only a few words, since, thank goodness, I will see you again soon....”

“Ever since you went away, I have felt as though either paralysis or a split in the heart would occur. I am as cold as ice and four doses of *digitalis* in one day could not quiet the heart.

“Well, let me only finish my *Secret Doctrine*.

“Last night, instead of going to bed I was made to write till 1 o’clock. The *triple Mystery* is given out....”

(Source: H.P.B.’s letter to Countess Wachtmeister, quoted in Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 68.)

**February 23, 1887**—H.P.B. writes to William Q. Judge in New York:

“...I will be June the 1<sup>st</sup> in London. If, during this summer you came for a month or two—it would do you good and my S.D. too as I will be reading the proof sheets. . . .”

“...today....dear old [Bertram] Keightley [is here].... [he] came from Engl[and] to see me....”

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(Source: H.P.B.'s letter to William Q. Judge, published in *The Theosophical Forum*, July, 1932, pp. 224 & 227.)

**February (late), 1887**—Bertram Keightley is in Ostende visiting H.P.B. He writes later about his trip to Ostende as follows:

“The first I saw of *The Secret Doctrine* manuscript was on a visit paid to H.P.B. at Ostend...[in] 1887. I had gone over to urge upon H.P.B. the advisability of coming to settle in London for the purpose of forming a centre for active work in the cause of Theosophy. There were six of us in all who felt profoundly dissatisfied with the deadness which seemed to pervade the [Theosophical] Society in England, and we had come to the conclusion that only H.P.B. could give efficient aid in restoring the suspended animation of the movement, and initiating active and wisely directed work. Of these six—with H.P.B. the original founders of the first Blavatsky Lodge—two only, alas! now remain active workers in the Society.

“During the few days I then spent at Ostend with H.P.B., she asked me to look over parts of the MSS. of her new work, which I gladly consented to do. Before I had read much it grew plain that *The Secret Doctrine* was destined to be by far the most important contribution of this century to the literature of Occultism; though even then the inchoate and fragmentary character of much of the work led me to think that careful revision and much rearrangement would be needed before the manuscript would be fit for publication.

“On a second visit a week or two later, this impression was confirmed by further examination; but as H.P.B. then consented to come and settle in or near London as soon as arrangements could be made for her reception, nothing further was done about it at the time.”

## The Writing of *The Secret Doctrine*: A Chronology

(Source: Countess Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine*, 1893, p. 89.)

**February (sometime around the 23th), 1887**—H.P.B. writes to Mr. Sinnett about her progress on writing *The Secret Doctrine* manuscript [Volume 3 on Anthropogenesis]:

“...young Fawcett [is] upsetting books and furniture behind me [as I write this]....

“...I am [writing] on the 4<sup>th</sup> Race. I have done with the Hermaphrodite Third Race....”

(Source: *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, pp. 229-230.)

**February, 1887**—Countess Wachtmeister writes in her book *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*:

“...I hurried through the remaining work [I had to do in London] as quickly as possible, and was much distressed on arriving at Ostend to find H.P.B. looking so worn and ill. Mr. Z [Fawcett] left, and then we recommenced our usual routine of life, and the writing of *The Secret Doctrine* was carried on strenuously.

“Very rarely was I able to persuade H.P.B. to bask in a bath chair on the esplanade. I thought that the warmth from the sun and the sea air might do her good, but she always seemed dissatisfied when she came in, as if she felt she had done wrong in losing so much valuable time.

“She often said, ‘Soon we shall no longer be alone, and then the conditions will be altered, and the currents will be broken, and I shall not be able to work nearly so well.’

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“And so she would keep at her desk, no matter what her pains or sufferings were. She just clenched her teeth together and fought her battle bravely.”

(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 68-69.)

**March, 1887**—Archibald Keightley goes to see H.P.B. at Ostende. He writes:

“In the early months of 1887 there were some few members of the T.S. in London who felt that if Theosophy did not receive some vital impulse, the centre there would be confined to a few individuals only who were pursuing and would continue to pursue their studies. Of course there may have been many who felt the same, but I write here of those with whom I was actually in contact. There were many anxious discussions as to how a vital interest could be awakened in the truths of Theosophy, and how attention should be restored to the ethical philosophy. This was the more necessary, for in the public mind the philosophy had been inseparably connected with the phenomena.

“We all felt that we were working in the dark and that we were ignorant of the real basis upon which the philosophy rested. Obviously we required a leader who might intelligently direct our efforts. We then determined each separately to write to H. P. Blavatsky, who was then in Ostende, laying before the Founder of the T.S. and the Messenger of the Masters the position as each of us saw it. We asked her to reply in a collective letter giving us advice as to what to do. She replied, however, to each individual, writing letters of eight to twelve pages. The result of this was that we all wrote and asked her to come over and direct our efforts.

“She had told us that she was writing the *Secret Doctrine* and must finish that before undertaking other work.

## The Writing of *The Secret Doctrine*: A Chronology

Nevertheless we wrote to her that there was, we believed, urgent need of her directing presence, and that she could finish the *Secret Doctrine* in London as well as or better than in Ostende.

“After receiving her reply, which urged objections, Mr. Bertram Keightley went over to Ostende during the latter part of February or beginning of March and talked matters over with her. She agreed to come to London at the end of April provided we would find a house for her somewhere a little out of London in which she could work in peace. Soon after he returned I went over to Ostende rather unexpectedly myself.

“I naturally went to call after leaving my luggage at the hotel. Madame Blavatsky received me with the greatest kindness, although previously to that occasion I was almost unknown to her. She insisted that I should transfer my things to her house and stay with her while in Ostende. At that time she was occupying the first floor of the house, with a Swiss maid to wait on her and Countess Wachtmeister to keep her company. I was at once introduced to the *Secret Doctrine* with a request to read, correct, and excise, a privilege I naturally did not avail myself of.

