

PHILOSOPHY · SCIENCE · RELIGION · THE ARTS

# TheoSophia

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*The Spiritual Self and its  
Goal of Perfection*

AN EMBODIED  
SPIRITUALITY

Lilian Edger  
*Inspiring Trailblazer*

SOUL AND SPIRIT

# TheoSophia



*TheoSophia* is the official magazine of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand.

*TheoSophia* is published quarterly and is received by members as part of their annual subscription. For further information and back issues, turn to page 31.

Contributions are welcome. Articles will be considered if up to 1,500 words, and sent as an email attachment to the editor. Note that *TheoSophia* articles will also be used in part or whole on the website: [www.theosophy.nz](http://www.theosophy.nz)

Please contact the editor at [editor@theosophy.org.nz](mailto:editor@theosophy.org.nz) or visit our website for the guidelines: [www.theosophy.nz/](http://www.theosophy.nz/)

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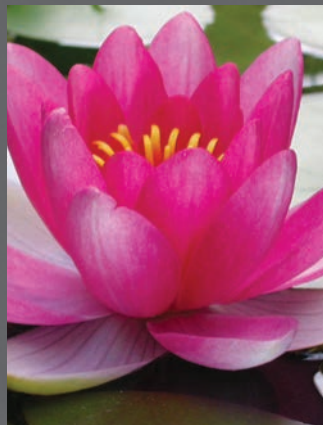
## THE MISSION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Our Mission is to serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realisation of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation and the Unity of Life.

*July 2018 Naarden meeting of the TS*



Cover:  
*Autumn Leaves*  
by Aaron Burde  
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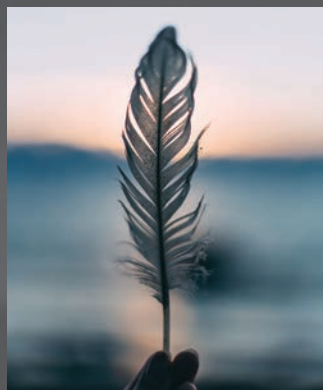
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I say "Microtubules"

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# School of Theosophy 2021

THE SPIRITUAL PATH IN DAILY LIFE  
Exploring The Mahatma Letters

Friday 23 April 7:30 pm to Monday 26 April 3:00 pm  
At HPB Lodge, 4 Warborough Avenue, Auckland, NZ

Facilitated by John Vorstermans

*The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom* (edited by C. Jinarajadasa) will be explored for their perspectives on the Spiritual Path in Daily Life. The format of the sessions will be a mixture of presentations on the chosen letters, with background context and interactive discussion. There will be meditation and time for reflection during the School.

Presenter, John Vorstermans is the National President of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand and past International President of the Indo-Pacific Federation of TS. He has a deep interest in the ageless wisdom tradition and over recent times John has focused on transformative processes that help people to understand themselves and to create positive change in their lives.



Enquiries to: [office@theosophy.org.nz](mailto:office@theosophy.org.nz) or (09) 523-1797. For costs, accommodation and registration see enclosed registration form or to register online, visit [www.theosophy.nz](http://www.theosophy.nz).

**INTRODUCING**

**WWW.THEOSOPHY.WORLD**  
A NEW RESOURCE CENTRE FOR ALL THINGS THEOSOPHICAL

theosophy.world is a resource centre dedicated to helping you find what you are looking for. As a new online resource, material is building all the time.

- eBooks
- video and audio archives
- historical publications
- links to other helpful resources
- poems, quotes and much more...

**SOMETHING TO SHARE?**  
EMAIL US AT [content@theosophy.world](mailto:content@theosophy.world)

**Theosophy World**  
RESOURCE CENTRE

## Central Region Event

**GEOFFREY HODSON**  
*How he Trained his Pupils  
and Conducted his  
Superphysical Investigations*

Saturday 15 – Sunday 16 May 2021

Hosted by Wellington Branch

Facilitated by Bill Keidan and Murray Stentiford

Bill Keidan writes that it was his great privilege to be invited to join Geoffrey and Sandra's inner circle of friends known as *The Family*. National Speaker, Murray Stentiford, skilled in science and music, collaborated closely with Geoffrey and will be sharing his unique insights.

REGISTRATION AND DETAILS: Secretary – [tswlgtn@gmail.com](mailto:tswlgtn@gmail.com)  
Please contact by Friday, 30 April 2021.

## Recovery & Resources

Recovery is currently an important focus in our communities as we learn to live in a covid-19 threatened world. Taking stock of what the pandemic has cost so far, we consider lonely deaths, extreme sickness, fear, damaged lives, long-term handicaps and mental health challenges as well as isolation, job losses, challenged economies and complete re-sets of many aspects of our lives previously taken for granted and appreciated anew. Recovery can bring wisdom but it takes time, patience and willingness to go with the process, not fight against it. How well we recover at all levels will determine our future. It is time to draw on all resources.

As theosophists, some resources we can rely on include our understanding of Soul and Spirit – the theme of this issue of *TheoSophia*. Writers to inspire us within these pages are: Tim Boyd (p.9), Geoffrey Hodson (p.10), Richard Sell (p.12), Betty Bland (p.18) and Mike Hall (p.20).

John Vorstermans has included his National President's Annual Report in this issue (p.4). Further details and contributions from branches can be found on the website: [www.theosophy.nz/](http://www.theosophy.nz/)

This year's TSNZ convention inspired many. See comments and photos on pages 24-27.

Through recovery, may we each grow in wisdom as Soul and Spirit flourish.

Pamela Zane Keys  
Editor

## A MOMENT RARE

A tiny piece of Heaven touched my heart,  
A moment rare as beings truly met.  
In wondrous harmony, a world apart  
And from it came a sound I can't forget.

