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PROLOGUE to *THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE*, No. 1

H. P. Blavatsky was a prolific writer whose *Collected Writings* alone span fourteen volumes. Yet she is better known for her two monumental works, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, published in 1877 and 1888 respectively, and which together contain nearly three thousand pages. *Isis* created quite a sensation with its remarkable, but sprawling, panoramic view of the wisdom tradition. The work for which she is best known today, *The Secret Doctrine*, presents a daring depiction of the origin and essential nature of humanity and the universe. After producing an epic like *The Secret Doctrine*, many writers understandably would have taken some time off to recuperate, but not H. P. Blavatsky. In 1889—one year later and two years before her death—she wrote two smaller but still important books, *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Voice of the Silence*. The first was an instructional book, while the second was a spiritual guidebook containing a little over 300 verses. It is the latter work that this prologue, and the other prolegomena to follow, will address.

First, a brief comparison of *The Voice* to the other three works mentioned may be helpful. For instance, the style of *Isis Unveiled* might be described as discursive; so much so, in fact, that the reader may easily lose track of the overarching theme while trekking through the labyrinth of digressions, citations, and topical commentary. Although *The Secret Doctrine* puts forth the fundamental doctrines of the wisdom tradition in magnificent fashion, it is not a book of instruction. John Algeo has described it as a “heuristic” book, which is to say, a book of discovery. It is *The Key to Theosophy* that holds the distinction of being the only instructional book ever penned by Blavatsky. It is written in the expository style typical of such books, but framed in a question-answer format, with HPB filling both roles.

The very first verse of *The Voice of Silence* might lead the reader to believe it also to be a book of instruction, beginning as it does with the words, “These instructions are for . . .” but he would be wrong. Although *The Voice* contains teachings put forth as precepts, it is essentially a book whose purpose is to inspire rather than instruct; its message is directed at the heart, not the intellect. It was intended to serve as a spiritual guidebook for those who desire to tread the path of altruism in the service of humanity. The fact that *The Voice* is still being published and read 125 years after its initial publication suggests that it has enduring value and will continue to be a source of inspiration and guidance for many generations to come.

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