

THE MAKING OF *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*

By Michael Gomes

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While most Theosophists are familiar with the fact that H. P. Blavatsky's magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*, was published in 1888, and are aware of the vast theories of cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis contained therein, the events which shaped the making of this book are not as well known. Fortunately a number of eyewitness accounts have survived, making it possible to reconstruct this period. The most fascinating and detailed is Countess Wachtmeister's *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine* published in 1893 after HPB's death.

The blond, blue-eyed Countess was a society woman who was born in Florence, Italy, on March 28, 1838. In 1863 she married her cousin, the Count Karl Wachtmeister, who was then stationed in London as the Swedish and Norwegian minister to the Court of St. James. Subsequently they lived in Copenhagen where he was minister to the Danish court, and in Stockholm, where he was named minister of foreign affairs. After his death in 1871 she developed an interest in spiritualism. But like many titled members of the early Theosophical Society, her spiritualism soon developed into occultism. Her reading *Isis Unveiled* led her to join the British T.S. in 1880.<sup>1</sup>

It was at the London home of the popular Theosophical author, A. P. Sinnett, early in April 1884 that Countess Wachtmeister first met HPB, who had come over briefly from Paris for the elections of the London Lodge. The Countess saw Mme. Blavatsky later that spring at the chateau of the Count and Countess d'Adhemar at Enghien, France, before returning to Sweden, and was told by HPB that "before two years had passed, I would devote my life wholly to Theosophy,"<sup>2</sup> which at the time, she says, she regarded as an utter impossibility.

When Countess Wachtmeister again contacted HPB at the beginning of December 1885, the situation was a very different one from the brilliant receptions of London and Paris, which had culminated with a gala farewell for Colonel Olcott and Mme. Blavatsky at Prince's Hall in London on July 21, 1884, attended by 500 people in evening dress. "It's not life," HPB had written to her sister Vera, "but a sort of mad turmoil from morning till night. Visitors, dinners, evening callers, and meetings every day."<sup>3</sup> But now the Theosophical leader was in disgrace, "abandoned by all and deserted." Letters attributed to her in the September and October 1884 *Madras Christian College Magazine* seemed seriously to compromise her phenomena, as had her failure to prosecute for libel, and her sudden leaving of India in March 1885 for Europe. An agent had been sent by the newly-formed

London Society for Psychical Research to investigate the matter, and his report to be issued soon was generally believed to be unfavorable.<sup>4</sup>

The Countess had intended to spend the winter of 1885/86 in Italy, and had stopped en route at the home of a fellow T. S. member and student of the occult, Marie Gebhard in Elberfeld, Germany. Mme. Gebhard, who had been one of the few private pupils of the French Kabbalist, Eliphas Levi, urged her guest to see HPB who was now settled in nearby Würzburg. Mme. Blavatsky's response was a polite refusal claiming lack of space and time to entertain a visitor, as she was engaged in writing *The Secret Doctrine*. But as the Countess was preparing to leave for Rome, and the cab was actually at the door, a telegram arrived saying, "Come to Würzburg at once, wanted immediately—Blavatsky."<sup>5</sup>

Because of the rumors of fraud and deception circulating about Blavatsky, Countess Wachtmeister says she could not help being on her guard as she climbed the steps of No. 6 Ludwigstrasse in Würzburg on the evening of her arrival. She found an unhappy 54 year-old woman who was smarting sensitively under insults and suspicions, and who embarrassingly told her that she had not initially invited the Countess because the small size of her apartment—mainly a bedroom, dining room, sitting room, and maid's quarters—might not satisfy someone of her guest's background.

Countess Wachtmeister must have been a remarkably unpretentious person for she stayed with Mme. Blavatsky for the next five months. A screen had been bought which separated the bedroom to provide their only private space. At six in the morning their Swiss maid, Louise, would bring a cup of coffee for HPB, who then rose and dressed and was at her writing desk by seven. Breakfast was at eight when the day's mail would be read, and then Mme. Blavatsky would return to her writing. Their main meal was served at one in the afternoon, but when the Countess rang the hand bell, sometimes HPB might not respond for hours, depending how well her writing was going. Finally, at seven she put it aside, and after tea, the two of them would spend a "pleasant evening together," HPB amusing herself with a game of patience, while the Countess read her passages and articles from the daily journals. By nine HPB retired to bed where she would read the Russian newspapers late into the night.