It crossed all boundaries, met all needs,  
Created, uncreated, newly formed yet free.  
It spanned the years, became a swaying reed  
and brought a tear, one jewel of it, to me.

Once in a life such sound turns on the sun,  
Brings us to our knees in loving prayer,  
Returns the blessings of The Way, The One  
And tells of joy and peace awaiting there...

*Vicky Weston*

## Bernice Croft

It was with sadness we heard of the passing of Bernice Croft, whom my husband Warwick and I met in Chennai. Remarkable Bernice made us welcome at Adyar, guided our shopping, shepherded us through traffic and stunned us with her dedication to her vocation, her calm efficiency and her warm-hearted compassion. We feel fortunate to have met her – as do so many others.

Read more about this incredible woman in the June *TheoSophia*.

## DIARY DATES

### 2021

23-26 April	School of Theosophy
15-16 May	Central Region Event
July 30	Induction/Orientation Day
July 31-Aug 01	Immersion Weekend: Exploring Reincarnation
Aug 07	Presidents' Forum

Check for updates and details of these events: [www.theosophy.nz](http://www.theosophy.nz)

### FUTURE ISSUES 2021

Date	Theme	Deadline
June	Invocation and Prayer	1 April
September	The Ancient Wisdom	1 July
December	Unity	1 October

Email: [editor@theosophy.org.nz](mailto:editor@theosophy.org.nz)

*Theosophy in New Zealand***NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT**

1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020



While COVID-19 restrictions prevented implementing some strategy approved at the AGM of TSNZ in January 2020, it is a pleasure to present this report to members, with a few highlights outlined below:

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- A very successful National Convention was held by National Section in Hamilton in January, themed *One Heart, One Breath, One World*.
- The annual *School of Theosophy* held in Auckland in October, led by French International Speaker, Jacques Mahnich, was very well received.
- Our Branches/Lodges held active programmes early in the year.
- Jacques Mahnich toured Branches/Lodges in October and November 2019.
- Social Media campaigns helped create greater awareness of Theosophy.
- A seven-part online series *Exploring Theosophy* has been published and is available through Udemy.com

**NATIONAL SECTION ADMINISTRATION****NATIONAL PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT**

During this period, National President John Vorstermans visited Hawke's Bay Branch with presentations at their regional event and spoke at Hamilton and Orewa Lodges. The National President represented New Zealand at the 2019 International Convention and General Council meeting and at the Indo-Pacific Conference in Manila, the Philippines in November 2019. Vice-President, Renée Sell spoke in Dunedin, Auckland, Christchurch and Whanganui Branches. It is important to have these opportunities to talk to all members. However, in March 2020, COVID-19 lock-down stopped Lodges/Branches visits.

**Summary of the primary duties within the Section during this period:** National Vice-President, Renée Sell arranged and hosted the annual Convention in Hamilton, developed presentations, reviewed governance policies, oversaw National Speakers' tours and International visitors: International Vice-President Dr Deepa Padhi, International Treasurer and Theosophical Order of Service Secretary Nancy Secrest. Both Nancy and Deepa were guest speakers at the National Convention and several Branches. International guest Jacques Mahnich led the annual *School of Theosophy* and toured Branches/Lodges. Renée chairs the Property Management Committee and oversees daily property maintenance and compliance with new Healthy Homes Legislation standards.

National President, John Vorstermans chairs and sets agenda and reports for the Management Team; compiles agenda and reports for the Governance Board alongside the Chair of the Board; oversees production of the National Section magazine *TheoSophia* with Editor Pamela Zane Keys and Editorial Team; is ex-officio member and Chair of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand Trust; ex-officio member of the Investment Oversight Committee; with the Constitution Working Group reviews the constitution and by-laws, developed a motion for the AGM to vote on amendments and manages the website.

**MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The Management Team oversees day-to-day administration of the Section. It met five times during the period: in October and November 2019 and March, June and September 2020. During 2020, Management meetings were held via Zoom video conferencing. Its members include three ex-officio members: National President, National Vice-President and National Treasurer as well as two appointed members: Susan Skarsholt and Chris Seymour. The Management Team deals with National Section correspondence, strategic implementation, reports from the National President of National Section activities and Lodge/Branch events, membership and financial statements, approving sponsorship applications and grants/loans up to \$3,000 and National Section membership applications. Management Team minutes are available for members via the website members' area.

**NATIONAL SECTION STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

The information below provides a summary of tasks carried out by dedicated staff at the National Section. It is a pleasure to work with such a harmonious team. Main activities during this year, which included periods when staff worked from home, were:

**Graham Eden**, National Treasurer reports to the National President and provides reports to Governance Board, Management Team, Property Maintenance Committee, and The Theosophical Society in New Zealand Inc. Trust on financial matters; provides accounts of the Society's activities and financial statements to Charities Services and the AGM each year, providing our auditors with detailed information required, pays wages and fees including taxes, and GST. Graham is a member of the Investment Oversight Committee, Property Maintenance Committee and deals with tenant issues. Over the last year we moved our accounting system from *MYOB* to *Xero*, a long and challenging process made more difficult by COVID-19 lockdowns. Graham supports some Branches/Lodges with the end of year financial statements and gives advice when asked.

**Marilyn Dale**, Office/Membership Secretary, valued member of staff, is first point of contact for incoming communications, dealing with visitors, managing the membership database and members' and Branch/Lodge dues. She compiles membership statistics for Adyar every quarter and provides or arranges support for branches. Marilyn provides administration support, takes minutes of Management Team and Governance Board meetings, organises travel arrangements for National Speakers, processes membership applications, and sends welcome correspondence with diplomas of membership to new members.