“Madame Blavatsky at that time had never ventured out of her rooms since the previous November, and never came from her writing and bed-room into the dining-room until the windows had been closed and the room well warmed. Several attacks of inflammation of the kidneys had warned her that the slightest chill was dangerous to the completion of her work. At the close of my visit I returned to England with renewed assurances of her arrival on May 1<sup>st</sup>, and under pledge to return and assist Madame Blavatsky on her journey to London.”

(Source: *The Path* (New York), November 1892, pp. 245-248.)

**March (toward end of month) 1887**—H.P.B. becomes seriously ill with a kidney infection. Countess Wachtmeister gives the following account:

“To my great distress, I now began to notice that she [H.P.B.] became drowsy and heavy in the middle of the day, and often was unable to work [on *The Secret Doctrine*] for an hour together. This increased rapidly, and as the doctor who attended her pronounced it to be an affection of the kidneys, I became alarmed, and sent a telegram to Madame Gebhard to tell her of my apprehensions, and to beg her to come and help me. . . . I was, therefore, thankful when I received a cordial response to my telegram and knew that in a few hours I should see Madame Gebhard.

“When she came, I felt as if a great burden had been lifted off my shoulders. In the meanwhile H.P.B. was getting worse, and the Belgian doctor, who was kindness itself, tried one remedy after another, but with no good result, and I began to get seriously alarmed and anxious as to what course I should adopt. H.P.B. was in a heavy lethargic state, she seemed to be unconscious for hours together, and nothing could rouse or interest her. Finally, a bright inspiration came to me. In the London [Theosophical] group I knew there was a Doctor Ashton Ellis, so I telegraphed to him, described the state that H.P.B. was in, and entreated him to come without delay.

“I sat by H.P.B.’s bed that night listening to every sound as I anxiously watched the hours go by, till at last, at 3 a.m., the joyful sound of a bell was heard. I flew to the door, opened it, and the doctor [Ashton Ellis] walked in. I eagerly told him all her symptoms, and described the remedies that had been applied, whereupon he went to her and made her drink some medicine that he had brought with him. . . .

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“The next day there was a consultation between the two doctors. The Belgian doctor said that he had never known a case of a person with the kidneys attacked as H.P.B.’s were, living as long as she had done, and that he was convinced that nothing could save her. . . . Mr. Ellis replied that it was exceedingly rare for anyone to survive so long in such a state. He further told us that he had consulted a specialist before coming to Ostend, who was of the same opinion, but advised that, in addition to the prescribed medicine, he should try massage, so as to stimulate the paralyzed organs. . . .

“The night passed quietly, and several times the following day Mr. Ellis . . . [massaged] her until he was quite exhausted; but she got no better, and to my horror I began to detect that peculiar faint odour of death which sometimes precedes dissolution. I hardly dared hope that she would live through the night, and while I was sitting alone by her bedside she opened her eyes and told me how glad she was to die, and that she thought the Master would let her be free at last. Still she was very anxious about her *Secret Doctrine*. I must be most careful of her manuscripts and hand all over to Col. Olcott with directions to have them printed. She had hoped that she would have been able to give more to the world, but the Master knew best. And so she talked on at intervals, telling me many things. At last she dropped off into a state of unconsciousness, and I wondered how it would all end.

“It seemed to me impossible that she should die and leave her work unfinished; and then, again, the Theosophical Society . . . what would become of it? How could it be that the Master who was at the head of that Society should allow it to crumble away? . . . Still the thought came to me that the Master had told H.P.B. that she was to form a circle of students around her and that she was to teach them. How could she do that if she were to die? And then I opened my eyes and glanced at

her and thought, was it possible that she who had slaved, suffered, and striven so hard should be allowed to die in the middle of her work? . . .

“None of those who knew her, really understood her. Even to me, who had been alone with her for so many months, she was an enigma, with her strange powers, her marvelous knowledge, her extraordinary insight into human nature, and her mysterious life, spent in regions unknown to ordinary mortals, so that though her body might be near, her soul was often away in commune with others. . . .

“Such were the thoughts which passed through my mind, as I sat hour after hour that anxious night, watching her as she seemed to be getting weaker and weaker. A wave of blank despondency came over me, as I felt how truly I loved this noble woman, and I realised how empty life would be without her. . . . My whole soul rose in rebellion at the thought of losing her. . . . I gave a bitter cry and knew no more.

“When I opened my eyes, the early morning light was stealing in, and a dire apprehension came over me that I had slept, and that perhaps H.P.B. had died during my sleep—died whilst I was untrue to my vigil. I turned round towards the bed in horror, and there I saw H.P.B. looking at me calmly with her clear grey eyes, as she said, ‘Countess, come here.’

“I flew to her side. ‘What has happened, H.P.B.—you look so different to what you did last night.’

“She replied, ‘Yes, Master has been here; He gave me my choice, that I might die and be free if I would, or I might live and finish *The Secret Doctrine*. He told me how great would be my sufferings and what a terrible time I would have before me in England (for I am to go there); but when I thought of those students to whom I

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shall be permitted to teach a few things, and of the Theosophical Society in general, to which I have already given my heart's blood, I accepted the sacrifice, and now to make it complete, fetch me some coffee and something to eat, and give me my tobacco box.”

(Source: Constance Wachmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 71-76.)

**April 25 or 26, 1887**—Archibald Keightley goes again to Ostende. He writes:

“. . . In the middle of April Mr. [Bertram] Keightley again went over [to Ostende] and I followed him about the 25th or 26th. We were rather in consternation because Madame Blavatsky said she could not possibly leave in such weather as then prevailed, especially on account of her late serious illness. Her landlord said she must leave, for the rooms were let. Countess Wachtmeister had previously left for Sweden to attend to urgent business affairs there under promise to rejoin Madame Blavatsky in London. Staying in the house with us was a friend of Dr. Ellis who assisted in the removal.