They had few visitors at this time, the regularity of their days punctuated only by the weekly visit of HPB's doctor who usually stayed an hour, and an occasional appearance by their landlord. Most of HPB's time was spent working on her new book which had been advertised in the *Journal* of the Society early in 1884 as a "new version of *Isis Unveiled* with a new arrangement of the matter, large and important additions, and copious notes and commentaries." But the work had gone slowly. An attempt at grouping subjects exists from HPB's 1884 European tour, and before the arrival of the Countess she had managed to put together a few chapters.

Like Colonel Olcott's testimony for HPB's writing *Isis Unveiled*, and Annie Besant's on the production of *The Voice of the Silence*, Countess Wachtmeister's account tallies with

the depiction of HPB being able to sit for long hours and write continuously, stopping only to gaze into vacant space. HPB explained her technique as being able to “make what I can only describe as a sort of a vacuum in the air before me, and fix my sight and my will upon it, and soon scene after scene passes before me like the successive pictures of a diorama, or, if I need a reference or information from some book, I fix my mind intently, and the astral counterpart of the book appears, and from it I take what I need. The more perfectly my mind is freed from distractions and mortifications, the more energy and intentness it possesses, the more easily I can do this.”<sup>6</sup>

But soon the peaceful atmosphere which the Countess had managed to create by relieving HPB from concern about the running of the household was shattered in a most dramatic way. On New Year’s Eve 1885 a member of the Germania T. S., Prof Sellin, appeared with the finally published report by Richard Hodgson for the Society for Psychical Research Committee on theosophical phenomena in which the Committee had judged her worthy of permanent remembrance as “one of the most accomplished, ingenious and interesting imposters in history,”<sup>7</sup> and Hodgson had added his own conclusion that she had done it all as a cover for her being a Russian spy!

“I shall never forget that day,” the Countess records in her *Reminiscences*, “nor the look of blank and stony despair that she [HPB] cast on me when I entered her sitting room and found her with the open book in her hands.” In the intensity of the moment HPB turned on her, shouting, “Why don’t you go? Why don’t you leave me? You are a Countess, you cannot stop here with a ruined woman, with one held up to scorn before the whole world, one who will be pointed at everywhere as a trickster and an imposter. Go before you are defiled by my shame.”<sup>8</sup>

The Countess did not go; instead she stayed on, not only through this crisis, but until HPB’s death in 1891. Her presence did much to alleviate HPB’s suffering, and her personal integrity must be counted towards influencing HPB’s later acceptance by London society. This is something HPB herself acknowledged, for in writing to a T. S. member in India, she says, “The widow of the Swedish ambassador in London, the ex-visitor at all hours of the Queen, and one who is known in London for twenty years in the highest circles as a woman of unblemished reputation and one who has never uttered a falsehood in her life, is not likely to throw her reputation, her friends and position, to become the most devoted champion of an HPB, if there was nothing serious in it.”<sup>9</sup>

Still, they had a terrible time as Countess Wachtmeister’s letters to A. P. Sinnett in London show. “We have had a terrible day and the Old Lady wanted to start to London at once,” she wrote him on the evening of January 1, 1886.<sup>10</sup> The Countess had finally managed to calm HPB down, who wanted to write a number of indignant protests to all concerned, and who in her excited state had developed palpitations of the heart, which required a dose of digitalis. The following days brought rude letters and resignations as the contents of the S.P.R. Report became known, until, the Countess says, “my heart used to

sink every morning, when the postman's ring was heard at the thought of the fresh insults which the letters would surely contain."<sup>11</sup>

"We are having a horrible time of it here," she informed Sinnett on January 4th. "I thought Madame would have had an apoplectic fit—but fortunately a violent attack of diarrhea saved her, but I weary of it all so much."<sup>12</sup> The Countess reports how HPB "felt herself deserted by all those who had professed such devotion for her. As she pathetically said one day: 'If there was only one man, who had the courage to come forward and defend me as he would his own mother, if thus scurrilously attacked, the whole current of the Theosophical Society would be changed.'" It was a critical moment for the Society, and HPB was left alone in her agony and despair.<sup>13</sup>

