

In the third part of the book, contributors write about interactions between Theosophists and Indian intellectuals in the important years between the 1880s and India's independence in 1947. Various movements among Indian thinkers and activists fed into the stream of the greater independence movement. Michael Bergunder explores Mohandas Gandhi's relationship with Theosophists during his years in South Africa and in India until his death. Isaac Lubelsky considers the impact that Blavatsky had on Allan Octavian Hume, founder of the Indian National Congress. Sand traces the relationship between Theosophists and members of the Arya Samaj, a reform movement that promoted the Vedas as the basis for a renewed India. And K. Paul Johnson examines Theosophical figures involved in the Bengal Renaissance. This third part of the book contains persuasive arguments in favor of a new look at the role of Theosophists in the massive cultural and social changes leading up to Indian independence.

*Imagining the East* is a landmark collection. It could easily become one of the most important scholarly texts in the study of the Theosophical movement. Although its chronological scope does not extend past the first two decades of the twentieth century, the early years of the movement's history are still considered the most important era of Theosophical development. There are still many questions about that era that have not been answered satisfactorily. Hopefully this book will inspire scholars to take a fresh look at older issues and conflicts.

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*Eco-Alchemy: Anthroposophy and the History and Future of Environmentalism.* By Dan McKanan. University of California Press, 2018. 312 pages. \$70.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper; ebook available.

This is an especially timely book. It was timely when published in 2018, and even more so in light of the challenges facing the world today in 2020: an ecological crisis that continues to worsen, a global pandemic that has stressed food and economic systems worldwide, and an industrial-technological culture that appears increasingly unstable and unsustainable. Since its origins in the early twentieth century, Rudolph Steiner's Anthroposophy has offered a stunning alternative to the worldview that has generated these challenges. Dan McKanan reminds us of the power of this alternative vision in *Eco-Alchemy: Anthroposophy and the History and Future of Environmentalism*, and he affirms that this vision is both relevant and inspiring today.

*Eco-Alchemy* is a valuable resource for students of new religions, environmentalism, agrarianism, organics, the western esoteric tradition, and, of course, Steiner's unique addition to the world's religious

ecology. It is an important addition to scholarship on new religions, offering an excellent study of Anthroposophy, and serving as an outstanding example of how to construct a book on a new religion's relation to some other cultural phenomena—as here, environmentalism. In this regard, *Eco-Alchemy* is a fine primer on the religion itself, detailing its origins, development, organizational issues and structures, primary beliefs, and major figures. Notable is McKanan's treatment of Anthroposophy's evolution over the past century from its emergence as an esoteric movement in central Europe prior to the World War I to its wide-ranging global manifestations today. The text offers substantial accounts of the movement's various institutions, including Waldorf schools, the Camphill movement, several economic projects, and especially a number of sustainable agricultural programs and systems.

Considerable attention is also given to the rise and development of environmentalism in the twentieth century, with that attention always mediated by Anthroposophy's role in inspiring and furthering environmental initiatives. The larger part of the treatment of the movement's relationship and contributions to environmentalism concerns Anthroposophical agricultural enterprises. These are considerable and include biodynamic farming, Demeter International, and community supported agriculture systems. The deeper roots of the environmental movement are not explored in depth, nor need they be in a study of this type, but some additional background would have been helpful. Also of benefit would have been more consideration given to the relationship of Anthroposophy's agricultural programs to the principles and practices of the American agrarian tradition, where there is considerable congruence.

Biographical details on Steiner and many other leaders of Anthroposophy are solid with Steiner's story being especially well told. There are a number of memorable findings, which even experienced students might find intriguing. Moreover, there is a sense of academic adventure and scholarly surprise in McKanan's narrative that vivifies these findings. Case in point is his observation near the close of the book: "From the beginning to the end of my research, I have been surprised to discover that foundational components of the organic network that I did not think were associated with Anthroposophy actually had a significant link" (230).

That sense of surprise is evident through the entire book and helps carry the text. McKanan's style is energetic rhetorically and enthusiastic in tone. To its credit, *Eco-Alchemy* reads more like a good piece of journalism and less like a scholarly text. It is largely free of jargon. Make no mistake, however, *Eco-Alchemy* is a work of first-rate scholarship, with excellent documentation of sources (32 pages of notes) and a masterful ease in moving through tough explanative terrain e.g., Anthroposophy's complicated relationship with conservative ideologies, tensions with

mainstream environmental groups, and the struggles of a new religion's second generation to maintain continuity with a founder's vision.

Those interested in further development of methodologies specific to studies of new religions will likely be disappointed, with explication of methodology being little more than an aside: "a hybrid of textual, historical, and ethnographic approaches" (xv). Those approaches are quite evident throughout the book, with the ethnographic elements being very well done.

*Eco-Alchemy* adds to the underdeveloped category of New Religions Studies and environmentalism. There are too few studies of this relationship and fewer still that engage the relationship of specific traditions to environmentalism. There are none as detailed and well-researched as *Eco-Alchemy*; but, then, there are few new religious movements (or old religious movements for that matter) that are as intimately involved with the environmental movement as Anthroposophy. Besides being one of the two classic examples of the reemergence of the western esoteric tradition (the other being Theosophy), and unlike its more well-known precursor, Anthroposophy is rightly classified as an environmental religion. McKanan's excellent study removes any doubt of this fact.

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*Visions in a Seer Stone: Joseph Smith and the Making of the Book of Mormon.* By William L. Davis. University of North Carolina Press, 2020. xi + 250 pages. \$90.00 cloth; \$29.95, paper; ebook available.

Midway through *Visions in a Seer Stone*, William L. Davis cites the noted historian Larry Morris' description of one of the great frustrations of historians of Joseph Smith and the Mormon tradition he founded: scholars have discovered no extant, contemporary documentation of the production of the Book of Mormon. There are reminiscences, like that of Joseph Smith's mother Lucy and his scribe Oliver Cowdery; there are decades-later interviews of Joseph Smith's wife Emma and close friend David Whitmer; there is Joseph Smith's own enigmatic insistence that the book was produced "by the gift and power of God" from a set of plates an angel guided him to, which was all he seemed to care to say on the subject. But there are no documents mentioning the book from the years in the mid-1820s, when Joseph Smith was by his own account learning about the book from an angel and then, in a blitz of productivity and after a false start that produced material now lost, dictating roughly 175,000 words to a scribe in sixty days or so.

This lack of source material continues to fuel a debate that began almost as soon as the book was published. It is clear that Smith produced the book with the use of various esoteric objects. In addition to