

# The Eclectic Theosophist

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## 3—How I Found Theosophy

### SEARCH AND DISCOVERY

GARY DOORE

*Slowly drifting on past twenty-four,  
A quarter-century now looms in the mist  
Of days ahead—an unknown, rocky shore—  
No welcome port where anchor might be cast!  
But I, without a compass, seem to float  
Upon some hidden current, drawing near  
The unmapped coast within a fragile boat  
That lacks a rudder or a helm to steer.  
Yet there I hear the breakers on the rocks  
Where many a well-made ship has gone aground—  
Where countless stronger hulls, now splintered wrecks,  
Are lying with the helpless captain drowned—  
And watch the prow in wonder as it glides  
Among these ragged reefs and seething tides.*

—Hilo, Hawaii

These lines were written in a mood of despair several years ago, shortly before I returned to San Diego from an abortive search for 'wisdom' in the philosophy departments and libraries at the University of Hawaii and a part-time vagabond-hermit existence in a camper along the wild coasts and tropical forests on the Big Island of Hawaii. I had investigated Zen and Yoga and been in and out of various 'Movements' with eastern philosophical foundations for several years, but there was something missing in all of them and in my own life. They did not deliver the guidance or sense of purpose and direction nor the peace of mind for which I had hoped, nor did studying the academic explanations of eastern philosophies relieve the confusion. Nay, the more I read and studied, the more difficult it became to make sense of the whole picture.

Then, immediately after arriving back on the mainland, I happened to pick up a volume in the San Diego public library and, opening to the title page, I was met by the penetrating and transfixing gaze of H. P. Blavatsky in her famous 'sphinx' picture. It was like an electric shock! Barely glancing at the table of contents in several of her works, I checked them out of the library knowing intuitively that she had something important to say to me. And suddenly, there it was!—the 'thread' on which the pearls of eastern wisdom could all be strung—the long-sought unifying vision that would enable me to make sense of the isolated fragments of oriental philosophy and religion I had gathered from here and there, which, without such a key, were only so much useless and unmanageable dross.

But there was more to H. P. Blavatsky's message than

merely abstract esoteric philosophy and hints for organizing its various components. In *The Key to Theosophy*, for example, there was the inspiring ethics of the Buddhist *Bodhisattva* teaching interpreted in practical western terms—the ideal of selfless service to humanity. I saw H.P.B.'s lifework as an embodiment of that noble purpose and realized that even though I had spent almost two years on and off seeking 'Enlightenment' in a Zen Buddhist community, a place where I had daily heard the *Bodhisattva* doctrine expounded, I had nevertheless not understood it at all, but had been living and meditating there from purely selfish motives—seeking only my own Liberation. But *The Key to Theosophy* made it abundantly clear that the thought of one's own salvation must be made subordinate to the higher motive of service to others on the truly spiritual Path—even though it meant postponing one's own final Liberation indefinitely. What a contrast to the popular books on Yoga and other eastern philosophical systems I had been reading! It was a much needed antidote to those subtle appeals to the merely personal instincts.

Then, in *The Voice of the Silence*, I discovered that the Bodhisattva's boundless compassion, his 'enlightened attitude' (*bodhicitta*) is itself the essence of the state of Enlightenment — a state which I had previously thought to be some sort of trance or condition of altered consciousness brought about by meditation and breath control. There too I learned that selfless Compassion is not merely the only way to begin treading the spiritual Path, but is the very heart and final goal of the Path itself. It was not necessary, then, to sit for hours in the Lotus Posture, as I had done in the Zen community, in order to get a taste of the enlightened state of mind, and neither was it necessary to travel to India in order to find the perfect *guru* who could impart the liberating *mantra*. As the *Voice of the Silence* made plain, in order to travel on the mystic

## MEDITATIONS—2

O my Divinity, Thou dost blend with the earth and fashion for Thyself temples of mighty power!

O my Divinity, Thou livest in the heart-life of all things, and dost radiate a golden light that shineth forever and doth illumine even the darkest corners of the earth!

O my Divinity, blend Thou with me, that from the corruptible I may become incorruptible, that from imperfection I may become perfection, that from darkness I may go forth in Light!

—Katherine Tingley: Invocation to the Higher Self

Path of Enlightenment one must first "become that Path itself" through service and self-sacrifice; and the teaching of The Two Paths also revealed clearly the choice that must be made right at the outset. Either one will strive for one's own illumination, working for oneself alone, or work for the emancipation of the race—nay more—of all future races during the countless *kalpas* to come in future Rounds.