Out of this crucial testing period came the nucleus of *The Secret Doctrine* as we know it. The book would no longer simply be a revision of an earlier work, but something HPB felt would serve as her vindication by answering the charges against her. Accordingly, she wrote to the president of the Society on January 6th: "*Secret Doctrine is entirely new.* There will not be there 20 pages quoted by bits from *Isis*. New matter, occult explanations—the whole Hindu Pantheon explained, based on exoteric translations (to be easily verified) and explained esoterically proving Xty and every other religion to have taken their dogmas from India's oldest religion. . . . In *four* Parts—Archaic, Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Periods. Each Part 12 chapters, with Appendices and a Glossary of terms at the end. Countess here, and she sees I have almost *no* books. Master and Kashmiri dictating in turn. She copies all. This *will* be my vindication, I tell you."<sup>14</sup>

Here perhaps is the great lesson of the writing of *The Secret Doctrine*. Here was someone whose world was crumbling around her, who had worked for a decade to see the Society that she had helped start almost destroyed, to be socially ostracized, shunned, and dropped by friends and acquaintances. How did she react? Did she give up, as many others might have, defeated? No. She turned on her critics by producing a book containing one of the most complete outlines of physical and spiritual evolution of her century. A book that has survived a hundred years and that is read around the world.

When HPB returned to the writing of *The Secret Doctrine* at the start of February 1886, it was with a grim determination that would carry her through the next two years, and which would triumph over death itself. By the end of the month, she had completed 300 foolscap pages of a preliminary volume that would show "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 years that followed it" of the existence of a "Universal Secret Doctrine," and would serve as an introduction to her translation of the Stanzas of Dzyan.<sup>15</sup>

As the rent on the apartment at Würzburg was only paid up until April 15th, HPB decided to pass the summer months at Ostende on the Belgian seacoast. Her sister Vera and a niece would stay with her, allowing the Countess the chance to return to Sweden to settle

her affairs there. An English member, Miss Emily Kislingbury, whose affiliation with the Society went back to 1876, would travel with HPB till Ostende. But when they arrived at Cologne to change trains and rest for the day, Gustav Gebhard persuaded HPB to pay a brief visit to his family in Elberfeld. It was there that she slipped and sprained her leg, which postponed her leaving till July accompanied by her sister and niece.

She arrived in Ostende at the height of the season to find everything overpriced. With the help of her sister she managed to find a suite of rooms, first at No. 10 Boulevard Van Isgham, and later at No. 17 Rue d'Quest, where, reunited with the Countess, she passed the winter. The regularity of their Würzburg days was repeated, the monotony broken only by a few more visitors, the English seer, Anna Kingsford, and her uncle, Edward Maitland; Sinnett gathering material for his proposed biography of HPB; Arthur Gebhard and Mohini Chatterji, who spent their time "studying 'Bhagavad Gita' all day;"<sup>16</sup> the Rev. A. Ayton; and K. F. Gaboriau from France.

A copy of the MS. of the finished preliminary volume of *The Secret Doctrine* was given to Marie Gebhard to send to Colonel Olcott from Elberfeld, but she kept it for a month and it did not reach him in India until December 10th. This volume was to be the introductory section to the "real pukka S. D." volume of the Archaic Period with the seven stanzas of Dzyan and the commentaries on them. "It is an absolutely necessary one," HPB informed Olcott, "otherwise if they began reading the Archaic Vol., the public would get crazy before five pages, *too metaphysical*."<sup>17</sup>

The Countess had been sent to London to attend to a business matter there, and HPB passed the New Year into 1887 alone. "The 2nd anniversary in exile and for what guilt or fault, ye Gods," she wrote to an American member. "Ah, life is a hard thing to bear."<sup>18</sup> It was at this time that she made the following important decision about her future. "Either 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. . . . I can stop here, or go to England, or whatever I like," she revealed to Countess Wachtmeister.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps it was just coincidental, but after the Countess's return, HPB began receiving letters from a small group of members of the London Lodge who still met on a regular basis, and who wrote her for advice on the best way of carrying on the work. Dr. Archibald Keightley, who with his uncle Bertram, had joined the Society in 1884, was deputed by this group personally to invite HPB to come over to England where she could spend the summer. Since Countess Wachtmeister had to go to Sweden that summer to dispose of property there to enable her to live with HPB on a more permanent basis, the move was decided upon.