“The fated day came, and in place of being bright but cold, as had been the case two days before, the morning proved to be cold and foggy, with a steady drizzling rain falling and penetrating all it touched, the thermometer being about 40 degrees. We fully expected Madame Blavatsky would decline to move, and thought her justified in doing so. Nevertheless she appeared that morning in full marching order, the trunks were packed, and all was ready. The carriage arrived and Madame Blavatsky was assisted into it, and off it drove to the wharf. It must be remembered that she had not had a window open in her room while she was in it (and would scarcely allow it open while she was out) for six months. She kept her room at a temperature of over 70 deg., believing that anything under that would kill her. Moreover, she was al-

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most crippled with rheumatism and could hardly walk, and was a constant martyr to sciatica. On getting to the wharf we found the tide low, and in consequence that there was only a narrow gangway leading at a very steep incline to the steamer's deck. Imagine our dismay. Madame Blavatsky, however, said nothing, but simply grasping the rails walked slowly and without assistance to the deck. We then took her to a cabin on deck where she sank on to the sofa and only then betrayed the pain and exhaustion caused by her effort.

“The journey was uneventful so far as Dover, save that for the first time in her life Mme. Blavatsky knew what the preliminary qualms of sea-sickness meant and was much puzzled. At Dover the tide was still lower, and as a result four very stalwart piermen had to carry her to the top. Then came the greatest difficulty, for the platform is low and the English railway carriage steps were high. It required the united efforts of all the party (and the piermen as well) to assist Madame Blavatsky in her crippled state into the carriage. The journey to London was uneventful, and with the help of an invalid chair and a carriage she was safely lodged in the house we had secured for her. Secretly I was afraid the journey would have serious results, but, whatever was the reason, she seemed to enjoy better health for some time after her arrival in England than she had for months previously. The day after her arrival she was at work on the *Secret Doctrine* at 7 a.m., and did not appear best pleased because she had been prevented from an earlier start through her writing materials not having been unpacked the previous night.”

(Source: *The Path*, November 1892, pp. 246-248.)

**May 2 or 3, 1887**—Having now settled in England at Mabel Collins' house, Maycot, Crownhill, Upper Norwood, London, H.P.B. continues her work on *The Secret Doctrine*.

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Bertram Keightley provides the reader *with the following important facts* about *The Secret Doctrine* manuscript that H.P.B. had brought with her to London:

“A day or two after our arrival at Maycot, 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 [H.P.B.]...with the solemn opinion that the whole of the matter must be rearranged 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 [in the 1st volume] with the Evolution of Cosmos, to pass from that to the Evolution of Man [in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume], 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. [Bold added.]**

“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 rearrangement 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....”

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(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine*, 1893, pp. 78-79; also quoted in Boris de Zirkoff, *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*, p. 41.)

Bertram's account of 1893 is also confirmed by the following testimony. A report of Bertram Keightley's lecture "Theosophy in the West" to the annual T.S. convention at Adyar, Madras, India, in December 1890, includes the following about *The Secret Doctrine*:

"[In 1887 in England] H.P.B. handed over to him [Bertram 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 rearrange...the manuscript according to the [new] scheme."

(Source: *The Theosophist*, July 1891, pp. 586-587.)

**May through Summer 1887**—Archibald Keightley writes about the work done on *The Secret Doctrine* during this time-period:

"All through the summer of 1887 every day found her [H.P.B.] at work [on the manuscript of the *Secret Doctrine*] from six to six, with intervals for meals only, visitors being with very rare exceptions denied or told to come in the evening. The evenings were given up to talk and discussion, and only on rare occasions was any writing done.

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“All through that summer Bertram Keightley and I were engaged in reading, re-reading, copying and correcting. The last amounted to casting some of the sentences in English mould, for many of them were ‘literal translations from the French.’ . . .

“Many of the quotations had to be verified, and here we should have been lost if it had not been for a hint from H.P.B. She told us one night that sometimes in writing down quotations, which for the purpose of the book had been impressed on the Astral Light before her, she forgot to reverse the figures—for instance page 123 would be allowed to remain 321 and so on. With this in mind, verification was easier, for one was puzzled on examining all editions in the British Museum to find in several cases that the books did not contain the number of pages. With the reversal, matters were straightened out and the correct places [for the quotations] were found.

“Much of the [*Secret Doctrine*] MSS. was type-written at this period. This was H.P.B.’s opportunity. The spaces were large and much could be inserted. Needless to say, it was. The thick type-MSS. were cut, pasted, recut and pasted several times over [by H.P.B.], until several of them were twice the size of the original MSS.

“. . . no work and no trouble, no suffering or pain could daunt her from her task. Crippled with rheumatism, suffering from a disease which had several times nearly proved fatal, she still worked on unflinchingly, writing at her desk the moment her eyes and fingers could guide the pen.”

(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 98-99.)

**May 7, 1887**—From her new residence in England, H.P.B. writes to William Q. Judge:

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“MAYCOT, CROWN HILL, UPPER NORWOOD,  
LONDON, *May 7<sup>th</sup>*.”

“. . . Didn't know old H.P.B. was for seventeen days hovering between life and death [at Ostende]; drawn irresistibly by the charm *beyond* the latter, and held by her coat-tails by the Countess [Wachtmeister] and some London Lodges? Nice intuitional friend. Anyhow *saved* once more, and once more stuck into the mud of life right with my classical nose. Two Keightleys and Thornton (a dear, REAL new Theosophist) came to Ostende, packed me up, books, kidneys, and gouty legs, and carried me across the water partially in steamer, partially in invalid chair, and the rest in train to Norwood, in one of the cottages of which here I am; living (rather vegetating) in it till the Countess returns. . . . Very, very seedy and weak; but rather better after the mortal disease which cleansed me if it did not carry me off. Love and sincere, as usual and for ever. Yours in heaven and hell.—‘O.L.’ H.P.B.”

