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A REFLECTION ON *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*, No. 9

It's a familiar refrain: "I've tried reading *The Secret Doctrine* but it was too difficult." Long time members of the Society are familiar with this complaint; some have even felt the need to apologize for the difficulty of HPB's magnum opus.

No one familiar with *The Secret Doctrine* would characterize it as an easy read. The truth is that it *is* difficult. In an age when instant results and easy accessibility are considered virtues, *The Secret Doctrine* stands as a sober reminder that coming to terms with greatness is neither quick nor easy.

There is a parallel, I think, to great music. In a March 21, 2012 interview with the *Wall St. Journal*, the chairman of the organ department at the Julliard School of Music, Paul Jacobs said, "There's no denying that the music of the great masters of the past makes demands upon listeners. However, today classical musicians constantly apologize for these demands in an effort to be listener-friendly. But great music needs no apology."

Amen to that. Many theosophical books have been published over the years, some of average quality, others of a noticeably higher caliber, and a select few that may be classified as great literature, i.e., works which have staying power from one generation to the next, works distinguished by their literary style as well as by their substance. In my humble opinion, and in the view of many theosophical scholars, *The Secret Doctrine* meets those standards of greatness.

So, let us freely admit that *The Secret Doctrine* presents a challenge for most readers. It is probably unlike any other book you or I will read in our lifetime. But at the same time, let us not make excuses for its difficulty, just as no musician should feel obligated to make amends for the music of Beethoven or Bach. With regard to *The Secret Doctrine*, we will not be able to hear its hidden melodies or attune ourselves to its cosmic harmonies without putting forth mental effort. And for those who are unwilling to do that, its music will forever fall upon deaf ears.

David P. Bruce is the National Secretary of the Theosophical Society in America.