Thus, Liberation was not at all what I had imagined and vainly sought through various intricate 'methods' of self-culture—not some transcendent, blissful trance where one is isolated in solitary grandeur from the world and the problems of daily life, nor some absorbing vision of "the White Light of the Void in the First *Bardo Realm*," nor yet the attainment of magical and psychic powers. Such things might come later, but they were not what one ought to strive after. No, it was something much simpler—it was an *attitude*—but an attitude that required a radical and complete reversal of the usual self-centered consciousness, a total about-face to the very bottom of one's mind. But, while simpler in some respects, this simplicity, I knew, was not going to be one bit easier to acquire than the *Nirvikalpa Samâdhi* sought by the *yogins*. Yet the Path was now at least in plain view, not beginning at the foot of a mango tree in some tropical rain-forest or at the feet of a guru in a Himalayan cave, but right here in San Diego, in normal daily life.

'Meditation' now took on a completely different meaning. It was no longer necessary to try to kill one's thoughts or enter a trance through altered breathing, for *thought itself* was to be the instrument to bring about the necessary change in attitude and transformation of consciousness, and the body, breath and emotions would thereby follow the intellect naturally, without strain. Hence, this realization brought the sense of direction I had been seeking. The goal of full enlightenment — including the "siddhis of perfection" and ability to enter the trance states—might still be far in the distance, but when the Path is seen to be clearly marked out, then even at the beginning one will be able to set about treading it with the energy and enthusiasm born of confidence. Of course, I realized that there would still be trials and problems (perhaps more than before, although of a different kind); but these in themselves do not cause despair, however great they may be, if seen in the proper perspective. For problems are simply part of the Path, and hence, are means by which to become spiritually stronger and more effective in one's service.

Thus I saw that the Bodhisattva Vow (which I had repeated mechanically in the Zen community, without understanding) is not a matter for outer formalism, but of inner conviction and determination. One does not "swear before God" in the presence of others in order to make it actual, but only before one's own Higher Self, the highest Authority one could ever hope to find as a Witness. Yet, once taken with seriousness and determination, this Vow will act as a strong keel and rudder to provide stability through the storms en-

countered along the Way, while the bright stars of the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom will serve to chart one's course for safe steerage through the troubled waters of this fleeting, earthly existence. This Bodhisattva Ideal, I believe, is the essence of Theosophy—an essence expressed in many religions, but perhaps most concisely in the Zen Buddhist "Four Vows" which I have rendered from the Japanese as the following:

I vow to bring the Spirit's Light  
To every being lost in Night,  
And vow this day to quench the fire  
Of selfish, personal desire;  
I vow to master every rule  
And law of Nature in her school  
That I may use the power gained  
To free all beings now enchain'd;  
Thus I vow to tread today  
The noble Bodhisattva Way.

Thus is one's ship set aright.

## A Man's Real Religion

HENRY T. EDGE

The following is an extract from *Theosophy and Christianity*, Manual No. 12, of the series of twelve that present the fundamental teachings of Theosophy. These manuals are also used as the basis of study in the Theosophical Correspondence Course now being conducted under the auspices of Point Loma Publications and in which all interested inquirers are invited to enroll.—EDS.

Various movements have been started, and exist today, for uniting the world's religions in common service, so that they may pool their efforts instead of contending with each other; and though such efforts are worthy of all praise and have achieved beneficial results, yet their shortcomings and the reasons therefor will be clear in the light of what we are saying. Religions are one in essence, and different in external form. The real way to unite them is to get back to the essence in each; attempts to bring about artificial union in externals are not so practicable. Moreover such attempts at unification are apt to take the form of eliminating from the common program the points of difference, so that what remain is a residue more or less vague and lifeless. Such a process resembles subtraction rather than addition; or, better, it is the attempt to find a common factor, which, as we know, becomes smaller in proportion to the multitude of the numbers whose common factor is to be found.

All religions have an esoteric basis beneath their exoteric form, and it is this which has so largely disappeared. Religions as they are do not satisfy the needs of human aspiration, for they leave out so large a part of what vitally concerns man. They are confined chiefly to ethical principles, but tell us nothing about the nature of the universe or the nature of man. Falling thus behind the age, they have allowed to grow up competing influences, such as natural science and abstract philosophy; and so we find the field of knowledge, which should be one, divided into compartments, either independent of each other or else conflicting.

The false antithesis between morals and knowledge,

religion and science, righteousness and culture, has been one of the great banes of religion. A unification of the field of knowledge is much desired; a uniform law by which to live; a solid basis for ethics, morals, conduct, instead of dogmas which we cannot believe, or speculations and fads and cults innumerable. A man's real religion is what he lives by—whatever he may profess. Thus the real unification of religions is found, not by trying to force an external union, or by eliminating from them all points of difference and thus leaving a weak residue, but by getting back to the esoteric basis of religions and showing the common parentage of them all; in short, by reviving a knowledge of the ancient Wisdom-Religion.

## LOST KEYS

Reprinted from *Theosophy*, 'On the Lookout', June 1976, issued by the United Lodge of Theosophists, Los Angeles, California.