(Source: *The Path*, November 1892, p. 248.)

**May 29, 1887**—Bertram Keightley writes to W. Q. Judge:

“H.P.B. is fairly well & working away right hard at the Secret Doctrine, which is *awfully good* & I am sure you will be immensely pleased with it. . . . I am staying with H.P.B. at Maycot, Crown Hill, Upper Norwood, S.E. where I expect she will be for the next two or three months. We have got a scheme on foot for establishing H.P.B. in *winter* quarters near London where she can live in peace & gather the real workers in the Society around her....”

(Source: Kirby Van Mater's “The Writing of *The Secret Doctrine*,” *Sunrise*, November, 1975, pp. 60-61.)

**Summer 1887 and later**—Bertram Keightley gives the following description of the work done on the *Secret Doctrine* manuscript during these months:

“ . . . [The new copy of *The Secret Doctrine*] typewritten out by professional hands . . . [was] then re-read, corrected, compared with the original MSS., and all Greek, Hebrew, and Sanskrit quotations inserted by us.

“It then appeared that the whole of the Commentary on the Stanzas did not amount to more than some twenty pages of the present work, as H.P.B. had not stuck closely to her text in writing. So we seriously interviewed her, and suggested that she should write a proper commentary, as in her opening words she had promised her readers to do. Her reply was characteristic: ‘What on earth am I to say? What *do* you want to know? Why it’s all as plain as the nose on your face! !’ We could not see it; she didn’t—or made out she didn’t—so we retired to reflect.

“ . . . I think the removal [of H.P.B. and the household] to Lansdowne Road [in September 1887 was] effected, before the problem of the Commentary on the Stanzas was finally solved.

“The solution was this:—Each sloka of the stanzas was written (or cut out from the type-written copy) and pasted at the head of a sheet of paper, and then on a loose sheet pinned thereto were written all the questions we could find time to devise upon that sloka. In this task Mr. Richard Harte helped us very considerably, a large proportion of the questions put being of his devising. H.P.B. struck out large numbers of them, made us write fuller explanations, or our own ideas—such as they were—of what her readers expected her to say, wrote more herself, incorporated the little she had already written on that particular sloka, and so the work was done.

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“But when we came to think of sending the MSS. to the printers, the result was found to be such that the most experienced compositor would tear his hair in blank dismay. Therefore Dr. Keightley and myself set to work with a type-writer, and alternately dictating and writing, made a clean copy of the first parts of volumes I. and II.

“Then work was continued till parts II. and III. of each volume were in a fairly advanced condition, and we could think of sending the work to press.

“It had originally been arranged that Mr. George Redway should publish the work, but his proposals not being financially satisfactory, the needful money was offered by a friend of H.P.B.’s, and it was resolved to take the publication of *Lucifer* into our own hands. So the Duke Street office was taken, and business begun there, the primary object being to enable the T.S. to derive the utmost possible benefit from H.P.B.’s writings.

“ . . . there were months of hard work [still] before us. H.P.B. read and corrected two sets of galley proofs, then a page proof, and finally a revise in sheet, correcting, adding, and altering up to the very last moment:— result: printer’s bill for corrections alone over 300 [pounds] . . . .

“Of the value of the work, posterity must judge finally. Personally I can only place on record my profound conviction that when studied thoroughly but not treated as a revelation, when understood and assimilated but not made a text for dogma, H.P.B.’s *Secret Doctrine* will be found of incalculable value, and will furnish suggestions, clues, and threads of guidance, for the study of Nature and Man, such as no other existing work can supply.”

(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 92-95.)

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**September (early) 1887**—Countess Wachtmeister goes to London and joins H.P.B. at Maycot, just prior to H.P.B. moving to Lansdowne Road.

(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, pp. 80-81.)

**September 10, 1887**—H.P.B. writes to G. Subbiah Chetty in India:

“...Subba Row has even refused through C. Oakley to read or have anything to do [with] my *Secret Doctrine*. I have spent here £30 to have it typed, on purpose to send to him, and now when all is ready, he refuses to look into it. Of course, it will be a new pretext for him to pitch into and criticize when it does come out. Therefore I will defer its publication....”

(Source: Boris de Zirkoff, *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*, pp. 44-45.)

**September (middle), 1887**—H.P.B. moves to 17, Lansdowne Road, Holland Park, London.

**September 1887 and later**—Archibald Keightley writes:

“Then came the time of the founding of *Lucifer*. This work had to be added to that of writing *The Secret Doctrine*. . . .

“In September [1887] came the move to London, to Lansdowne Road. . . .

“During the greater part of this period in London, H.P.B. had the assistance of E. D. Fawcett, especially in those parts of the second volume [of *The Secret Doctrine* on anthropogenesis] dealing with the evolutionary hypotheses. He suggested, corrected, and wrote, and sev-

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eral pages of his MSS. were incorporated by H.P.B. into her work.”

(Source: Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, 1893, p. 99)

**Autumn, 1887**—Madame Blavatsky writes to her sister Vera:

“If you only knew . . . how busy I am! Just imagine the number of my daily duties; the editing of my new magazine, LUCIFER, rests entirely with me, and besides that I have to write for it each month from ten to fifteen pages. . . . [Concerning] my *Secret Doctrine*. . . I have to continue the second volume and correct the proofs of the first [volume] two or three times over. And then the visits! . . . Very often as many as thirty [visitors] a day. . . Impossible for me to get out of it! . . . There ought to be a hundred and twenty-four hours in each day. . . .”

(Source: *Lucifer*, April 15, 1895, p. 102.)

**December, 1887**—At the Theosophical Society’s 1887 Annual Convention at Adyar, Madras, India, Colonel Olcott tells his listeners that:

“During the past twelve months she [H.P.B.] has sent me the MSS. of four out of the probable five volumes of the ‘The Secret Doctrine’ for examination....”

