

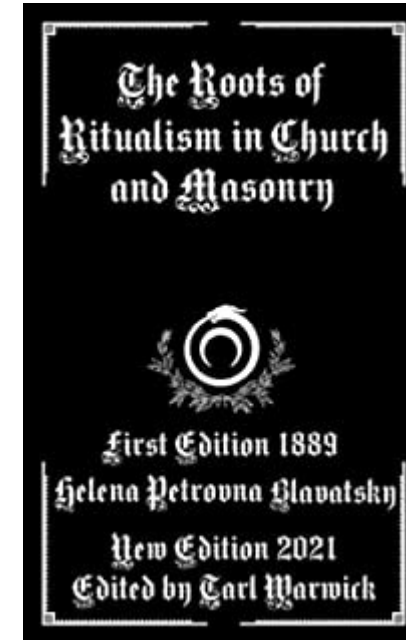
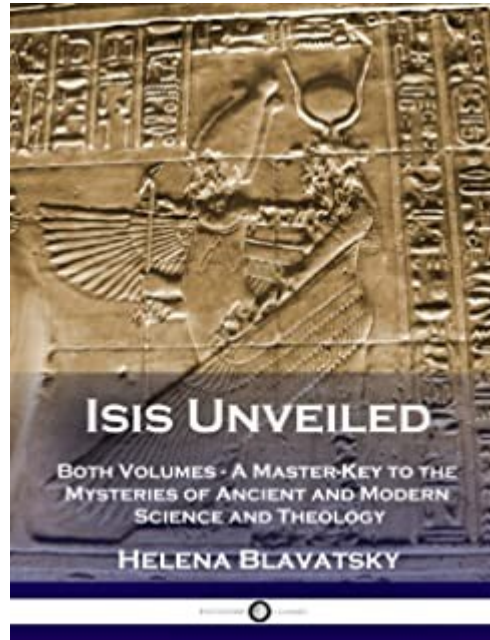
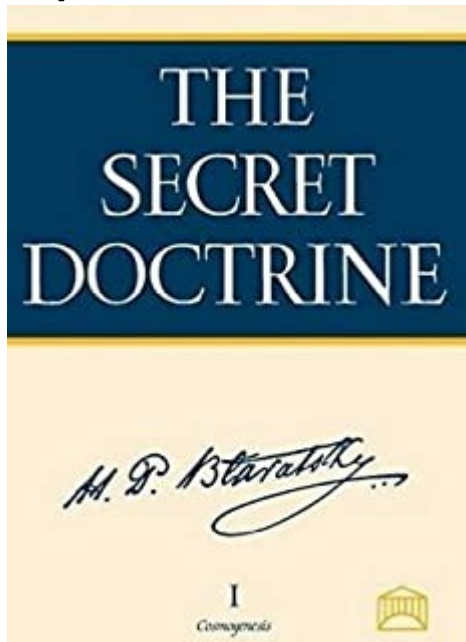
Subject Two: Mysticism and Science

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

Mysticism: Where Science, Art, and Religion Meet
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Information Sources

- Stephen M Phillips website (smpphillips.mysite.com)
- Wikipedia



Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891)

Biography



- Born into an aristocratic family of mixed Russian-German descent in Yekaterinoslav, then in the Russian Empire (now Dnipro in Ukraine), Blavatsky traveled widely around the empire as a child. Largely self-educated, she developed an interest in Western esotericism during her teenage years. According to her later claims, in 1849 she embarked on a series of world travels, visiting Europe, the Americas, and India.
- She also claimed that during this period she encountered a group of spiritual adepts, the "Masters of the Ancient Wisdom", who sent her to Shigatse, Tibet, where they trained her to develop a deeper understanding of the synthesis of religion, philosophy, and science. Both contemporary critics and later biographers have argued that some or all of these foreign visits were fictitious, and that she spent this period in Europe.
- By the early 1870s, Blavatsky was involved in the Spiritualist movement; although defending the genuine existence of Spiritualist phenomena, she argued against the mainstream Spiritualist idea that the entities contacted were the spirits of the dead. Relocating to the United States in 1873, she befriended Henry Steel Olcott and rose to public attention as a spirit medium, attention that included public accusations of fraudulence.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891)