**Danika Plowman** is a personal assistant providing support and assistance to the National Vice-President, National President and Senior Librarian. A large part of Danika's responsibility is in assisting with management of National Section rental properties including maintenance, dealing with contractors, quotes, managing work required by Healthy Homes Legislation and ensuring properties meet current required standards. Danika supports Renée organising aspects of National events, library cataloguing, preservation and sorting of books and spearheading Social Media campaigns.

**Jo Atkinson** is Senior Librarian of the National Section Library and Archives. With extensive library experience, her current focus is on upgrading the library to national standards. Jo has been in contact with the National TSA Library in the U.S.A. and drawn up procedures to catalogue the library in line with U.S.A. standards. Her work includes storage of archival magazines, correspondence, photos, old lodge charters and other documents into catalogued archival boxes. Many books from closed branch libraries are processed and integrated into the library with spare copies offered to branches and centres with new libraries and to members. Irrelevant books are removed. Books are barcoded, covered with protective material and entries updated in the Koha digital library system.

**Murray Stentiford**, Tours Co-ordinator for National Speakers, National Speaker for over 40 years, co-ordinates National Speaker visits to branches. Murray works with the National President and National Vice-President creating touring speakers' plans and organising at least four speakers per branch per year. Once speakers have supplied Murray with preferred presentations for the year and availability, Branch/Lodges are contacted for visiting options. Murray arranges a plan of place and date which is passed on to Marilyn for devising the itinerary and organising travel arrangements which Murray then forwards to branches. Due to COVID-19, National Speaker tours were cancelled in March. Since then, Murray has worked in the office digitally scanning paper archives stored in the library.

**Pamela Zane Keys**, Editor of *TheoSophia*, masterfully produces the quarterly magazine. Pamela communicates with contributors, National Section office, graphic designer Kelly Bassett, proof-reader Vicki Jerome and printers, to expertly bring each issue to fruition. She is supported by the Editorial Team: John Vorstermans, Warwick Keys and Clive Conland who can provide advice.

**Nicky Wood**, Video Co-ordinator, records and edits videos of National events which she publishes on our *YouTube* channel as a resource for the Lodges/Branches and general public. Nicky works with Stephen Moss producing *Theosophical Study Courses*.

**Stephen Moss**, Online Course Developer, has brought professional course development skills and depth of knowledge of Theosophy to this role. He is developing a series of presentations on Theosophy, the first of which is now available as *Theosophy in Today's World* on Udemy.com, an online learning platform.

## GOVERNANCE BOARD

The Governance Board is responsible for setting and reviewing Society's strategy and receives regular reports from the National President on its implementation. It sets and reviews policy, is responsible for financial oversight of TSNZ assets such as property and investments and deals with governance issues that do not have defined processes. It provides support to branches and members via avenues such as the *Complaints Process* and help such as assisting Canterbury Branch with exploration of a new building. The National President and National Vice-President are responsible for implementing strategy.

The Governance Board met four times in the current period. Two meetings were held effectively via Zoom video conferencing due

to the COVID-19 lockdown. The Board comprises two ex officio members (the National President and National Vice-President) and six further elected members, with two standing down each year and nominations called for two new members elected via postal ballot. Current members are ex officio: John Vorstermans, Renée Sell; elected: Richard Sell (chair), Marshall Hope, Melanie Closs, Chris Hensley, Julia Tarnawsky and Simon Webber. Warwick Keys retired as an elected member. The Board is grateful for the experience and skill he brought to the meetings.

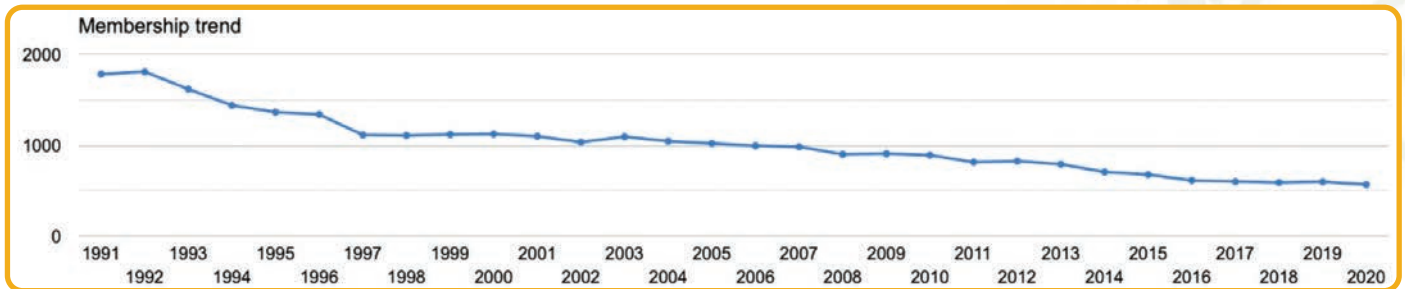
**GENERAL COUNCIL**

As National President, I am a member of the General Council which meets during the International Convention each year. This year it was held in Varanasi, India and hosted by the Indian Section while renovations were taking place at Adyar. We had a one-day meeting due to very cold weather in Varanasi (no heating with only blankets to keep us warm). This meeting was to receive and ratify reports of the previous financial year's activities of the International Society. There have been ongoing building renovations on the Adyar campus, particularly Leadbeater Chambers, one of the main accommodation blocks to which the NZ Section has contributed donations over recent years. A valuable historical archive has been relocated from the basement of the Headquarters building, where it was vulnerable to flooding, to a specially purposed renovated area within the library. Discussion is ongoing with a like-minded organisation of similar values to the TS regarding leasing Damodar Gardens as an educational campus. Damodar Gardens was once used as a Krishnamurti School. A new Theosophical School was also started on the campus during this time called The Theosophical Academy. It is based on an educational model similar to the Golden Link Schools in the Philippines.