Little exercise of the imagination is needed to recognize how widely and fundamentally acceptance of the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation would alter and eventually eliminate the most pressing social and moral problems. The key to present medical issues, to looming ecological disasters, and to the complex economic instabilities which seem merely practical matters, but which are really moral through and through, is the principle and law of brotherhood, and brotherhood can hardly be understood without the light of those doctrines which Mr. Judge spoke of as "the self-compelling basis for right ethics." Meanwhile, the pressures of the times, at almost every level of modern life, are having the effect of making people think. More and more are wondering about the questions quoted by Rachel Carson (in *Silent Spring*) from Paul Shepard:

"Why should we tolerate a diet of weak poisons, a home in insipid surroundings, a circle of acquaintances who are not quite our enemies, the noise of motors with just enough relief to prevent insanity? Who would want to live in the world which is just not quite fatal?"

An age in which such questions arise so naturally is surely shadowed enough to be called 'dark'. The only explanation for all this is provided throughout the Theosophical literature, but nowhere more succinctly than in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 643-44):

"We stand bewildered before the mystery of our own making, and the riddles of life that we will not solve, and then accuse the great Sphinx of devouring us. But verily there is not an accident in our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or in another life."

And the remedy, which may not be quick-acting, but is sure:

"With right knowledge, or at any rate with a confident conviction that our neighbors will no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, the two-thirds of the World's evil would vanish into thin air."

## Garden Party Notes

ELsie BENJAMIN

Under this inviting title we append notes sent the Editors on request by Mrs. Elsie Benjamin on the subject How to Study Theosophy, which was the main topic of discussion at this year's gathering of members of the Corresponding Fellows Lodge in England at Arden Cottage, Walton-on-Thames, the home of Capt. and Mrs. Cyril Duncan-Miller. (Mrs. Duncan-Miller is Lodge President, Mrs. Benjamin is Corresponding Secretary). We give the notes as roughly jotted down by Mrs. Benjamin.—Eds.

1. Decide why you want to study Theosophy: (a) confirming earlier beliefs; (b) comfort; (c) curiosity; (d) dissatisfaction with present religion; (e) search for Truth.
2. First step, as advised by K.H. to Sinnett: clear away old mistaken beliefs; don't try to build a superstructure of Theosophy on top of them.
3. Don't be too distressed by constant repetition, as in G. de P.'s writings. Such repetition, for example, is urged by Sri Krishna Prem in his *Man, the Measure of all Things*. Helps to embed the teachings in one's memory and to understand various differing angles, like studying the various facets of a jewel.
4. Analogy the key. In mathematics we were taught in solving a difficult problem "Compare what you want to know with what you do know". Constantly advised by Masters and H.P.B.
5. Never take only one statement found in a book and build a dogma around it, as, for example when dealing with time-periods, such as the 1500 years in Devachan. Analogy: the Biblical three score years and ten. How many people live exactly 70 years?
6. Understand the *reason* for your acceptance of any one teaching. Illustration: Capital Punishment: don't make a dogma of your disapproval; know the reason why: for instance, it makes the executed criminal much more dangerous to mankind.
7. Repeated study of teachings each time falls on a wider field of understanding consciousness.
8. Don't nurse a spirit of intolerance for others' viewpoints. Each has a right to his own standpoint. "From different peaks of the Alps the view is different."
9. Always look up anything you are uncertain about. G. de P. used to say: Impossible to carry all the intricacies of the teaching in one's mind, but know where to look it up; *and then look it up*.
10. A good test whether you understand a teaching: can you explain it to someone else?
11. Read and study the books; don't rely only on attending meetings.
12. Useful method: look up all references to one subject, as for instance FOHAT; builds up a sort of jig-saw puzzle.
13. Remain flexible in your thinking. Don't learn the teachings by rote. Example: Which is the third principle? Not necessarily *Manas*, or *Prâna*; it depends on whether you're counting them from below or from above.
14. Very important to know the meaning given in Theosophy to various terms., e.g.: Chaos; Compassion;

Free Will; the difference between reincarnating and reimbodying (the former used only for bodies of flesh; the Logos, for instance, 'reimbodies'). *Chaos*: there's a different meaning between what one views in one's home when a burglar has entered, and CHAOS, "Infinite, boundless, endless and beginningless in duration." *Compassion*: "means, remember, law, harmony, regular procedures of cause and effect, the very Heart of Nature's being." (*Studies in Occult Philosophy*, 620). *Free Will*: this is one aspect or definition: "the amount of spiritual vitality and intellect that the evolving individual has been able to grasp through inner growth." (*op.cit.* 631) Thus Masters and high chelas have more free will in living than we ordinary people, hence it is more difficult to read their horoscopes in advance.

15. Don't exclude all other religions: Example: G. de P. in *Stud. in OP.*, 595, mentions *Prajāpati*, then illustrates: in Sanskrit—Parents of progeny; in Persian—Amshaspends; Jewish—Sephiroth; Orphic—Kabiri; Christian — Archangels. Helps to expand one's consciousness and tolerance of others' beliefs.