A departure date of March 27th had been set, but on the 17th of the month HPB uncharacteristically lost consciousness in her armchair after dinner. Then she developed a cold, and on the fifth day of her illness, the doctor diagnosed uremic poisoning due to inaction of the kidneys. The Countess says she became alarmed when HPB began to drift

into “a heavy lethargic state, she seemed to be unconscious for hours at a time, and nothing could rouse or interest her.”<sup>20</sup>

Madame Gebhard had come from Elberfeld so that in shifts someone would always be in attendance with HPB, and as their local doctor could get no results, Countess Wachtmeister telegraphed Dr. Ashton Ellis, a member of the London group of Theosophists, to send over a specialist. Dr. Ellis replied that he would come immediately, and upon arrival prescribed a program of massage to stimulate the paralyzed organs, which he proceeded to do for the next three days.

As there seemed to be no improvement to HPB’s condition, Mme. Gebhard suggested that her will be made out, for if she died intestate in a foreign country there would be no end of complications. So a lawyer, the doctor, and the American Consul were to come the next day. During that night’s watch the Countess says, “To my horror I began to detect the peculiar faint odour of death which sometimes precedes dissolution. I hardly dared hope that she would live through the night.”<sup>21</sup>

HPB was anxious about the fate of the manuscript of *The Secret Doctrine*, and gave the Countess instructions to send it to Colonel Olcott at Adyar to have it printed. She said she was glad to die after what she had suffered in the last years. She drifted into unconsciousness, and as the night passed seemed to grow weaker by the hour. The strain of the last few days was such that the Countess says a “wave of blank despondency” swept over her and she too drifted off.

Morning light was already streaming in when Countess Wachtmeister opened her eyes. Her first thought was that HPB might have died as she slept. Instead she found an alert and awake HPB who told her that during the night she had the choice of being able to die or finish *The Secret Doctrine*. “But when I thought of those students to whom I 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.”<sup>22</sup>

It was a joyous group that the lawyer found when he arrived to make the will later in the day. The Belgian doctor kept repeating, “But she should be dead . . . she should be dead,” and the American Consul, who had come as a witness, left with the words, “Well, I think this is enough fatigue for a dying woman,”<sup>23</sup> and the little party laughed heartily over the events of that day’s turnaround.

The Countess looked so used up that Mme. Gebhard suggested that she leave for Sweden at once, and offered to stay until the Keightleys came to take HPB to London. In spite of bad weather, the crossing to Dover was without incident, though everyone was concerned for HPB, who had not left her heated rooms for weeks. She was housed at “Maycot,” a small cottage in Upper Norwood, with Mabel Collins, a member of the London group, on May 1st, and before the day’s end was back at work with *The Secret Doctrine*.

During Countess Wachtmeister's absence in Sweden throughout the summer of 1887, the narrative for the making of *The Secret Doctrine* is continued by the accounts of two young Cambridge graduates, Archibald (1859–1930), and his uncle, Bertram Keightley (1860–1945). By the end of May, Bertram Keightley could write to W. Q. Judge, General Secretary of the newly formed American Section, and editor of the New York *Path*, that "HPB is fairly well and working away right hard at *The Secret Doctrine*, which is *awfully* good, and I am sure you will be immensely pleased with it."<sup>24</sup>

Soon after her arrival at Maycot, HPB passed her MS., which was now over three feet high, over to the Keightleys "to read, punctuate, correct the English, alter, and generally treat as if it were our own."<sup>25</sup> Their summer was spent "reading, rereading and copying." *The Secret Doctrine*, as it came to be published, dates from this time, for it was the Keightleys' suggestion that "instead of making the first volume to consist, as she had intended, of the history of some great occultists, we advised her to follow the natural order of exposition, and begin with the Evolution of Cosmos, to pass from that to the Evolution of Man, then to deal with the historical part in a third volume treating of some Great Occultists; and finally, to speak of Practical Occultism in a fourth volume, should she ever be able to write."<sup>26</sup>

The material was then rearranged under the headings of Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis with the stanzas of Dzyan and her commentaries leading off each volume, followed by explanations of the symbolism and science treated therein. The thing that impressed the Keightleys was the paucity of Mme. Blavatsky's personal library. Archibald, who had made the transit with her from Ostende and who had helped her unpack, states: "I knew there was no library to consult and I could see that HPB's own books did not amount to thirty in all, of which several were dictionaries and several works counted two or more volumes."<sup>27</sup> Yet the manuscript edited by them for the press quoted or referred to over 1300 books. The checking of the sources alone occupied a group of people, including E. Douglas Fawcett, assistant editor of the London *Daily Telegraph*, Richard Harte, a member from America, and it was even rumored, S.L. Macgregor Mathers, who was regularly seen at the British Museum poring over old folios of Cabalistic lore.