Biography



- In 1875 New York City, Blavatsky co-founded the Theosophical Society with Olcott and William Quan Judge. In 1877, she published *Isis Unveiled*, a book outlining her Theosophical world-view. Associating it closely with the esoteric doctrines of Hermeticism and Neoplatonism, Blavatsky described Theosophy as "the synthesis of science, religion and philosophy", proclaiming that it was reviving an "Ancient Wisdom" which underlay all the world's religions. In 1880, she and Olcott moved to India, where the Society was allied to the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement. That same year, while in Ceylon, she and Olcott became the first people from the United States to formally convert to Buddhism.
- Although opposed by the British colonial administration, Theosophy spread rapidly in India but experienced internal problems after Blavatsky was accused of producing fraudulent paranormal phenomena. Amid ailing health, in 1885 she returned to Europe, there establishing the Blavatsky Lodge in London. Here she published *The Secret Doctrine*, a commentary on what she claimed were ancient Tibetan manuscripts, as well as two further books, *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Voice of the Silence*. She died of influenza.
- Blavatsky was a controversial figure during her lifetime, championed by supporters as an enlightened Sage and derided as a charlatan by critics. Her Theosophical doctrines influenced the spread of Hindu and Buddhist ideas in the West as well as the development of Western esoteric currents like Ariosophy, Anthroposophy, and the New Age Movement.

Theosophy and Blavatsky



- **Theosophy** is a religion established in the United States during the late 19th century. It was founded primarily by the Russian immigrant Helena Blavatsky and draws its teachings predominantly from Blavatsky's writings. Categorized by scholars of religion as both a new religious movement and as part of the occultist stream of Western esotericism, it draws upon both older European philosophies such as Neoplatonism and Asian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.
- As presented by Blavatsky, Theosophy teaches that there is an ancient and secretive brotherhood of spiritual adepts known as the Masters, who—although found across the world—are centered in Tibet. These Masters are alleged by Blavatsky to have cultivated great wisdom and supernatural powers, and Theosophists believe that it was they who initiated the modern Theosophical movement through disseminating their teachings via Blavatsky. They believe that these Masters are attempting to revive knowledge of an ancient religion once found across the world and which will again come to eclipse the existing world religions. Theosophical groups nevertheless do not refer to their system as a "religion".
- Theosophy preaches the existence of a single, divine Absolute. It promotes an emanationist cosmology in which the universe is perceived as outward reflections from this Absolute. Theosophy teaches that the purpose of human life is spiritual emancipation and claims that the human soul undergoes reincarnation upon bodily death according to a process of karma. It promotes values of universal brotherhood and social improvement, although it does not stipulate particular ethical codes.

Theosophy and Blavatsky



- Theosophy was established in New York City in 1875 with the founding of the Theosophical Society by Blavatsky and Americans Henry Olcott and William Quan Judge. In the early 1880s, Blavatsky and Olcott relocated to India, where they established the Society's headquarters at Adyar, Tamil Nadu. Blavatsky described her ideas in two books, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. She sought to produce purportedly supernatural phenomena to support her claims regarding the Masters, although was repeatedly accused of fraudulently doing so.
- Following Blavatsky's death in 1891, there was a schism in the Society, with Judge leading the Theosophical Society in America to split from the international organization. Under Judge's successor Katherine Tingley, a Theosophical community named Lomaland was established in San Diego. The Adyar-based Society was later taken over by Annie Besant, under whom it grew to its largest extent during the late 1920s, before going into decline. The Theosophical movement still exists, although in much smaller form than in its heyday.
- Theosophy played a significant role in bringing knowledge of South Asian religions to Western countries, as well as in encouraging cultural pride in various South Asian nations. A variety of prominent artists and writers have also been influenced by Theosophical teachings. Theosophy has an international following, and during the 20th century had tens of thousands of adherents. Theosophical ideas have also exerted an influence on a wide range of other esoteric movements and philosophies, among them Anthroposophy, the Church Universal and Triumphant, and the New Age.

Blavatsky and Theosophy



Helena Petrovna Blavatsky ★ Spiritual Traveler

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DeRITdkN60&t=227s>

Exploring The Secret Doctrine of H. P. Blavatsky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TeuAQkcL0os&t=193s>

Helena Blavatsky Returning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjSrA4G0gY0>