

**ECHOES FROM THE ORIENT. A
BROAD OUTLINE OF
THEOSOPHICAL DOCTRINES.
THIRD POINT LOMA EDITION
REVISED**

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Echoes from the Orient. A Broad Outline of Theosophical Doctrines. Third Point Loma Edition
Revised by William Q. Judge

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WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

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BY

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

[OCCULTUS]

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DEDICATED TO
HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY
WITH LOVE
AND GRATITUDE
BY
THE AUTHOR

To the Reader

ECHOES FROM THE ORIENT was written by Mr. Judge thirty-one years ago (1890) as a series of papers for a well-known periodical. The author wrote under the name of *Occultus*, as it was intended that his personality should be hidden until the series was completed. The value of these papers as a popular presentation of Theosophical teaching was at once seen and led to their publication in book form. As Mr. Judge wrote in his "Antecedent Words" to the earlier edition:

"The restrictions upon the treatment of the subject growing out of the popular character of the paper in which they were published precluded the detail and elaboration that would have been possible in a philosophical or religious periodical. No pretense is made that the subject of Theosophy as understood in the Orient has been exhaustively treated, for, believing that millions of years have been devoted by the sages who are the guardians of Theosophical truth to its investigation, I think no one writer could do more than to repeat some of the echoes reaching his ears."

The reader should remember that the scope and influence of the Theosophical Movement have since that time (1890) greatly expanded, the work of THE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY now reaching nearly every country in the world.

Point Loma, California, 1921.

ECHOES FROM THE ORIENT

I

WHAT appears to the Western mind to be a very strange superstition prevails in India about wonderful persons who are said to be of immense age, and who keep themselves secluded in places not accessible to the ordinary traveler. So long has this been current in India that the name applied to these beings is well known in the Sanskrit language: 'Mahātmá,' a compound of two words, *maha*, great, and *ātman*, soul. The belief in the existence of such persons is not confined to the ignorant, but is shared by the educated of all castes. The lower classes look upon the Mahātmás as a sort of gods, and think most of their wonderful powers and great age. The pundits, or learned class, and educated Hindús in general, have a different view; they say that Mahātmás are men or souls with unlimited knowledge of natural laws and of man's history and development. They claim also that the Mahātmás — or Rishis, as they sometimes call them — have preserved the knowledge of all natural laws for ages, not only by tradition among their disciples, but also by actual records and in libraries existing somewhere in the many underground temples and passages in India. Some believers assert that there are also stores of books and records in secluded parts all over that part of Tibet

which is not known to Europeans, access to them being possible only for the Mahâtmâs and Adepts.

The credence given to such a universal theory grows out of an old Indian doctrine that man is a spiritual being — a soul, in other words — and that this soul takes on different bodies from life to life on earth in order at last to arrive at such perfect knowledge, through repeated experience, as to enable one to assume a body fit to be the dwelling-place of a Mahâtmâ or perfected soul. Then, they say, that particular soul becomes a spiritual helper to mankind. The perfected men are said to know the truth about the genesis of worlds and systems, as well as the development of man upon this and other planets.

Were such doctrines held only in India, it would be natural to pass the subject by with this brief mention. But when it is found that a large body of people in America and Europe hold the same beliefs, it is interesting to note such an un-Western development of thought. The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875, with the avowed object of forming a nucleus for a Universal Brotherhood, and its founders state that they believe the Mahâtmâs directed them to establish such a society. Since its foundation it has gained members in all countries, including people of wealth as well as those in moderate circumstances, and the highly cultured also. Within its ranks there flourish beliefs in the Mahâtmâs and in Reincarnation and its twin doctrine, Karma. This last holds that no power, human or divine, can save one from the consequences of acts performed, and that in this life we are experiencing the results due to us for all acts and thoughts which were ours in the preceding incarnation.

This has brought out a large body of literature in books and magazines published in the United States, England,

India, and elsewhere. Newspapers are published in the interest of the new-old cult in the vernacular of Hindûstân and also in old Ceylon. Even Japan has its periodicals devoted to the same end, and to ignore so wide-spread a movement would bespeak ignorance of the factors at work in our development. When such an eminent authority as the great French savant, Emile Burnouf, says that the Theosophical movement must be counted as one of the three great religious influences in the world today, there is no need of an excuse for presenting its features in detail to readers imbued with the civilization of the West.

The grand theories of the Theosophists regarding evolution, human races, religions and general civilization, as well as the future state of man and the various planets he inhabits, should engage our more serious attention; and of these I propose to speak at another time.

II

THE first Echo from the burnished and mysterious East which reverberated from these pages sounded the note of Universal Brotherhood. Among the men of this day such an idea is generally accepted as vague and Utopian, but one which it will do no harm to subscribe to; they therefore quickly assent, and as quickly nullify the profession by action in the opposite direction. For the civilization of today, and especially of the United States, is an attempt to accentuate and glorify the individual. The oft-repeated declaration that any born citizen may aspire to occupy the highest office in the gift of the nation is proof of this, and the Mahâtmâs who guard the truth through the ages while nations are decaying, assert that