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PROLOGUE to *THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE*, No. 3

The Voice of the Silence is a remarkable book in more ways than one. As is the case with *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, eyewitness accounts of how it was written is a story in itself, further adding to the mystery surrounding H. P. Blavatsky. Those who are intrigued by such things would profit from reading C. W. Leadbeater's preface to *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, vol. 2, where he speculates about what occult techniques Blavatsky may have used in writing *The Voice of the Silence*.

On a more mundane level, *The Voice* holds other points of interest. In terms of its structure, it is comprised of three parts. What first strikes the observant reader is the odd term used to designate those parts; not only is it unusual, but when the rationale behind its use is understood, further questions arise. Authors commonly divide their works into *chapters*; Blavatsky did that in *Isis Unveiled*. Sometimes a book is divided into *sections*, as is *The Key to Theosophy*. Still others, particularly longer works, are apportioned into "books," as in Plato's *Republic*, Montaigne's *Essays*, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Why, then, did Blavatsky use the peculiar term "fragments" when organizing the contents of *The Voice*?

To understand why, the reader must first realize that *The Voice of the Silence* is a translation. Blavatsky was not its *author* but its *translator*. She makes this clear in the first sentence of her preface: "The following pages are derived from *The Book of Golden Precepts* . . ." According to her, it contained some 90 short treatises, and of those she memorized thirty-nine, only three of which comprise *The Voice of the Silence*. When and where did Blavatsky come into contact with *The Book of Golden Precepts*? Most likely, it was some thirty years prior to the publication of *The Voice* when Blavatsky spent three years in Nepal (some scholars say Tibet). If that is true, the choice of the term *fragments* is apropos, since the three Fragments of *The Voice* are small parts, or "fragments," a much larger work.

The reader may then ask, why translate only three fragments? Why not all ninety? Blavatsky explains that they could not be "given to a world too selfish and too much attached to the objects of sense to be in any way prepared to receive such exalted ethics in the right spirit." That answer may not satisfy the cynics or skeptics, but if they would consider to what extent the sublime ethics given to the world two thousand years ago in "The Sermon on the Mount" have been put into practice today, Blavatsky's answer seems eminently plausible.

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