16. Need of using both mind and heart, not one to the exclusion of the other. See *Stud. in OP.*, 440.

17. No dogmas; and unorthodoxy desirable—BUT *within certain limits*. In other words, not everything one chooses to believe is necessarily Theosophy. But in a group of five students, there could easily be five (or more, if opinions are changed when listening to some other's) different understandings.

18. Finally, consciousness in the sense of inner awareness is a key which opens doors to answers to many questions, such as: How many lives does a man have to live until he attains a certain status? Ans.: No set number of lives; depends on the amount of consciousness one uses while living. HPB accomplished much more in her one life, i.e., 'lived longer', than her mere 60 years.

## AND WE QUOTE . . .

*Extracts from recent correspondence*

*To an inquirer in a Correctional Institution in Indiana:*

It is with genuine pleasure that we see a rising interest in Theosophy all around the world, for it indicates that people are turning to a study of something *real* in life, the essence, in fact, of what can be carried with them from life to life and, in a certain sense, be remembered or recollected. But it is important, we feel, that the student get the 'right sort' of teaching, one that reflects as near as possible the spirit and atmosphere and substance of the original Teachings. That is what this Course tries to do . . .

I also suggest that you may find it helpful to read a little each day in G. de Purucker's *Golden Precepts*. There you will find that one of the great ideas is the essential Oneness of ALL things in the universe; that man is inherently divine (not a worm of the dust; not born in sin), and that these divine faculties must gradually become awakened in him so that he grows to understand the meaning more and more of that essential idea. The Christian religion has the same

teaching: "I and my Father are one"—that is, the Inner God. The Buddhists teach the same: "THAT thou art!" That meaning the highest beyond what you can imagine, because there is always something yet higher. Yet the lowliest thing you can think of is also a part of the Great Whole, and within that lowly particle sleeps the divine. Evolution will gradually bring it forth; but when we reach the human stage we can and should aid the slow natural evolution by using our mental and spiritual qualities and so grow faster as we tread the Path more surely.

—Secretary, Theosophical Correspondence Course  
*To a Friend in Holland*

It has occurred to me at this Sacred Season of the Spring Equinox, might it not be well to call for a general declaration of war—not on other people or other nations, but war on ourselves; that is, on our lower personal self, with its perpetual self-centeredness, vanity, greed, and lust for power?

Of course, I realize that most of us are far too closely identified with 'the enemy' to be willing to declare war against him. So, perhaps in this Kali-Yuga the best we can hope for is to record with ourselves a 'non-aggression pact'—that is, a covenant that we will never knowingly injure anyone by deed, word, or even thought.

Would not such a covenant be a long step in the direction of world peace and universal brotherhood? Isn't it worth trying, at least among fellow-students of Theosophy?

—IVERSON L. HARRIS

*To a friend in Arkansas*

I had to laugh in a friendly way about your statement that you at first thought you'd have achieved Nirvâna within five years after first becoming interested in Theosophy. Let me give you part of a definition of the word from G. de Purucker's *Occult Glossary*:

"Nirvâna is a very different thing from the 'heavens'. Nirvâna is a state of utter bliss and complete, untrammelled consciousness, a state of absorption in pure Kosmic Being, and is the wondrous destiny of those who have reached superhuman knowledge and purity and spiritual illumination. It really is *personal-individual* absorption into or rather identification with the Self—the Highest SELF. . . . So far as the individual human being is concerned, the nirvânic state or condition may be attained to by great spiritual Seers and Sages, such as Gautama the Buddha, and even by men less progressed than he; because in these cases of the attaining of the Nirvâna even during a man's life on earth, the meaning is that one so attaining has through evolution progressed so far along the Path that all the lower personal part of him is become thoroughly impersonalized, i.e., the personal has put on the garment of impersonality, and such a man thereafter lives in the nirvânic condition of the spiritual Monad . . ."

And more could be written about this. But even greater than the wish to attain Nirvâna is the wish to serve

humanity. This is the pathway of the Buddhas of Compassion, as is explained in H. P. Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*. And this, too, is the essence of Theosophy. So be not discouraged at your seeming lack of progress. Life follows life on our long path toward Buddhahood. If we do our immediate duty well and if we seek ever more impersonality in our dealings with others, we will find advancement coming naturally.

—HUGH PENDARVIS

### To a Friend in England

You speak of systole-diaстole, afferent-efferent, centripetal-centrifugal; and I get the impression that you pit these pairs against each other, each fighting for supremacy. But as I see the broad landscape of Nature, I think of each pair as correlatives, reciprocally dependent. Take for instance, centripetal-centrifugal (etymologically, they mean 'center-seeking' 'center-fleeing'). Yes, they are opposites, if you like, but we should remember this is the prevailing way or habit of nature: opposites preserving a balance. Usually we study these two forces in relation to astronomy: the pull of the sun and opposite pull of the planets, these two in cosmic balance and perfect harmony all the time. Now, if this reciprocal and necessary relationship were not existent, the planets long ago would have rushed off into space 'on their own'. We take the apparent miracle of this steady circling without question.