There is usually a General Council planning meeting at the T.S. Centre in Naarden in the Netherlands each June. This year it was cancelled due to COVID-19. A Zoom meeting was held to discuss possible leases for Damodar Gardens. This allowed many members to contribute who could not usually attend. It showed that such meetings can work well. The only challenge was that the meeting took place at midnight N.Z. time.

**MEMBERSHIP**

**Statistics:** As of 30 September 2020, the Section has 565 members, a decrease of 23 members over the last 12 months.



**National Section Membership** stands at 80 (members not attached to a Lodge/Branch). Many of these members are some distance from a Lodge/Branch so choose to become members attached to the National Section. They receive regular updates from the National Office via the *Vasanta Newsletter* and occasional e-newsletter. We value these members and welcome them to our National events.

**Letters to New Members:** Newly joined members continue to receive 24 monthly letters from the National President. We regularly receive expressions of appreciation of these letters which cover many relevant topics. Some Branches/Lodges use these letters in their study programmes.

**Membership Application Forms** are now available on-line and can be downloaded by those interested in becoming members or for Branches/Lodges' use. The forms have been modified in line with the Privacy Act.

**THEOSOPHIA**

We published four issues of the magazine in this period, December, March, June and September which all members received. The magazine was originally published as *The New Zealand Theosophical Magazine* in 1900, changed to *Theosophy in New Zealand* in 1909 and rebranded as *TheoSophia* in 2007. Pamela Zane Keys remains the editor of *TheoSophia* and along with the graphic designer, Kelly Bassett and Editorial Team does an excellent job compiling a world-recognised quality magazine. Appreciation goes to Pamela as an exceptional editor producing an excellent edition every three months with a variety of articles from across the spectrum of Theosophical perspectives. Appreciation also goes to the graphic designer and supportive Editorial Team.



### CONVENTION 2020

The Convention, hosted by the National Section, was held in Hamilton in January 2020 with the beautiful theme 'One Heart, One Breath, One World'. Special guests were International Vice-President Dr Deepa Padhi, International Treasurer and International Secretary of the T.O.S. Nancy Secrest and New Zealand special guests and speakers. Much appreciation goes to the many members who made this Convention a success. Without each of you it would not have been possible. Feedback we received from the event was very positive.

### CONVENTION 2021

Planning for the Convention in January 2021 has been ongoing through the year with hosts, Wellington Branch. Despite planning disruptions due to COVID-19, we are set to go at the retreat venue of Our Lady's Home of Compassion 7–12 January, 2021.

### INDO-PACIFIC FEDERATION

The Indo-Pacific Conference, held triennially, was in the Philippines in November 2019. Four members from the New Zealand Section attended. These are heartwarming events. During this one, participants had the opportunity to visit the Golden Link School which has grown significantly with the addition of a College wing since my 2007 visit.

### PRESIDENTS' FORUM

The National Section hosts a Presidents' Forum twice a year, in May and August. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we met via Zoom allowing all to share their branches' activities. The National Section provided support and study resources to branches on request. The focus of these forums is to allow Branch/Lodge presidents to come together to share successes and challenges as part of their Theosophical educational programs. Presidents have opportunities to share and explore ideas on how to popularise Theosophy. This includes developing ways for application of Theosophy across branches and centres and participation in developing theosophical communities in Branches/Lodges.

### EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Much of our work in supporting branches takes place in this area:

#### NATIONAL SPEAKERS

Our National Speakers for the period were: John Vorstermans, Renée Sell, Murray Stentiford, Orest and Julia Tarnawsky, Barbara Zanarb, Carol Collier and Richard Sell. Due to COVID-19 we were not able to organise speaking tours for 2020 with uncertainty of lockdowns and requirement to give up to six months' notice to some branches. Usually, we ensure each branch is visited by at least four National Presenters a year. However, each branch did receive one visiting speaker in this year.

#### INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS

Jacques Mahnich from France visited all Branches/Lodges in New Zealand during October/November 2019 and Dr Deepa Padhi and Nancy Secrest visited some branches in January 2020, after the convention.



Renée Sell, Nancy Secrest and Dr Deepa Padhi



Convention 2020 Outing



Jacques Mahnich - School of Theosophy 2019

## SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS

Scholarships were granted to four young members to attend the Youth Forum in Adyar and six members to attend the International Convention in Varanasi in December 2019. One member received a scholarship toward attending the Indo Pacific Conference in the Philippines in November 2019. Three members received scholarships to attend the NZ Convention. We also provided a scholarship for one member to attend the European Congress and another to attend the School of Theosophy in Australia. However, these two were cancelled due to COVID-19.

Grants were given to Palmerston North Branch to repaint the hall roof and replace spouting, and to Hamilton Lodge for new library shelving.

## DONATIONS

An annual donation was given to our TOS School in Pakistan which pays for a teacher, the room and materials required. These are generally home-based schools providing education for young children, mainly girls, who would otherwise not receive any schooling.

The Adyar Renovation project has focused on upgrading the building at the International Society Campus in India and has received an annual donation from the New Zealand Section of around \$10,000 per year for the last four years. This year the donation went to the work on Leadbeater Chambers and rebuilding in the Social Welfare Centre which was found to have faulty foundations.

## REGIONAL FUNDS

A \$12,000 fund is divided equally between the three regions in New Zealand with the intention to bring branches together within their geographical region once or twice a year encouraging closer ties and collaboration in sharing Theosophy. Branches share resources, knowledge and experience for the benefit of sharing theosophy in the wider community. Access to this fund is through an application process. The Southern Region held one event and Central Region held four events. However, due to COVID-19 most regions chose not to plan any events during this time.