Later in writing about the events of 1887 in his *Old Diary Leaves*, Colonel Olcott gives us additional information about *The Secret Doctrine* manuscripts sent to him:

“....Subba Row [refused] to edit the *Secret Doctrine* MSS., contrary to his original promise, although she [H.P.B.]...had it typed-copied at a cost of £80 and sent [to] me for that purpose....”

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(Sources: *The Theosophist*, Vol. IX, Supplement to January, 1888 issue, p. xvii; Henry S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume IV, p. 23.)

### 1888

**February 24, 1888**—H.P.B. writes to Colonel Olcott:

“Now Tookaram writes me a letter. In it he says that S[ubba] R[ow] told him he was ready to help me and correct my *S.D.* *provided* I took out from it every reference to the Masters!

“Now, what’s this? Does he mean to say that I should deny the Masters, or that I do not understand Them and garble the facts They give me, or that he, S.R., knows Master’s doctrine better than I do? For it can mean all this. Please take your first opportunity of telling the whole of Adyar as follows:

“...It is *I*, who brought in, the first, the existence of our Masters to the world and the T.S. I did it because They sent me to do the work and make a fresh experiment in this XIX Century and I have done it, the best I knew how. It may not dovetail with S.R.’s ideas, [but] it answers truth and fact...*I either know Them personally as I have ever maintained; or—I have invented Them and Their doctrines....*”

(Source: Boris de Zirkoff, *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*, pp. 47-48.)

**April 1888 (estimated)**—A notice in *The Theosophist* tells the reader:

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“Mr. Bertram Keightley writes encouragingly from London about the health of . . . [Madame Blavatsky]. He says ‘she is much stronger than at the beginning of the year, and, though suffering much from the derangement of the stomach, is wonderfully cheerful.’

“The publication of the ‘Secret Doctrine’ has been commenced, and as soon as the magnitude and, of course, the cost of the work can be definitely calculated, the price to subscribers will be fixed and a circular sent them....”

(Source: *Supplement to The Theosophist*, May 1888, p. xxxvii.)

**April 3, 1888**—H.P.B. writes to the Second American Theosophical Society Convention:

“The MSS. of the first three volumes [of *The Secret Doctrine*] is now ready for the press....”

(Source: H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Volume IX, p. 247.)

**May or June, 1888 (estimated)**—H.P.B. has a circular issued and sent out from London announcing the forthcoming publication of *The Secret Doctrine* “on or about October 27th, 1888, in Two Volumes, Royal Octavo, of *circa* 650 pp. each.” One important excerpt reads:

“. . . The first of these [two] volumes contains Book I of the ‘Secret Doctrine,’ and is concerned mainly with the evolution of Kosmos. It is divided into three parts.

“Part I commences with an introduction explaining the philosophical basis of the system. The skeleton of this book is formed by seven Stanzas, translated from the Secret Book of Dzyan, with commentary and explanations by the translator. This work is among the oldest MSS. in

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the world; it is written in the Sacred Language of the Initiates, and constitutes the text-book which was the basis of the oral instructions imparted during the Mysteries....

“...Book II (forming the second volume) ... treats of the Evolution of Man....Part I contains a series of Stanzas from the Book of Dzyan, which describe the Evolution of Humanity in our cycle....”

A Table of Contents for these two volumes is also given in this circular.

The arrangement of the material as given in this Table of Contents is somewhat different from the final arrangement of the material as found in the First Edition published several months later. A photographic facsimile of this circular as printed in *The Path* can be found at:

<http://blavatskyarchives.com/sdprospectus.pdf>

In this table, Part II of the first volume is headed with the following significant words:

*“Explanatory Sections on Symbolism and the Eastern Presentation of the Secret Cosmography.”*

This Table of Contents shows that Volume II on Anthropogenesis contained a chapter titled “Nebo of Birs-Nimrod” in the Part II “Chapters on Symbolism.” In the final rearrangement of some of the material as issued in the published First Edition, this chapter is *missing*. This “Nebo” article was finally published by Boris de Zirkoff in Volume XIII of H.P.B.’s *Collected Writings* with the following editorial note:

“This manuscript in H.P.B.’s handwriting was in the possession of John M. Watkins, the renowned Publisher and Bookseller, who was a close friend of hers. It is marked XV(a) and covers a little over twelve numbered

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pages. It may have been intended for *The Secret Doctrine* and later set aside. A few words or brief sentences have remained illegible. It has been transcribed from a microfilm of the original MS. now in the hands of Geoffrey Watkins.”

The listing of this “Nebo” chapter in the above circular gives support to Mr. de Zirkoff’s speculation that “it may have been intended for *The Secret Doctrine* and later set aside.”

(Sources: The above circular was published in *The Path*, July, 1888, pp. 133-136; it was also published in *The Theosophist*, July 1888, pp. 632-635. See “Nebo” chapter in H.P.B.’s *Collected Writings*, Volume XIII, pp. 271-282.)

**July, 1888**—Madame Blavatsky, in a letter dated Oct. 25, 1888 to Elliott Coues, writes:

“...[Master] K.H....only a few months ago...[was here] in flesh and bones. But He is gone, was in London only eleven days, in July....”

(Source: “The History of a Humbug: The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to Elliott Coues,” *The Canadian Theosophist*, July-Aug. 1985.)

**July/August, 1888 (estimated)**—At this time, Madame Blavatsky apparently writes and adds a special 41-page section to Volume I of *The Secret Doctrine* correcting certain mistakes in A.P. Sinnett’s *Esoteric Buddhism* and giving further esoteric teachings on the Moon chain, the Lunar Pitris, etc. In this added section, letters from Master K.H. are given correcting some of Mr. Sinnett’s mistakes.

Archibald Keightley refers to this additional material in a letter to a Mrs. Malcolm:

“...H.P.B. did not hold back the Secret Doctrine from the Press and delay its printing for a week, so as to write in

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that part about the lunar Pitris, for nothing. All that part about Sinnett in the first volume was put in in a great hurry at great expense and delay, for a special purpose....”