I find it interesting to study the little universe of man in the same context. Our Central Sun is that centripetal center "where truth abides in fulness", as Robert Browning so intuitively expresses it. Our human self is centrifugal like a planet to that Sun. Now, if there were ever any attempts at breaking this harmonious arrangement it would be the human centrifugal 'planet' struggling to break away from that spiritual center. But that strong center (the centripetal force) holds steady, and the human self, willy-nilly follows its prescribed course around that central luminary—the Self. This, I think, is not only a good analogy, but it holds a tremendous secret: the meaning and purpose of life, and our ultimate goal.

—S. A. TARRYTON

### BOOK REVIEWS

**REMINISCENCES OF H. P. BLAVATKY AND THE SECRET DOCTRINE,** Constance Wachmeister, Quest Books, paper, 164 pp. 14 half-tones, \$3.75. The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois.

It is good to see this little book in print again. It was first published in England in 1893, two years after the death of H. P. Blavatsky and some five years after the writing of her masterpiece. But, as the Countess Wachmeister says, the account is given "while yet the circumstances are fresh in my memory, with memoranda and letters still available for reference." Even the enemies of HPB—those who mainly in ignorance, we may hope, still culminate against her and her teach-

ing—cannot deny the factual honesty, the appealing frankness, of this recital by one who was with HPB during those long hours of night and day in the eventful years 1887-1888. "I desire to convey to the reader, if possible," wrote Wachmeister, "as full a knowledge as I myself possess of the difficulties and distractions that beset her during the progress of her work. The ill-health, the wandering life, the unpropitious surroundings, the lack of materials, the defection of false friends, the attacks of enemies, were obstacles that impeded her labor; but the co-operation of willing hands, the love and care of devoted adherents, and, above all, the support and direction of her beloved and revered Masters, rendered its completion possible."

The reader is made the intimate witness to the phenomena which took place while HPB was writing, to incidents of guidance and aid given her, to precipitated messages, to insights into her character, and above all her quenchless devotion and spiritual allegiance to those she regarded as her Teachers and who, in degree, became also co-authors of her volumes. Yes, even her detractors must feel some touch of remorse, some twinge of awakening inner understanding?

And bright lights in the theosophical firmament of those days sparkle through these pages: Dr. Anna Bonus Kingsford, Dr. Edward Maitland, Colonel Henry S. Olcott, T. Subba Row, Dr. Franz Hartmann, A. P. Sinnett, the Gebhards, the Comptess d'Adhémar, Bertram and Archibald Keightley, and William Q. Judge, as well as members of HPB's own family, her sister and niece. Valuable commentary on the writing of the *S.D.* by many of these constitutes the second part of the book, as well as historically interesting reprints of articles from the news media of that day, and a dozen early half-tones of HPB, of the author, and other prominent Theosophists at the time of the writing of the *S.D.*

One regrets, however, "the minor editorial changes" the publishers felt necessary "to conform to contemporary practices." They are not needed and are no improvement. One doesn't change Dickens, or Trollope or Sterne or Hugo; and why should not the Countess Wachmeister's prose—clear and educated as it is—have been left untouched by no matter how well-meaning and conscientious a 'modern' hand? The changes, we should add, in no way affect the sense of the writing, but only the style. But, again, when in the Preface and first chapter alone, a brief five pages, we find 37 changes, none of them necessary, we are constrained to wonder to what degree the unknown editor felt driven by the bugbear of contemporary practice—which, given time, will itself change, and change. Perhaps a pointed reference to the years of the writing of the *S.D.*, 1887-1888, would have sufficiently 'translated' readers back to that Victorian era and prepared them for the style of writing then in vogue. But this is minor.

Those who have cherished this volume from earlier years welcome its reappearance. Those to whom it will be new have here the opportunity of reading a warm and intimate recital, touching and poignant, depicting

the agony (and indeed perhaps a little of the ecstasy, and ever the mystery) surrounding the birth of that book called *The Secret Doctrine*.—W.E.S.

**PSYCHIC POWERS**, by Helen Todd, Theosophical Publishing House, London, in collaboration with Point Loma Publications, San Diego, California. Paper, 84 pp. \$2.00.

In this manual we find elucidated such important subjects as: an explanation of the Astral Light and the Astral Senses; the nature of the human psyche, showing that man, like the universe, has an inner nature ranging from the purely astral to the highest spiritual; mediumship and its dangers; communication after death and what it really means.

And these questions are answered: What are elementals or nature spirits? What are vampires? What is meant by materialization? apparitions? poltergeists? What is the difference between a mediator and a medium? What is hypnotism, clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy or thought-transference (ESP)? Psychometry, crystal-gazing, and automatic writing? What indeed is meant by "The Third Eye" or "The Eye of Śiva"?