## PROMOTIONS

The National Section and many branches are now using Social Media to help make their presence known in communities and promote activities. The National Section is present through the following media:

- Facebook which is free to use and one of the most popular mechanisms for attracting attention to our work. See: <https://www.facebook.com/TheosophyNZ>
- Twitter where we are active mainly to promote awareness of Theosophy. See: <https://twitter.com/TheosophyNZ>
- Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/theosophynz/>
- *TheosophyNZ YouTube* channel where we add videos of presentations from events. We now have a large volume of subscribers. See: <https://Youtube.com> and Search for "Theosophy NZ".

Vasanta Newsletter goes out four times a year with *TheoSophia* magazine to members in New Zealand.

E-Newsletters of various types were sent out by email to:

- Branch Presidents and Secretaries
- New Zealand Members
- Interested people who subscribe via the website.

## BRANCHES/LODGES

The work of the T.S. Branches and Lodges around New Zealand is significant. Acknowledgement goes to the many volunteers who have served and helped at these centres. Without their valuable service Theosophy would not have the outreach and influence which it currently has amongst the membership and their communities.

See summaries of TSNZ Branches' and Lodges' activity reports on website: [www.theosophy.nz/](http://www.theosophy.nz/)



International President of the Theosophical Society,  
Tim Boyd considers the meaning of being fully human.

## An Embodied Spirituality

During her lifetime, particularly in her later years, famed theosophist Joy Mills frequently focused on one particular question: “What does it mean to be fully human?” The answer seems obvious until you actually think about it. Clearly it involves more than merely standing on two legs and thinking. In *The Secret Doctrine*, H.P. Blavatsky says that the human results from the coming together of three evolutionary streams, “the Monadic (or Spiritual), the Intellectual, and the Physical Evolutions.” She goes on to say that “each of these three systems has its own laws, and is ruled and guided by different sets of the highest Dhyanis ... Each is represented in the constitution of Man ... and it is the union of these three streams in him, which makes him the complex being he now is.”

In other contexts HPB says that humanity and the “hierarchy of spiritual beings” associated with it are “like an army” composed of its “corps, divisions, brigades, regiments, and so forth, each with its separate individuality or life, and its limited freedom of action and limited responsibilities; each contained in a larger individuality, to which its own interests are subservient, and each containing lesser individualities in itself.” The picture she paints is consistent with our experience of the worlds within worlds that we inhabit. It is, however, challenging to an entrenched worldview that insists that all things are divisible into distinct essentials. Much like the view that believed the atom to be the ultimate and irreducible particle of physical matter, our desire to consider ourselves as some type of unit – simple, uncomplicated, and easily described – does not conform with reality. The human being is more nuanced than it would seem from the popular understanding of the famous quote from Pierre

Teilhard de Chardin: “I am not a human being having a spiritual experience. I am a spiritual being having a human experience.” In this cooperative human project involving the “highest Dhyanis” of three evolutionary streams, who can point to a clear dividing line between spiritual and human? The spiritual being or entity seems to be deeply, perhaps inextricably, imbedded in matter, at least for the duration of this human cycle.

In the spiritual traditions of the world, there are beautiful stories and images that speak about what it means to be human. One such story is about a blind man and a crippled man. Traditions as varied as those of Central Africa, *Aesop’s Fables* and the Hopi Indians all tell the story of the blind and the crippled man coming together to complete a journey or accomplish a task. In the yoga philosophy of India, the same story appears, with the blind man symbolic of *prakriti*, matter, and the lame man symbolizing *purusha*, spirit or soul. The one who is strong but cannot see carries and is directed by the one with vision who has no capacity to move. The story is told to illustrate the human dilemma of the interaction between “highest spirit and lowest matter.”

The need now is for the “fully human” being – one who recognizes the flame of his or her highest potential Self, burning in this cave of matter; who sees that abdication of involvement in this world and its mounting demands in exchange for some imagined spiritual state is a caricature of a genuine spirituality which embraces and ennobles all things with an awareness of an all-pervading divinity.

Printed in TSA magazine, *Quest* 104.4 (Fall 2016): pg. 96-97.  
Boyd, Tim, *Viewpoint: An Embodied Spirituality*

..... ❖❖❖ .....



# THE SPIRITUAL SELF *and its goal of perfection*

Inspirational Theosophist and spiritual teacher, **Geoffrey Hodson** has left us wise words to guide us through life.

Alexander Pope said: “The proper study of mankind is man.” The teachings of Theosophy enable us to follow Pope’s advice with fullness and completeness, for Theosophy teaches not only about the physical, material person but also of the emotions, intellect and spiritual nature. Some of the age-old teachings about humanity which form part of what is known as the Ancient Wisdom, or Theosophy, relate directly to this study.

What then is humanity? How shall we describe it? The occult definition of man makes of him a threefold individual for he is described as that being in whom highest spirit and lowest matter are united by intellect. Although thus threefold in essence, humans are said to be manifest in seven ways – or to express themselves through seven ‘vehicles’ or bodies. Of these seven bodies, the physical is the densest, the other six being built of finer substances until the highest, most tenuous and most spiritual ‘body’ and state of consciousness is reached. Thus concerning man, it is said that he is a three-fold immortal, spiritual being, incarnated in four mortal, material bodies. This sevenfold constitution is sometimes symbolised by an equilateral triangle placed upon a square.

The three parts of each individual’s spiritual nature are reflections of the will, wisdom and intelligence of the Supreme Deity, the Blessed Trinity. The pertinent teaching concerning both the Deity and immortal man is that they are threefold for God, the Trinity, reproduces Himself as the threefold Spiritual Soul in mankind – made in God’s image. In this spiritual aspect of his nature, man – sometimes called the

Microcosm – is forever at one with the Divine or Macrocosm.

