

his books on the Greeks, the political studies, and his analyses of the causes of war. In 1931 he wrote to an Indian inquirer:

When I was a young man I became much absorbed first in Plato, and then Plotinus. I am one of the few Englishmen who have studied Plotinus from cover to cover, though that was years ago. I thought then that there must be some way of reaching ultimate truth (or perhaps I should say ultimate experience) by some short cut. I suppose that the principal thing that happened to me, in the course of my life, was the disappearance of this idea. *I feel now that we are all very ignorant and quite incredibly and unimaginably inadequate to deal with the kind of questions we ask about ultimate things.* I know however that there do exist what are called mystic states and I am interested when I come across anyone genuine who claims to have them. But what they signify really, when had, I cannot of course pretend to judge. I am now pretty near death and naturally my mind moves in that direction. What death really means no one can tell, perhaps it means different things to different people. I am content and indeed obliged to "wait and see."

In the Introductory to *The Secret Doctrine* (I, xlv), H.P.B. speaks of the Neo-Platonists and Gnostics as the last of those who gave focus to "the bright rays of light streaming from the aeons of time gone by, unobscured by the hand of bigotry and fanaticism." There must have been many, reborn from that period, who struggled as individuals to renew that focus in themselves, during the nineteenth century and after, with varying success, in a time when the clouds of materialism and skeptical denial rested heavily upon the minds of even the most thoughtful men of the West. There were, indeed, several Neoplatonic revivals during the rise of European civilization—one in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century, another in England in the time of Elizabeth, and again in Germany in the work of Herder, Lessing, Fichte, and others. Gleams of Platonic and Neoplatonic inspiration seem clear in the works of all these men, as in the Transcendentalist movement in America and England. Dickinson, in his way, can hardly be denied a similar inspiration. His attitude toward the first great war was that war is always "folly and crime," and he did what he could to give constructive shape to the League of Nations. Insight into his spirit is provided by a delightful book, *Appearances* (1914), which is an account of his travels in the East and elsewhere. John McTaggart, who wrote extensively on reincarnation, and whose *Some Dogmas of Religion* is a brilliant criticism of the personal-God idea, was one of his closest friends.

In the Feb. 22 issue of *Rolling Stone*—a magazine which, like many of its contemporaries, confuses ribaldry with editorial daring—an interview with Henry Miller discloses a current of thought in the famous novelist's life which helps to explain some of the rather remarkable passages in the work of this talented Rabalaisian writer of mixed tendencies, now in his eighties. Speaking of what he meant by "conversion," Miller recalled a day in Paris in 1934. He was reading, he said, books by Mme. Blavatsky, when he came across a photograph of her face. He told the interviewer:

"... I was hypnotized by her eyes and I had complete vision of her as if she were in the room.

"Now I don't know if that had anything to do with what happened next, but I had a flash, I came to the realization that I was responsible for my whole life, whatever had happened. I

used to blame my family, society, my wife . . . and that day I saw so clearly that I had nobody to blame but myself. I put everything on my own shoulders and I felt so relieved. Now I'm free, no one else is responsible. And that was a kind of awakening, in a way. I remember a story of how one day the Buddha was walking along and a man came up to him and said: 'Who are you, what are you?' and the Buddha promptly answered 'I am a man who is awake.' We're asleep, don't you know, we're sleepwalkers."

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PEOPLING OF THE EARTH: A Commentary on Archaic Records in *The Secret Doctrine*, by Geoffrey A. Barborka. The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois, 1975. 233 pages, index. Cloth, \$10.00.

Geoffrey A. Barborka is known for his lucid and profound expositions on *The Secret Doctrine* philosophy, and this latest work of his will be a valuable addition to the library of every Theosophical student. It is a remarkable book, a commentary on the Anthropogenic *Stanzas of Dzyan* (Numbers 1 through IV), throwing vivid light upon many obscure and cryptic passages in the *Stanzas and Commentaries*.