The author concludes that today we are seeing evidence of a more serious and genuine scientific approach to the whole problem of the psychic world, though much remains to be done in the way of sound education. "We are opening upon a new cycle," she declares, "which will see the progressive development of new faculties in man. As the human race advances it will inevitably become more finely organized both physically and psychically, and will come gradually more and more in contact with forces, powers, and beings that belong to a more subtle plane of existence. What Theosophy has to give in the way of explanation and preparation is needed *right now* as the introduction to a new cycle of development."

That "right now" information is here in this manual (No. 11 of a series of 12 clear expositions of fundamental tenets of occultism and Theosophy). Much of it is gentle but wise warning against any fanatic headlong rush into experimentation and practice whose dangers are little dreamed of. What people need is not power or powers but wisdom. With wisdom increased powers of a psychic nature can be used constructively for the benefit of the human race. Beware the guru or teacher ready—for a fee—to develop in you *immediate* power. Beware advertisements saying "In six weeks you can learn to gain power over others." Be warned in time. Learn first of the nature, origin, and true destiny of the complex being called man, and with that vision wisely take first steps along the age-old Path of Ātma-Vidyā.

That is the burden of this study.

—AMOS THRID

**NEW PLATONISM AND ALCHEMY**, by Alexander Wilder. A Secret Doctrine Reference Series Reprint, published in 1975 by Wizards Bookshelf, Box 66, Savage, Minnesota 55378. 32 pp. Price \$2.00.

Although not to be found in the lists of the famous—and who cares?—Alexander Wilder was one of the

great minds of the 19th century. A medical doctor by profession, his avocation was that of a student of the classics, and he shone as a Platonist. Wilder was a friend and co-worker of Madame Blavatsky in her New York years. She held him and his talent in high esteem.

This Secret Doctrine Reference Series reprint contains two fine essays by Wilder. "The Eclectic Philosophy" is probably the best exposition of the Neo-Platonic philosophy to be found anywhere. Likewise "Alchemy, or the Hermetic Philosophy" is a mine of information about this mysterious subject. Students of either of these topics will be well rewarded with a reading of these relatively short pieces.

It is a pleasure to read Wilder. His style makes for easy reading and he wrote in a clear and commonsense way. Both these essays are extremely interesting presentations: they have a freshness about them that one might think they were written last week, yet they were originally published in 1869.

— TED G. DAVY in *The Canadian Theosophist*,

## ITEMS of INTEREST

### About Jan Venema

From Jan van der Sluis on behalf of the School for the Study and Promulgation of the Esoteric Philosophy, Arnhem (Holland) branch, a request has come to insert in the *Eclectic* a few words "in memory of our beloved brother Jan Venema." Mr. v.d. Sluis writes: "When we heard that our dear Brother had passed away we felt as he himself once wrote in one of his fine poems: 'Servus servorum, Chela, returned to your Home . . . one moment my breath failed me . . .' We owe our comrade much, very much, because he has given us much, very much. Is not the best way to show our gratitude by carrying out the exhortation in the last lines of his poem: 'Maintain, carry on Masters' work'? Please receive our feelings of deep sympathy." (Later word informs us that Jan Venema's fine library will be moved from The Hague to Arnhem, housed in rooms which the School there uses for study-meetings.)

And also from a letter from Lucie and Jan Molijn, Heemstede, this final paragraph: "The older Fellows of the Dutch T.S., Point Loma, will feel Jan's demise as a great loss and like the fall of a strong, irreplaceable pillar. How well do we remember the time that he presided over the T.S. Board, and was indefatigable in translating the speeches which K.T. and G. de P. made in Holland. His expulsion from the Pasadena T.S. was a shocking experience, but undaunted he continued to promulgate the Ancient Wisdom, especially as the mentor of his School, which he wanted to model after that founded by Pythagoras at Crotona. We are sure you will miss your Dutch theosophical friend and brother very much indeed, since you had life-long personal as well as organizational ties with him."

We may add that we received, later, a letter written by Mr. Venema, typed by himself the day before his death. We quote a few lines: "In spite of all the chaotic literature and the appearance of thousands of

books making people think along more psychic than genuinely spiritual lines, I find real gems of esoteric wisdom now and then, giving us hope for the future . . . The more I read (as far as one can keep up with all that appears in book and magazine) and the more I hear everywhere, the more I am convinced of the enormous force and energy that will be needed to extend the Movement of HPB and the Teachers in the world during the last quarter of this century. We are all doing what we can, though we would like to be 45 years old sometimes! . . . Our studies and work on the outward plane are now finished during July and August. I hope to be able to have a holiday in the south of England later on . . . Love and greetings to all who know us and whom you may meet during the summer months. As ever . . ."

