

PREFACE

Ever since early childhood, I've had a powerful inner longing for the infinite. As a child, of course, I believed that the infinite was God. My mother was what I called a "lukewarm" Christian. She did not attend church, but she allowed me to go with my maternal grandmother. I went every Sunday and, when old enough, went on my own to every possible service. God was a living presence to me. Because of that, I believed what I was told about God. Sometimes on my walk home from church, the spiritual feeling was so overwhelming that I thought Jesus would appear in the clouds at any moment. Although my understanding of what God is has greatly changed, the powerful divine presence has never diminished. In fact, with deeper understanding, that presence has become more intensely real. By dropping my childish concepts about God, I have lost nothing but falsehood. What I have gained is more than words could ever express.

After graduating from high school in 1954, I took a two-year course in New York to study Spanish. One of the conversation classes consisted of only six students. The instructor of that class was a Peruvian woman who was a member of the Spanish-language branch of the Theosophical Society in New York. The city of New York had approximately eight million inhabitants, and her local

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Society had no more than thirty-five members. I am convinced beyond all doubt that being in that class was no accident. It was destiny.

For a final exam in that conversation class, I chose to talk about an essay that I had written in high school. It was on comparative religion. While I was a devout Christian, I also believed that God had inspired other religions. That open-minded approach was a central theme in my essay.

The day following the exam, the instructor handed me a Spanish-language pamphlet on Theosophy. The concepts put forward in the pamphlet were quite new to me, but they sparked my interest. The last sentence in the pamphlet read, “If you doubt these things, there is a vast literature on the subject. Read and decide for yourself.” That caught me. The pamphlet and all that followed from it changed my life forever.

Following graduation, I served in the United States Army for two years. On returning to New York in 1959, I joined the Theosophical Society and have been a dedicated member from that day to this. In the 1980s I was asked to become one of several national lecturers for the Society in America. Later, I was invited to branches of the Society in other countries and finally to speak at the International Headquarters in Adyar, Chennai (Madras), India. As I traveled from place to place, people often asked me to write a book. The pressure to write continued to mount, and finally a good friend and spiritual brother, Dan Doolin, e-mailed one day to say, “Why don’t we have books by Ed Abdill?” That final bit of encouragement was all I needed. I hope he—and you—will be encouraged by the result.