Concurrent with the editorial work on *The Secret Doctrine* were a series of events which revived Theosophical work in England. The Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society (still in existence) was formed May 19 with ten members; by the second meeting a week later it was decided to publish a magazine that would bring Theosophical ideas to a larger public, and The Theosophical Publishing Company was started to manage this. By the time Countess Wachtmeister arrived in England in August, a three story brick building had been leased at 17 Lansdowne Road in London to serve as a residence for the Theosophical household.

*The Secret Doctrine* was to be issued by the London publisher George Redway, with whom A. P. Sinnett had invested in, but after a disagreement on terms, the work was taken

over by The Theosophical Publishing Society and the release date of October 27, 1888 set. An advance copy of the first volume (723 pp.) exists bearing the notation by Richard Harte that he received it at Lansdowne Road from the printer on October 20th as he was leaving for India with Colonel Olcott. The first edition of 500, bound in light grey, and bearing the dedication “to all True Theosophists, in every Country and of every Race,” sold out immediately, going mainly to subscribers, and a second edition was printed before the end of the year.<sup>28</sup> With the publication of the book, Countess Wachtmeister closes her *Reminiscences* with the words: “HPB was happy that day.”<sup>29</sup>

In comparison to *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine* was not as widely reviewed by the press, though *The Theosophist* reprinted notices from such diverse sources as the *Memphis Appeal*, the New Orleans *Southland*, and the London *Secular Review*. Such was the prejudice against the movement at the time that the New York *Evening Telegram* published a review based only on the prospectus sent out four months before the actual release date. The *Telegram* reported: “Mme. Blavatsky is undoubtedly an intellectual phenomenon, but because she can soar back into the Brahmin ignorance of the Buddhists and furnish Edwin Arnold with food for thought is no proof that everything she says is true . . . Ten minutes of Edison and Noah Webster will do more for civilization than all the fine spun immoralities of the Indian poets. However it is a good thing to study history, and Mme. Blavatsky, with her learning and patience throws the light of her intellectual dark lantern on the monstrosities of the past. Her book is very elaborate and comprehensive in its scope, and will undoubtedly be widely read.”<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps the most influential review appeared in London’s literary *Pall Mall Gazette*. The anonymous reviewer’s closing remarks serve as a fitting conclusion to the making of *The Secret Doctrine* and an introduction to the book itself. “Mme. Blavatsky’s views may not meet with acceptance, but they are supported by sufficient learning, acuteness and ability to enforce a respectful hearing. It is indeed the East which, through her, challenges the West, and the Orient need not be ashamed of its champion.

“The book deserves to be read: it deserves to be thought over; and none who believe in the progress of humanity has the right to turn away over-hastily from any contribution to knowledge, however new its form, from any theory, however strange its aspect. The wild dreams of one generation become the commonplaces of a later one . . .”<sup>31</sup>