The material/section referred to apparently covers pp. 151 to 191 of Volume I of the 1888 First edition. H.P.B. decided to insert this additional material between her commentaries on “the 4th Sloka of Stanza VI” and Stanza VI, Sloka 5.

Compare the above material with the two chronological entries about Master K.H. for July and Aug. 22, 1888.

It may be that at this point in time some of the material was rearranged in Volumes I and II of the S.D. The interested reader may want to compare and contrast the Table of Contents as found in the circular mentioned a few entries above with the Table of Contents as published in the First Edition.

(Source: Archibald Keightley’s letter is dated Sept. 24, 1895 and is quoted in: Knoche, Grace F., ed. *Secret Doctrine Centenary, October 29-30, 1988: Report of Proceedings*. Pasadena, California: Theosophical Society, 1989, p. 84.)

**August 22, 1888**—During his trip to England from India on board the steamship *Shannon*, Colonel Olcott receives in his cabin an important letter from Master Koot Hoomi. The Master tells Olcott:

“I have . . . noted your thoughts about the ‘Secret Doctrine.’ Be assured that what she [H.P.B.] has not *annotated* from scientific and other works, we have given or *suggested* to her. Every mistake or erroneous notion, corrected and explained by her from the works of other theosophists *was corrected by me, or under my instruction*. It is a more valuable work than its predecessor [*Isis Unveiled*], an epitome of occult truths that will make it a source of information and instruction for the earnest student for long years to come. . . .”

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(Source: *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, Series I, Letter 19.)

**August 26, 1888**—Colonel Olcott arrives in London from India. He sends a report of his European visit back to Adyar. A summary titled “The President’s European Visit” is given in the *Supplement to the Theosophist*:

“Embarking at Bombay on board the P. and O. mail steamer *Shannon* on the 7th of August, the President [of the Theosophical Society, Henry S. Olcott] reached Brindisi [Italy] on the 23rd, and proceeded overland to London, where he arrived on the 26th. . . .

“The President found Madame Blavatsky in bad health, but working with desperate and pertinacious energy. An able physician told him that the fact of her even being alive at all was in itself a miracle, judging by all professional canons. Her system is so disorganized by a complication of diseases of the gravest character that it is a simple wonder that she can keep up the struggle; any other being must have succumbed long ago. The microscope reveals enormous crystals of uric acid in her blood, and the doctors say that it is more than likely that one hot month in India would kill her.

“Nevertheless, not only does she live, but she works at her writing desk from morning to night, preparing ‘copy’ and reading proofs for *The Secret Doctrine* and her London magazine, *Lucifer*. Of her greatest work over three hundred pages of each of the two volumes were already printed when Colonel Olcott arrived. . . . From all he heard from competent judges who had read the manuscript, the President was satisfied that *The Secret Doctrine* will surpass in merit and interest even Isis Unveiled.

“Madame Blavatsky is living at 17, Lansdowne Road, Holland Park, with three Theosophical friends, among

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them her devoted guardian, nurse and consoler, the Countess Wachtmeister of Sweden, who has attended her throughout all her serious illnesses of the past three years. The house is a pleasant one, in a quiet neighbourhood, and the back of it looks upon a small private park or compound, common to the occupants of all the houses which surround it.

“Madame Blavatsky’s rooms are on the ground floor, she being practically unable to go up and down stairs. Her desk faces a large window looking out upon the green grass and leafy trees of Holland Park; at her right and left hands are tables and book racks filled with books of reference; and all about the room are her Indian souvenirs — Benares bronzes, Palghat mats, Adoni carpets, Moradabad platters, Kashmir plaques, and Sinhalese images, which were so familiar to visitors at Adyar in the old days. . . .

“Clustering around her in London she has several devoted Theosophists who, besides advancing £1,500 to bring out *The Secret Doctrine* and *Lucifer*, have formed a Theosophical Publishing Co. (Limited), to issue at popular prices reprints of articles from *The Theosophist*, *Lucifer* and *The Path*, and useful tracts of all sorts. The interest in Theosophy increases and deepens in Europe, and still more in America. . . .”

(Source: *Supplement to the Theosophist*, October 1888, pp. xvii-xviii.)

**October 20, 1888**—On this day the First Volume of *The Secret Doctrine* comes off the press in London. The first printing of 500 copies is exhausted before date of publication. Second Volume comes out towards the end of the year. On the same day, Col. Olcott and Richard Harte leave for India.

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A penciled notation in Harte's own copy of Vol. I of the S.D. reads:

“This is the first copy ever issued. I got it from Printer by special Messenger on the morning of the 20 Oct. '88 as I was leaving the house 17 Lansdowne Road, with Col. Olcott for India....The Second Vol. followed me to India.—R.H.”

**October-December 1888**—H.P.B. writes about the still unpublished third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* in the newly published Volumes I and II of *The Secret Doctrine*:

“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 philos-

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ophy. 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: 10-11]

“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 Manushi-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 Qu-tamy being instructed by the *idol* of the moon, is easily understood (*vide* Book III.) Seldenus tells us the secret as well as Maimonides.... The worshipers 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]

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“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]

### 1889

**April 29, 1889**—Archibald Keightley is 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....”

(Source: *New York Times*, April 29, 1889, p. 5.)

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**November 21, 1889**— H.P.B. writes to N. D. Khandalavala in India:

“...[I] have been able to write my *S.D.*, ‘Key,’ ‘Voice,’ and prepared two more volumes of the *S. Doctrine*....”

(Source: *Theosophist*, August 1932, p. 626.)

### 1890

**February, 1890**— H.P.B. writes in a letter to her sister Vera:

“... I must put the third volume of the [*Secret*] *Doctrine* in order, and the fourth [volume]—hardly begun yet, too.”