Especially impressive are the chapters on "The Lunar Pitris" and "The Lords of the Flame," those "Beings" known in *The Secret Doctrine* under a multitude of names, many of which are Sanskrit. (As in previous works, Mr. Barborka carefully explains all Sanskrit and technical Theosophical terms. So interesting is this "language of the gods" that one is almost inclined to take a course in Sanskrit!)

Who are these strange entities who played such an important role in Man's evolution? The following excerpts from *The Secret Doctrine* give some insight into this mysterious subject:

Concerning the Lunar Pitris:

They could only create, or rather clothe, the human Monads with their own Astral Selves, but they could not make man in their image and likeness. Their creating the semblance of men out of their own divine Essence means, esoterically, that it is they who became the first Race, and thus shared its destiny and further evolution.—II, pp. 94-95, orig. ed; *An Abridgement of The Secret Doctrine*, p. 170

On the Solar Pitris, the Lords of the Flame:

These are . . . those 'Flames' (the *Agnishwatta*) who, as shown in Sloka 13, 'remain behind' instead of going along with the others (the Lunar Pitris) to create men on Earth. But the true esoteric meaning is that most of them (Lords of the Flame) were destined to incarnate as the *Egos* of the forthcoming crop of mankind.—II, 79; *Abridgment*, 166

The Fall was the result of man's knowledge, for his 'eyes were opened.' Indeed, he was taught Wisdom and the hidden knowledge by the 'Fallen Angel', for the latter had become from that day his *Manas*, Mind and Self-Consciousness . . . Satan, or the Red Fiery Dragon, the 'Lord of Phosphorous' . . . and *Lucifer* or 'Light-Bearer,' is in us: it is our Mind—our tempter and Redeemer, our intelligent liberator and Savior from pure animalism. Without this principle—the emanation of the very essence of the pure divine principle *Mahat* (Intelligence), which radiates direct from the *Divine mind*—we would be surely no better than animals.—II, 513

Mr. Barborka also dispels several misconceptions which have crept into the original teachings and have been prevalent in some Theosophical circles for years. Concerning one of these he says:

Whence came the Lords of the Flame? A question which has been raised concerning the coming of the Lords of the Flame to the Earth from Venus. In all probability this assumption was

formulated because of a statement made in a Commentary from the Book of Dzyan that each one of the Seven Root-Races comes under the regency of one of the Seven Sacred Planets. The Dhyāni of Venus is the Regent of the Third Root-Race, and it was during the fifth sub-race of the Third Root-Race that the enlightenment of humanity was brought about by the Lords of the Flame . . . They are said to have come down into the present sphere because of having descended from a superior sphere of the Earth planetary system.—pp. 170-71

It is hoped that some of Erich Von Däniken's readers and followers will read *Peopling of the Earth*. Admittedly, Von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods* contains a few gems of truth concerning man's origin and evolution on this planet, but *Chariots* embodies an extremely naïve, garbled, and materialistic interpretation of the ancient myths and legends concerning man's origin and relationship to the "gods". *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Peopling of the Earth* are on a totally superior plane.

Special attention should be given to the last chapter which deals with "The Chronology of the Peopling of the Earth." Specific figures for the time-periods of the Rounds, Races and Sub-Races are given. This chronology is based upon an unfinished article written by H.P.B. but not published during her life, entitled "On Cosmic Cycles, Manvantaras and Rounds", which will appear in Vol. XIII of her *Collected Writings*. The interested student might compare this chronology with the "Dzyan Chronology" discovered and worked out by Victor A. Endersby, another deep student of H.P.B.'s teachings. (See June 1974 issue of *Theosophical Notes*, P.O. Box 427, Napa, California 94558. See also Jean Raymond's article "The Evolutionary Cycles and Their Chronology" in the book *H. P. Blavatsky and the Secret Doctrine* edited by Virginia Hanson; and also Elizabeth W. Preston's *The Earth and Its Cycles and The Story of Creation and of Man*).

We hope Mr. Barborka will write another book embodying a commentary on the remaining Stanzas (Nos. V through XII). In the meantime *The Peopling of the Earth* will help many sincere and earnest students of Theosophy digest and make fuller use of H. P. Blavatsky's *magnum opus*.