The immortal and eternal God and the spirit of man are one spirit. The Deity is in no sense external to, different or separate from mankind. They are one and indivisible throughout eternity. This is the one great truth in which resides the secret of supreme achievement and the attainment of power and peace. When the individual fully realises his/her unity with God, then the power of the Cosmos is at his/her disposal.

In the divine aspect of his nature, man is immune from death. The solution given by Theosophy is that the essential being is immortal; only the body dies. Individuality, capacities, character, interests and affections all persist after bodily death. The faculties attained during life are permanent powers of the threefold Inner Self.

The four material bodies of human beings, in order of their increasing density are: the mental body composed of mental material, or ‘mind stuff’, the vehicle of thought; the emotional body composed of emotional or astral material, the vehicle of feeling; the vital or etheric body composed of etheric material – the conserving principle of his physical, vital forces and the link between the super-physical and physical bodies. The physical body composed of physical material – solid, liquid and gaseous – is the vehicle of action and self-expression in the physical world. These four denser bodies are subject to death and disintegration.

When we are conscious solely in this fourfold material and mortal aspect of our nature, we are temporarily unconscious of both our divinity and unity with God. As our evolution proceeds, we gradually

rediscover this lost knowledge of oneness with the Deity. This is the ultimate secret of life. The salvation of man, following his so-called fall, is an ascent into full experience of the fact of God’s image at man’s very core.

Why then, we may ask, is the human spirit incarnate in a physical body? The purpose of our existence is spiritual evolution and this is a dual process, part spiritual, part bodily. Evolution consists of the gradual unfoldment from latency to full potency of man’s threefold spiritual attributes as well as the development of his four material vehicles to a condition in which they perfectly make manifest his threefold spiritual attributes. These two processes – spiritual and bodily – are parallel. Inner unfoldment is accompanied by outer development of the bodies to become a more perfect temple of the Inner God.

This is the solution of the problem of the meaning and purpose of life – purpose which is glorious in the extreme. For the goal of human evolution is the standard of perfection described in Christianity as ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’. This implies the attainment of a divine state of omnipotence – or perfected and resistless will; of omnipresence – or perfected and all-embracing love and of omniscience – or perfected and all-inclusive knowledge. Furthermore, and most importantly, the attainment of this perfection is absolutely certain for every person. The command, “Be therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect” will be literally obeyed by the Spiritual Selves of all human beings. All God’s children will one day reach His feet, however far they may stray.

Now we come to a most important theosophical idea. This human goal of perfection has already been reached by some people. Such perfect ones are known as World Saviours, Adepts, Masters of the Wisdom. These super-human beings constitute the Inner Government of the world and are the true spiritual Teachers and Inspirers of humanity.

### The immortal and eternal God and the spirit of man are one spirit.

How is this state of perfection or adeptship attained? Theosophy replies: By a succession of lives here on earth. The goal of human perfection is attained through a series of incarnations in material vehicles, which are newly formed during the pre-natal period of each succeeding life. Involved in this idea of evolution is a further most important truth, which is that all such human incarnations are connected with each other by the operation of the law of cause and effect – or readjustment. All actions, feelings and thoughts produce their own natural and appropriate reaction. Such reactions may follow their causative actions immediately, later in the same life, or in succeeding incarnations.

This law of cause and effect works something like this: actions motivated by love, service and unselfishness produce pleasure and a growing

freedom of self-expression, which encourage the actor to repeat them. But actions motivated by dislike, greed and selfishness produce pain and an increasing limitation of self-expression, which discourage the actor from repeating them. Such is the law.

Suffering then is not retribution imposed by the Deity, as a punishment inflicted from above. Neither is pain an accidental adversity. All pain is self-inflicted, and is designed to inform the actor of transgressions. The law is therefore truly beneficent and educative in its ultimate effect.

The way to escape from sorrow is defined in the Lord Christ's Sermon on the Mount and in that teaching of the Lord Buddha called the Noble Eightfold Path. Here according to Buddhism are the eight ways to enduring happiness: Right Belief, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Means of Livelihood, Right Exertion, Right Remembrance, Right Meditation. The Lord Buddha summed up these teachings on the way to happiness in these words: "To cease from sin, to get virtue, to purify the heart, to serve the world."

Such are some of the teachings of Theosophy concerning the evolution of the spiritual soul to the stature of the perfect person.

Originally titled *Man's Spiritual Self and its Goal of Perfection* and taken from a condensed version of an article in *Theosophy in New Zealand*, December 2006 and published in *Theosophical Digest* Vol. 22 No. 2.



Geoffrey Hodson (1886-1983), theosophical author, international lecturer, occultist, super-physical researcher, Liberal Catholic priest, Co-Freemason (32 degrees) and humanitarian was born in England. Geoffrey became a New Zealand citizen living in Auckland and inspiring all he met. His rich inner life is recorded in his writing: *Light in the Sanctuary*, *The Occult Diary of Geoffrey Hodson*, *The Yogic Ascent to Spiritual Heights* and *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition*.

# Lilian Florence Edger

## AN INSPIRING TRAILBLAZER

Richard Sell writes about Margaret Lilian Florence Edger, born in Abingdon, England on 8 January 1862. She was a scholar, lecturer, author, educator and prominent Theosophist.