(Source: *The Path*, December, 1895, p. 268.)

### 1891

**January 7, 1891**—Claude Falls Wright writes:

“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.”

(Source: *The Path*, February 1891, p. 354.)

**February, 1891**—Writing from London, Mrs. Alice Leighton Cleather sends a report to India with the following news about H.P.B.:

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“I am sorry to have to begin my letter with the news of H.P.B.’s ill-health. It is, unhappily, the case that she has been far from well of late again; and we can only hope and trust that, with the disappearance of frost and fog, she may regain somewhat of health and strength.

“. . . . Another edition of the *Secret Doctrine*, too, is in course of preparation. . . . Moreover H.P.B. has already started on Vol. III.”

(Source: *The Theosophist*, April 1891, p. 438.)

**February 18, 1891**—Countess Wachtmeister writes in a letter to W. Q. Judge:

“When Volume 3 [of *The Secret Doctrine*] comes out this summer I expect there will be a fresh demand for the earlier [two published] volumes.”

(Source: *Report of Proceedings, Secret Doctrine Centenary, October 29-30, 1988, 1989*, p. 86.)

**March 27, 1891**—Madame Blavatsky writes to W. Q. Judge:

“...UNSELFISHNESS AND ALTRUISM is Annie Besant’s name, but with me and for me, she is Heliodore, a name given to her by a Master, and that I use with her, it has a *deep meaning*. It is only a few months she studies occultism with me in the *innermost* group of the E.S. and yet she has passed far beyond all the others. She is not psychic nor spiritual in the least—all intellect, and yet she hears Master’s voice when alone, sees His Light, and recognizes his voice from that of *D*—. Judge, *she is a most wonderful woman*, my right hand, my successor, when I will be forced to leave you, my sole hope in England, as you are my sole hope in America.”

(Source: Countess Constance Wachtmeister’s *H.P.B. and the Present Crisis in the Theosophical Society*, p. 4.)

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**April, 1891**—In her own London journal *Lucifer*, H.P.B. tells the readers in the April 1891 issue about her current work on the *forthcoming* third volume of *The Secret Doctrine*:

“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 standpoint—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. . . .”

(Source: H.P.B.’s *Collected Writings*, Volume 13, p. 145.)

**May 4, 1891**—Annie Besant gives testimony in H.P.B.’s legal case against Elliott Coues and the New York *Sun*:

“There is one other work of hers [H.P.B.’s], which I have seen in manuscript, still unpublished; a third volume of ‘The Secret Doctrine’ 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.”

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(Source: 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, p. 23.)

**May 8, 1891**—H.P.B. dies in London. Laura Cooper writes about H.P.B.'s death:

“About 11:30 I was aroused by Mr. Wright, who told me to come at once as H.P.B. had changed for the worse, and the nurse did not think she could live many hours; directly I entered her room I realised the critical condition she was in. She was sitting in her chair and I knelt in front of her and asked her to try and take the stimulant....The nurse said H.P.B. might linger some hours, but suddenly there was a further change, and when I tried to moisten her lips I saw the dear eyes were already becoming dim, though she retained full consciousness to the last. In life H.P.B. had a habit of moving one foot when she was thinking intently, and she continued that movement almost to the moment she ceased to breathe. When all hope was over the nurse left the room, leaving C. F. Wright, W. R. Old and myself with our beloved H.P.B.; the two former knelt in front, each holding one of her hands, and I at her side with one arm round her supported her head; thus we remained motionless for many minutes, and so quietly did H.P.B. pass away that we hardly knew the second she ceased to breathe; a great sense of peace filled the room, and we knelt quietly there until, first my sister [Isabel Cooper-Oakley] then the Countess [Constance Wachtmeister] arrived. I had telegraphed to them and Dr. Mennell— when the nurse said the end was near, but they were not in time to see H.P.B. before she left us. No time was lost in vain regrets, we all tried to think and to do what she would have wished under the circumstances, and we could only be thankful she was released from her suffering.”

(Source: Laura M. Cooper, “How She Left Us,” *Lucifer*, June 1891, p. 271. Reprinted in *H.P.B.: In Memory of Helena Pe-*

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*trovna Blavatsky by Some of Her Pupils*, London, Theosophical Publishing Society, 1891, pp. 6-7.)

**May 8, 1891** (soon after H.P.B. had died)—Countess Constance Wachtmeister writing later about this time testifies:

“...I...searched diligently and minutely for various articles belonging to H.P.B. after her death, thus obeying certain instructions given by her to me....H.P.B.’s property, which I had thus collected, I handed over to Annie Besant on her arrival in England from America.....”

Isabel Cooper-Oakley and Laura Cooper added the following to Countess Wachtmeister’s words:

“...We, with Mr. Mead, were present when Countess Wachtmeister made the search referred to, and after everything had been carefully examined, all cupboards, drawers and boxes were sealed up in our presence until Mrs. Besant’s return....”

(Source: *Lucifer*, April 1895, p. 164.)

**May 11, 1891**—In an interview given in Australia shortly after Madame Blavatsky had died, Colonel Henry S. Olcott says the following about Madame Blavatsky and her writings to a reporter:

“ . . . she has just completed a glossary of Sanscrit and other Eastern terms for the use of theosophical students. At the time of her death she was engaged upon the third and fourth volumes of *The Secret Doctrine*. . . .”

(Source: *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), May 12, 1891, p. 5.)

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**August 1891**—Annie Besant writing an editorial notice tells readers of *Lucifer*:

“In the September issue, the first number of our new Volume—Volume IX—will appear a long and most interesting article from the pen of H. P. Blavatsky entitled, ‘The Substantial Nature of Magnetism Demonstrated.’ This will be succeeded by other papers from the MSS. left by her [H.P.B.] in my charge, so that *Lucifer*, her own Magazine, will be able for a considerable time to come to regard its Founder as being still its leading contributor.”