#### Gifts to Library

The Library of Point Loma Publications has received from Mrs. Marguerite Barton of Porterville, California, items of historic and artistic interest from the estates of her late mother, Emily Lemke-Neresheimer, and of her earlier deceased stepfather, E. August Neresheimer. Of special interest is a hand-illuminated document headed *ANANDAMAYA KOSA*: "A Theosophical gathering on September 4, 1893," inscribed with Sanskrit characters at the top and Sinhalese in the margins, and signed by the following thirteen representatives of different countries: Gyanendra N. Chakravarti (Allahabad, India), H. Dhamapala (Ceylon), Annie Besant (Ireland), William Q. Judge (Ireland), Henrietta Miller (Chile), Claude F. Wright ( $\Omega\gamma\gamma\alpha$ ) [Ogygia], E. Aug. Neresheimer (Germany), Alexander Fullerton (U.S.A.), H. T. Patterson (U.S.A.), Ella J. M. Judge (U.S.A.), Minnie Neresheimer (U.S.A.), C. T. Strauss (Switzerland), Maud Ralston (U.S.A.). As the first four signatories are known to have represented respectively Hinduism, Buddhism, and Theosophy (Annie Besant and W. Q. Judge) at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, it is reasonable to assume by the date of the document that it was composed and signed on that occasion.

Among the bound volumes presented by Mrs. Barton were *The Theosophical News*, published weekly at 24 Mount Vernon Street (the Theosophical headquarters in Boston, Mass.), Vol. I, No. 1, June 22, 1896, to Vol. II, No. 14, Sept. 20, 1897. It covers "The Crusade of American Theosophists Around the World"; and the last issue contains a notice that the work of *Theosophical News* will be taken over by *The New Century*, which was published weekly thereafter first in New York, and then from 1900 at Point Loma, until 1911, when it was succeeded by the monthly *The Theosophical Path*. The bound volume of *Theosophical News* bears on the cover the following imprint: "Presented to E. August Neresheimer, President Theosophical Society in America. June 13, 1896-June 13, 1898." Inside is a handwritten note: "Mr. E. August Neresheimer. Dear Brother: As you are the beloved General who took command of the Home forces with the departure of the Crusade and in whose strong hands they were

held intact to the day of its return, allow one of the privates in the ranks to present to you a volume of the 'Theosophical News', which tells the story of how the Home Fires were kept burning. (Signed) Solomon Hecht."

#### *Historic Footnote:*

To those interested in knowing the truth concerning certain statements made late in life by Mr. E. A. Neresheimer in his "Reminiscences of William Q. Judge", the following incontrovertible facts are gleaned and quoted from "Minutes of a General Meeting held at Headquarters, 144 Madison Avenue, New York, on Sunday, March 29, 1896 at 12:30 p.m."

Mr. Hargrove read several pages of the memoranda in Judge's handwriting found after his death. Thereafter, each member of the Council expressed his concurrence and acceptance of the documents read by Mr. Hargrove. Mr. Neresheimer's concluding statement was as follows: "I corroborate everything that has been said by Mr. Hargrove. I was present when the papers of Mr. Judge were examined, and I have seen all the documents to which he refers."

For further details, see *The Eclectic Theosophist* No. 37, November 15, 1976, "A Chapter of Theosophical History Clarified."

In conclusion, I quote the following from Mr. Hargrove's opening address to the members gathered at Headquarters in New York on March 29, 1896:

"This is the Rajah's [Judge's] statement in regard to our new Outer Head: 'This Head is as true as steel, as clear as a diamond, as lasting as Time'."

—IVERSON L. HARRIS

#### "A Chronological Disaster"

We are indebted to Mr. Jan Molijn of Heemstede, Holland, for the following summary of an article in *Theosofia*, the monthly magazine of the Dutch section of the Adyar T.S., November 1976, titled "A Chronological Disaster" by Dr. J. H. Dubbink:

The data on yugas given in *The Secret Doctrine* are partially based on the relevant Hindu teaching, these periods being in the proportion of 4:3:2:1. In *The Mahatma Letters* (p. 84) it is stated that beginning and end are symmetrically equal to each other, that the first period must be equal to the last, so that the sequence 4:3:2:1 cannot be the final word.

On the basis of *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, VI, 117, a series of 4:3:2:1:2:3:4 can be drawn up, applying both to Rounds and Races. However, nowhere in the S.D. has this sequence been used.

A relevant statement by HPB in one of her letters to Sinnett (p. 194) may also be cited. Our view of 'occult chronology' at last becomes a complete hodge-podge or mess when we take into consideration the series mentioned in *The Peopling of the Earth* by G. Barborka: not 4:3:2:1:2:3:4, but 1:2:3:4:5:6:7, based on an article by HPB in which she gives detailed calculations of the duration of the various races, completely contrary to her statements in the S.D. that the races exist next to each other for a considerable time, and thus overlap to some extent. Was also this article

intended as a draft for the parts of the *S.D.* which were never published and which disappeared?

For a serious student the only choice left is to conclude, woefully, that he is apparently not ALLOWED to form a reasonable picture from all the conflicting data. Nevertheless, we are anxious to hear whether others are in a position to shed more light on the matter, and we look forward to receiving their reactions with the greatest interest. (Readers are invited to write in response to: Prof. Dr. J. H. Dubbink, Bilderdijkstraat 88, Bilthoven, The Netherlands).