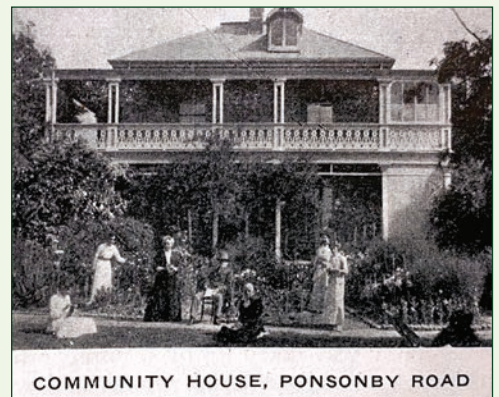
The Reverend Samuel Edger, with his wife Louisa Harwood and their family, including hazel-eyed infant Lilian, emigrated from London, England to New Zealand on the *Matilda Wattenbach* in September 1862<sup>1</sup>. They were amongst the first Albertland<sup>2</sup> settlers to arrive in the small community just north of Auckland. Lilian, the youngest daughter, received broad theosophical learnings from her father at an early age. Rev. Edger was a devotee of Emanuel Swedenborg whom he described as “the greatest and most influential religious thinker of these later centuries, if not the whole of our Christian era.”<sup>3</sup> In a book edited by Lilian and Kate Edger on their father’s lectures, *Autobiographical Notes and Lectures*, there is a lecture called *One Religion*, the last he preached at the Lorne Street Hall on his last three Sunday mornings in Auckland. In this lecture he says, “I have been endeavouring to show that religion in its essential elements is one and indivisible, the same among all people and in all ages, when rightly understood.”<sup>3</sup>

The family moved to Parnell, Auckland in 1866 after their family home burnt to the ground and all their possessions were lost<sup>4</sup>. Lilian went to school, attending Auckland Boys’ Grammar School under the well-respected headmaster Mr McCrea<sup>5</sup>. She is recorded in the *Daily Southern Cross* newspaper as winning a Provincial Scholarship in March 1875, where she scored the highest marks of the 14 scholarship winners<sup>6</sup>. She also won a university senior scholarship for Mathematics in 1880<sup>7</sup>. The greater part of her academic education was, however, gained from her time at Canterbury College where she was noted for her successes as a linguist and litterateur, and her abilities as a mathematician. She was interested in studying science and moved to Christchurch because the Grammar School in Auckland had no such facilities at that time<sup>5</sup>. A university graduate of the Canterbury College, she earned a Bachelor of Art in 1881 aged 19 – the second woman in NZ after her sister Kate<sup>8</sup> and about the fourth woman in the British Empire to do so<sup>5</sup>. She then gained her Master of Arts degree a year later in 1882 being the first woman in New Zealand to do so<sup>9</sup>, with double first-class honours<sup>10</sup>. In 1892 she was a scholarship examiner for the district scholarships exams for the Board of Education<sup>11</sup>.

After leaving school, Lilian spent a short period teaching at the Girls’ High School in Christchurch where her sister Kate had been teaching for about five years<sup>12</sup>. Lilian



On discovering Theosophy Lilian said, “This is what I have been waiting for all my life.”



COMMUNITY HOUSE, PONSONBY ROAD

taught at Nelson College for Girls when it opened in February 1883, and where her sister Kate had been appointed Principal at age 25<sup>13</sup>. Around November 1884 Lilian resigned due to her impending engagement to a young man recently returned from England<sup>12</sup> and headmaster of a public school in Christchurch<sup>14</sup>. This news must have come as a shock to the school Council, and especially to one member who had confidently spoken to a Professor Brown about the “sheer impossibility of either of the Miss Edgers, but especially the younger, getting married.”<sup>12</sup> Perhaps he felt that such an Olympian height of scholarship must inevitably preclude marriage. While Kate Edger did go on to marry Rev. W. A. Evans in 1890<sup>15</sup>, Lilian’s engagement seems to have fallen through as there is no mention of her ever marrying. Her ‘Last Will and Testament’ states her as being a spinster.

On her introduction to Theosophy, Lilian said a family friend, Dr C. W. Sanders lent her A. P. Sinnett’s book *Esoteric Buddhism* around 1888 or 1889.

The early part, about Planetary Chains and Rounds and Races, meant nothing to me, and did not arouse any interest; but when I came to the chapters dealing with Reincarnation, the Masters and Their work for humanity, and the possibility of coming into touch with Them, some subconscious memories must have been awakened, for I knew at once that it was true, and it satisfied a want that I had felt even in my childhood without understanding what it was; I laid the book down, for I had read the last half of it straight through, with the thought, ‘this is what I have been waiting for all my life.’<sup>16</sup>

Subscribing to *Lucifer* and reading it diligently, along with such books as she could get hold of, it was H. P. Blavatsky’s death that inspired Lilian to join the Society. She said, “Then I felt that in such a crisis no one who was deeply interested in Theosophy ought any longer to remain outside the Society.”<sup>16</sup> She approached Dr Sanders about joining, he also being interested, so together with a few others, applied in October 1891 to Adyar for membership and a charter for a Lodge<sup>16</sup>. Auckland Lodge was duly formed with its Charter signed on 24 March 1892<sup>17</sup>. Lilian’s own membership certificate was signed by Henry Olcott and must have taken some time to reach her. It was signed by Henry Olcott on 26 May 1892 and by William R. Old.

Around October or November of 1892, Miss Edger and a few theosophists who had dedicated themselves to the Masters, applied for the privilege of entering the Esoteric Section. The first Esoteric Group was then formed and they were permitted to call it *The H.P.B. Lodge*. “Mr Draffin was the leader of the group, and I doubt if any words would be adequate to convey even one half of what those meetings meant to us.”<sup>16</sup> Lilian Edger went on to become the President of the Auckland Lodge in 1895<sup>18</sup>.

Several distinguished leading lights of the international society had the pleasure of staying there [with Lilian] when visiting Auckland such as Col Olcott, Countess Wachtmeister, Mrs A. Besant, Mrs Cooper-Oakley and Mr C. Jinarajadasa.



Col. Olcott and Lilian Edger, India

Being an excellent theosophical speaker, she filled the old Albert Street Hall when she lectured.