—DANIEL H. CALDWELL

THE DESATIR or Sacred Writings of the Ancient Persian Prophets, translated by Mulla Firuz bin Kaus (1818). New material. Limited edition. Cloth, 400 pp. \$7.00. Wizards Bookshelf, Savage, Mn 55378.

This work is translated from a language of which no other vestiges exist, with the help of an ancient Persian commentary by the Fifth Sasan. A Persian translator stated that *The Desatir* is "the book of the blessed Mahabad," consequently it is often regarded as having been written in the Mahabadian language. H. P. Blavatsky commented "neither the *Dabistan* nor the *Desatir* can, strictly speaking, be included in the number of orthodox Parsee books—the contents of both of these if not the works themselves anteceding by several millenniums the ordinances in the *Avesta*." (BCW. IV, 507-8) Orientalists assign the date of 600 B.C. to the *Avesta*.

Thus *The Desatir* is indeed a very ancient work. The present reprint is a photographic copy of the 1888 edition. It consists of the writings of sixteen Iranian prophets, which are given in numbered sentences, mostly, hymns of adoration and praise addressed to Mezdām (i.e. Ahura Mazda in Zend, or Ormazd in Phalavi or Iranian). Each one of the sixteen prophets is named in the title heading of each "book," and each one opens with this injunction: "Let us take refuge with Mezdām from evil thoughts which mislead and afflict us. (1) In the name of Shemta, the Bountiful, the Beneficent, the Kind, the Just! (2)"

Of especial interest is the fact that the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation are expressed very clearly in the first book, which is entitled "The Book of the Prophet, the Great Abad." For instance:

Those who, in the season of prosperity, experience pain and grief, suffer them on account of their words or deeds in a former body, for which the Most Just now punisheth them. (69)

If anyone knowingly and intentionally kill a harmless animal, and do not meet with retribution in the same life either from the Unseen or the earthly ruler, he will find punishment awaiting him at his next coming. (75)

Another significant point: in the ninth sentence of the second "book" under the nomenclature of "slow-revolving stars" the twelve Signs of the Zodiac are enumerated. Then in the eleventh sentence the seven sacred planets are named in Mahabadian termed the "moving stars"; but in sentence 45 of the fourth "book" they are given in their familiar English equivalents.

Occasionally in the midst of lines of adoration and/or praise appear philosophical concepts, such as the Self-Existent: this would be equivalent to SAT. For example:

"The world is an idea of the Self-existent; Non-existence is the mirror of existence. Without the light of the Self-existent, Nothing is. His light extendeth over All, and conferreth being on all existences. (Book IX, 59-62)

Of especial significance is the thirteenth prophet, whose writing is entitled "The Book of Shet the Prophet Zirtusht", usually referred to as Zoroaster or the Iranian prophet Zarathustra. An extract from one of H. P. Blavatsky's articles on the subject of Zoroaster gives this explanation:

. . . there were several (in all seven, say the Secret Records) Ahuru-asters, or spiritual teachers, of Ahuramazda, an office corrupted later into *Guru-asters* and *Zuru-asters* from 'Zar-Ishtar,' the title of the Chaldean or Magian priests; and that the last of them was Zaratusht of the *Desatir*, the thirteenth of the prophets, and the seventh of that name. It was he who was the contemporary of Vistasp, the last of the Kaianian princes, and the compiler of *Vendidad*, the Commentaries upon which are lost, there remaining now but the dead letter. Some of the facts given in the Secret Records, though to the exact scholar merely traditional, are very interesting. They are to the effect that there exists a certain hollow rock, full of tablets, in a gigantic cave bearing the name of Zarathushtra, under his Magian appellation, and that the tablets may yet be rescued some day. (*Blavatsky Collected Writings*, III, 467)

To anyone who is interested in this ancient Iranian scripture, the suggestion is offered that one should first read the "Discussion on The Desatir" by Anthony Troyer (which is placed after the writings of the prophets), as well as the Preface, before taking up the text of the sixteen prophets.

—GEOFFREY A. BARBORKA