#### Complete Works of Emilio Bacardí Moreau

The following is an extract of a letter dated June 14, 1977, to Sra Amalia E. Bacardí, Miami Beach, Florida, from Iverson L. Harris. Sr. Bacardí was Mayor of Santiago de Cuba at the time of the Spanish-American war, and at the turn of the century when Katherine Tingley established her several Râja-Yoga schools in the island, he was one of her staunchest supporters.

"It was most gracious and thoughtful of you to send me the amazing collection of the collected writings of your distinguished father, don Emilio Bacardí Moreau: Ten volumes of *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba*; Two volumes of *Doña Guiomar, Tiempos de la Conquista*; Two volumes of *Vía Crucis, Páginas de Ayer*; and the six smaller works: *Hacia Tierras Viejas, Biografías, Espistolario, Filigrana, Cuentos de Todas Las Noches, Al Abismo*.

"All of these works bear witness to don Emilio's creative genius and energy, in addition to his other outstanding contributions to Cuba as courageous patriot, wise and just administrator. What a wonderful heritage he has left to his offspring.

"The collected writings of Emilio Bacardí Moreau will be a unique and valuable addition to the Library of Point Loma Publications, Inc., for which I thank you on behalf of all the members of the Board of Directors."

#### Theosophical Literature Around the World

The growing interest worldwide in Theosophy and the more vigorous effort to disseminate the teachings will be seen from the following notes gleaned from several publications of the T.S. (Adyar):

**Canada.** "A project started over ten years ago to place theosophical books in University Libraries has resulted in several hundred volumes being distributed. The last being offered was *The Caves and Jungles of Hindostan* by H. P. Blavatsky. The publication of the first volume of the writings of William Q. Judge, entitled *Echoes of the Orient* was another outstanding event. A copy of this book has been given to the library of each lodge in the Section."

**Brazil.** The same issue of *The Theosophist* (Feb. 1977) reports that *The Secret Doctrine* has now been translated into Portuguese by Senhor Raymundo Sobral. The edition of 3,000 copies was exhausted in three months, showing an interest not only by members but by the general public.

**France.** Under the heading "Beginnings of the Theo-

sophical Society: William Q. Judge", *Le Lotus Bleu*, Paris, Aug.-Sept. 1977, pays honor to one of the co-founders of the T.S. The last paragraph of this article written by Pierre Courtois reads: "William Quan Judge died March 21, 1896, at the age of forty-five. Until the death of Madame Blavatsky in 1891, he was her valued collaborator and devoted to her noble task of spreading the marvelous teachings which the Adepts of the Occult Science had charged her to disseminate. In pursuit of this service he deserves the gratitude of all Theosophists."

#### The Adyar Library Bulletin

Volume 40, 1976, of this Bulletin reports acquisitions: 2,240 books added, 55 purchased, and the rest gifts. Manuscripts: 218 palm-leaf MSS in good condition and containing about 600 words on various subjects. These were presented by S. Ranganathan of Shencottah, the largest addition to the Manuscripts' Collection in recent years. Among the many reviews, mostly of Indian literature, Vedic and Brahmana texts, commentaries, Sanskrit and Indological studies, were also those of *Golden Threads in the Tapestry of History* (Kenneth Morris), *Echoes of the Orient* (W. Q. Judge) and *H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement* (C. J. Ryan)—all published by Point Loma Publications, Inc.

#### The Secret Doctrine and Current Thought

*The Canadian Theosophist* of May-June 1977 begins a series which plans to quote from or refer to modern sources which specifically illustrate or elucidate ideas from *The Secret Doctrine* put forth nearly 100 years ago by H. P. Blavatsky. First responses are already bringing into focus the wish of Blavatsky's Teachers that science should be and could be "our chief ally". New and bolder methods of experimentation and theory promise in certain instances an approach to this end, an end which should show science that the Ancient Wisdom is Science in the deepest and truest sense. All readers are invited to send to the Editors (Ted and Doris Davy, 2307 Sovereign Cr. S.W. Calgary, Alberta, Canada T3C 2M3) "suitable quotations from books or articles published since 1950, and the relevant pages in the S.D. which they support."

#### Eclectic Theosophist

I found last issue seething with various kinds of theosophical activities in different parts of the world . . . Irene Ponsonby's short article, 'How I Found Theosophy' was very interesting, not least for what she wrote about Philip A. Malpas . . ."—S.M.

I do enjoy receiving your paper, and appreciate the balance between important historical information and concern with present day issues. One of those interesting 'coincidences' occurred on the receipt of your March issue. Our forthcoming Lodge program had been all set to study the illusions of the astral, but at that instant no suitable material to work round, and then Elsie Benjamin's article on "Past Lives", Hypnotic Regression and the Astral Light" arrived, and said it all. The whole evening centered round that, and it was a very stimulating and worthwhile one.—J.S., Toronto, Canada