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## References

1. Biographical information on the Countess is given in the *Path*, N.Y., Nov. 1893, pp. 246-47, and with slight amplification by Boris de Zirkoff in *Theosophia*, L.A., Fall 1957, p. 16. The Countess's early psychic experiences are given in her 1897 talk, "Spiritualism in the Light of Theosophy," printed by the Mercury Pub. Co., San Francisco, 1897. She applied for membership in the Theosophical Society in London, Nov. 24, 1880, and was elected December 5th.
2. Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893, reprinted Wheaton: Quest Books, 1976), p. 9.
3. HPB to Vera Zhelihovsky, July 1884. The *Path*, N.Y. June 1895, pp. 74-77.
4. For background on this incident see my article, "The Coulomb Case, 1884-1984." in *The Theosophist*, Dec. 1984, Jan., Feb., 1985.
5. Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences*, p. 12.
6. *Reminiscences*, p. 25.
7. S.P.R. *Proceedings* 3 (1885): 202.
8. *Reminiscences*, p. 18.
9. HPB to Judge N. D. Khandalavala, July 12, 1888, T. S. Archives, Adyar. "She would never consciously tell an untruth," remembers another member of the London household, James Pryse, *Canadian Theosophist*, June 15, 1932, p. 126.
10. In *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, [LBS] p. 270. Letter CXXVI.
11. Wachtmeister, "A New Year's Greeting," *The Vahan*, London, January 1, 1891, and *Theosophical Siftings*, 3:17, p. 3.
12. *LBS*, p. 272, Letter CXXVII.
13. Wachtmeister, *H.P.B. and the Present Crisis in the Theosophical Society*, privately printed, London, c. 1895, p.6.
14. In *The Theosophist*, HPB Centenary number, August 1931, p. 667.
15. *HPB to A. P. Sinnett*, March 3, 1886. *LBS*, p. 195. Letter LXXX.
16. *LBS*, p. 217. Letter XCVII.
17. HPB to HSO, September 23, 1886. *The Theosophist*, March 1925, p. 789.
18. HPB to Elliott Coues, dated by her "between 1886-1887." *The Canadian Theosophist*, Nov.-Dec. 1984, p. 116.
19. *Reminiscences* pp. 54-55.
20. *ibid.* p. 59.
21. *ibid.* p. 60.
22. *ibid.* p. 62.
23. *ibid.* p. 64.
24. Letter of May 29, 1887, quoted in Kirby van Mater's "The Writing of *The Secret Doctrine*." *Sunrise*, November 1975, p. 60.
25. B. Keightley, "Writing of *The Secret Doctrine*." in *Reminiscences*, p. 78.
26. B. Keightley in *Reminiscences*, p. 79. In addressing the December 1890 Adyar T. S. Convention he revealed that "what would now be the 3rd volume was to have been the first volume...."
27. A. Keightley, "Writing of *The Secret Doctrine*," in *Reminiscences*, p. 84. Marion Meade in her biography *Madame Blavatsky*, 1980, p. 380, notes, "In fact, every person involved with Madame Blavatsky during the writing of *The Secret Doctrine* seems to have gone out of their way to mention the curious lack of reference works." They were genuinely impressed by it.
28. Harte's copy with the October 20, 1888, notation on the flyleaf now in the Boris de Zirkoff Collection at the Olcott Library, Wheaton, formerly belonged to the Blavatsky Association in London. The note is transcribed in de Zirkoff's exhaustive presentation of the writing of *The Secret Doctrine*, *Rebirth of the Occult Tradition*

(Adyar: T.P.H., 1977), p. 1. A copy of the second edition inscribed December 7, 1888, and presented “to the Adyar Library by its most devoted and humble servant, H. P. Blavatsky,” exists in the Adyar Archives.

29. *Reminiscences*, p. 72.
30. N.Y. *Evening Telegram*, June 30, 1888, “Words with Wings.”
31. *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 25, 1889, p. 3. “Among the Adepts.”

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: (References to article are by page and paragraph.)

1. What sacrifices and risks did the Countess Wachtmeister take on in order to assist the work of HPB and Theosophy?
2. H. P. Blavatsky had to endure many trials and tribulations before she finished *The Secret Doctrine*. How did the way she responded to these difficulties reveal her human as well as a heroic side?
3. Can you find the one paragraph in this article where the author steps out of his objective role as historian and reveals his personal opinion of HPB?
4. The author describes several remarkable and mysterious occurrences which defied ordinary explanations and for which an occult or paranormal explanation seems more appropriate. What were those instances?
5. What does the New York *Evening Telegram* review of *The Secret Doctrine* indicate about the prevailing attitudes of the cultural elites at that time? (21.1)
6. Speculate why the *Pall Mall Gazette* review was published anonymously. (21.2)
7. Before it was published, *The Secret Doctrine* went through three conceptual stages of development. Describe the three stages.
8. What unique talent did H. P. Blavatsky have that made her a fitting instrument for the writing of *The Secret Doctrine*? In terms of writing skills, what ability did she lack that resulted in her needing assistance from other Theosophists?

EXCERPT FROM *THE SECRET DOCTRINE* —

Esoteric philosophy reconciles all religions, strips every one of its outward, human garments, and shows the root of each to be identical with that of every other great religion. It proves the necessity of an absolute Divine Principle in nature. It denies Deity no more than it does the Sun. Esoteric philosophy has never rejected God in Nature, nor Deity as the absolute and abstract *Ens*. It only refuses to accept any of the gods of the so-called monotheistic religions, gods created by man in his own image and likeness, a blasphemous and sorry caricature of the Ever-Unknowable.

—Introductory [vol. 1, p. xx]