(Source: *Lucifer*, August 1891, p. 528.)

**October, 1891**—Isabel Cooper-Oakley writes from London:

“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. This last piece of news will be hailed with joy by all true students.”

(Source: *The Path*, December 1891, p. 295.)

**October 29, 1891**—In a letter addressed to Bertram Keightley in India, Archibald Keightley writes:

“There is some talk [at London T.S. headquarters] of entirely reprinting ‘Secret Doctrine’ [Volumes 1 & 2] and of correcting errors when the Third Volume is issued. The plates [of the older edition of the S.D.] are in many cases found to be faulty and the expense of casting is so great as to make this [revised reprinting] worth while. . . .”

(Source: *The Messenger*, January, 1926, p. 166.)

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**November, 1891**—In a notice about the work of the H.P.B. Press in London, readers of *Lucifer* are informed that:

“...The first two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* are practically out of print and a new and revised edition has to be at once put in hand. The third volume has also to be brought out....”

(Source: *Lucifer*, November, 1891, pp. 254-255.)

**November, 1891**—Readers of *Lucifer* are told:

“IMPORTANT NOTICE: A Revised Edition of the ‘Secret Doctrine’

“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. Verifications of references and quotations, mis-spellings, errors of indexing, indication of obscure passages, &c., &c., will be most thankfully received. It is important that the ‘errata’ of the first part of Volume I should be sent in immediately.

ANNIE BESANT  
G.R.S. MEAD”

(Source: *Lucifer*, November, 1891, p. 261.)

**November 1891**—Writing later about this time-period, James Pryse says the following concerning *The Secret Doctrine*, Vols. I and II:

“The first printing [in 1888] of the S.D. was divided into two ‘editions,’ which are therefore identical save for the words ‘second edition’ on the title-page. The printing

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was done from the type, but stereotype matrices were made in case another [edition] should be called for. When that time came [in late 1891], however, we found that the matrices had been accidentally destroyed; and I, for one, was decidedly pleased at their loss, since it made opportune a much needed revision of the text, which arduous labour was undertaken by Mr. Mead and Mrs. Besant. Joyfully I placed copies of the S.D. in the paper-cutter, trimmed off the edges, and had assistants paste the pages on large sheets of writing-paper, to afford wide margins for marking corrections. As Mrs. Besant could spare but little time from her other Theosophical activities, the work of revision was done mostly by Mr. Mead, who was assisted by other members of the staff in verifying quotations and references....”

(Source: “An Important Statement by Mr. J. M. Pryse,” *The Canadian Theosophist*, Sept. 1926, pp. 140-141.)

**November 13, 1891**—Writing to Bertram Keightley in India, G.R.S. Mead says:

“We find it will be cheaper to reprint it [*The Secret Doctrine*, Volumes 1 & 2] entirely. The moulds [of the older edition of the S.D.] are practically useless . . . .”

(Source: *The Messenger*, January, 1926, p. 166.)

**November 27, 1891**—G.R.S. Mead writes in a report titled “European Section” and dated “London, Nov. 27, 1891”:

“. . . a revised edition of the latter work [*The Secret Doctrine*, Volumes I and II] is now in the press, and the third volume [of the S.D.] will be undertaken immediately on the completion of the new edition [of S.D. Vols. I & II].”

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(Source: *Report of the Sixteenth Convention and Anniversary of the Theosophical Society*, the Head-Quarters, Adyar, Madras, December the 27th, 28th, and 29th, 1891 with Official Documents, p. 36. This report is attached to the Jan. 1892 issue of *The Theosophist*.)

### 1894

**January, 1894**—Readers of *Lucifer* are told the following:

“...The year 1894 also sees the publication of the new edition of H. P. Blavatsky’s great work, *The Secret Doctrine* [volumes I & II], revised with much labour and care, and rendered doubly valuable by the addition of an exhaustive index of perhaps a hundred thousand words...the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* is [now] being type-written from the MS.”

(Source: *Lucifer*, January, 1894, p. 354. This quote occurs in the lead article/editorial titled “On the Watch-Tower.” Probably written by G. R. S. Mead.)

**January, 1894**—A notice appears in *The Path*:

“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.”

(Source: *The Path*, January, 1894, p. 323.)

**January 1894**—Writing later about this time-period, James Pryse says the following concerning Volume Three of *The Secret Doctrine*:

“When I had finished printing vols. I and II. Mrs. Besant placed the manuscript of vol. iii. in my hands. After

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reading it, I gave it to my brother John to make a type-written copy, which he did. It was in an unfinished state, and badly arranged. H.P.B. had rewritten some of the pages several times, with erasures and changes, but with nothing to indicate which copy was the final revision; Mrs. Besant had to decide that as best she might....”

(Source: “An Important Statement by Mr. J. M. Pryse,” *The Canadian Theosophist*, Sept. 1926, pp. 140-141.)

### 1895

**May, 1895**—Annie Besant writes in *Lucifer* (p. 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 of *The Secret Doctrine* were sent to the printer.

(Source: *Lucifer*, June 1895, p. 271.)

### 1896

**June, 1896**—An editorial note appears in *Lucifer* (p. 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 of *The Secret Doctrine* was completed.

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(Source: *Lucifer*, September 1896, p. 271.)

### 1897

**June, 1897**—Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* is published in London. Mrs. Besant wrote in the Preface to this third volume:

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

(Source: *The Theosophist*, September 1897, p. 766.)

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## THE STUDY OF THE SECRET DOCTRINE

### **Texts: Recommended Editions of H.P.B.'s 1888 *magnum opus***

Blavatsky, H.P. *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*. Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press, 1988, 1997. Photographic facsimile of the original 1888 edition. 3 Volumes: Volume I - xlvii + 676 pp.; Volume II - xiv + 798 + xxxi pp.; third volume is Index volume (1997) prepared by John P. Van Mater - viii + 433 pp.

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