Miss Lillian Edger, M.A.,



Lillian's mother - Kate Edger

Linked with our exploration of Lillian's life, we find the Hemus family home in Auckland's Ponsonby Road, being a centre of Theosophical activity for about 35 years. "The house stood high in spacious grounds in the best part of Ponsonby and commanded exquisite views, in all directions, of the hills, the harbour and away out to sea."<sup>19</sup> Lillian returned to Auckland in 1886 and stayed with her sister Mrs Judson and her husband. Miss Edger decided to open a secondary school for girls and had the upper story of this magnificent house fitted with beautiful wood mouldings and rooms were artistically decorated and furnished – "fine craftsmen were available and the ceilings of these rooms were truly works of art."<sup>19</sup> She herself lived in the top little rooms with dormer windows built into the roof. The private secondary school for girls called Ponsonby College, with Lillian as Principal, opened in 1888<sup>20</sup>. Lillian acquired the property herself in 1893 and many theosophical gatherings were held in its spacious rooms. Several distinguished leading lights of the international society had the pleasure of staying there when visiting Auckland such as Col Olcott, Countess Wachtmeister, Mrs A. Besant, Mrs Cooper-Oakley and Mr C. Jinarajadasa.

It was busy times in this period; Mrs Cooper-Oakley came to Auckland in 1893 and Mrs Besant was there the following year staying in the bedroom with the dormer-window. Edger's niece, Geraldine Hemus, says she [Mrs Besant] was then at the heyday of her oratorical power and gave some wonderful lectures to packed audiences in the old Albert Street Hall. The Countess Wachtmeister came in 1895-6 and in 1897 Colonel Olcott spent about a fortnight in Auckland.

At this time, the ministers of various churches in Auckland were branding Theosophy as 'Anti-Christian' and 'of the Devil'<sup>19</sup>. This gave it much publicity and many of the public came to meetings to hear what it was all about. "The meetings were never dull" stated Miss Hemus<sup>18</sup>. When Colonel Olcott spoke on 'Healing and Spiritualism', 1,000 people crowded into the hall and in the press report of the meeting he was called a "genial, well-educated and cultured gentleman!" In the 1890s Miss Edger was giving public lectures in Auckland on subjects such as 'Practical Theosophy', 'Karma and Re-incarnation' and 'Theosophy and Science'. Being an excellent theosophical speaker, she filled the old Albert Street Hall when she lectured.

Giving up her flourishing school in 1896, Lillian Edger notably became the first General Secretary for New Zealand when it became a National Section of the International Society on 4 April 1896<sup>21</sup>. The branches that formed the Section were Auckland, Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Pahiatua, Woodville and Waitemata.

Lillian Edger was very busy travelling around New Zealand and in a private letter to her sister dated 7 February 1896 from Christchurch, she remarks on a visit by Countess Wachtmeister and her plans to draw branches closer together in NZ<sup>22</sup>.

My plans are very uncertain yet, Will wants me to stay with the Countess entirely till she reaches Auckland, and I shall very likely do so, but I cannot tell until I have seen what she thinks about it. She arrives tomorrow, so I shall know everything then. The work here is as satisfactory on the whole as anywhere. The branch is small but there is a very good tone.

... I have had two lectures, with very good audiences, about 100 each time, and that last night with about half a dozen other attractions, one being a speech from the Premier [Prime Minister] so the Countess ought to have grand audiences... I have of course had lots of meetings, EST and branch – the scheme of study is working its way here too and it is almost certain the branch will take it up; in the S.D. work I think I shall succeed in getting this branch and ours to work on parallel lines and compare notes. I know our Branch will be glad to do so, I am pretty sure now of this; and there are some really good students here –



won't that be grand? We must draw N.Z. more together and I really think we shall.

Speaking on Reincarnation to a "crowded to overflowing" room, the *Christchurch Star* newspaper at the time wrote that Lilian Edger "spoke for over an hour, and throughout the whole time was very attentively listened to. Miss Edger lectured entirely without notes, and is a fluent and clear speaker."<sup>23</sup>

In 1897 Miss Edger was General Secretary of the fledgling New Zealand Section of the Theosophical Society and when the General Secretary for Australia, J. C. Stales passed away suddenly, Miss Edger went over to help with the interim administration in that country. That year Colonel Olcott visited Australia and New Zealand on a speaking tour, with Lilian Edger accompanying him as a lecturer. She was also appointed Travelling Inspector of Branches by the Australasian Section at Olcott's suggestion<sup>24</sup>. They had an interesting time of it – Col Olcott wrote "On Tuesday, the 29th, I presided at a lecture by Miss Edger in defence of Theosophy against an ill-natured attack on it by a local Presbyterian clergyman, who evidently believed there would not be room in heaven for his party and ours."<sup>24</sup>

She wrote later that lecturing in all the lodges in Australia and New Zealand with co-founder Henry Olcott, those months "were amongst the happiest of my life."<sup>25</sup> Edger's oratory ability obviously made an impression

on Olcott because at the conclusion of this tour he then invited her to go back to India and lecture there, in some part, in place of Mrs Besant<sup>26</sup>.

This was to be the beginning of the best part of 40 years Miss Edger spent in India. After some time lecturing at Adyar, Annie Besant then invited Edger to Varanasi (Benares) where she taught at the Central Hindu College Girl's School and served as its Principal from 1913 to 1919. She also tutored the sons of the Maharaja of Darbhanga (near Nepal) from 1919-1929. She said, "as the Maharaja was a very orthodox Hindu he did not want his sons to be too much Europeanised. I gave them what would be about equal to a secondary school education here. I lived my own life just as I would elsewhere, and the boys came to me for study in the mornings at my own house on the estate." She used her spare time studying Hindu philosophy and religion. One of the sons took over the estate on the death of the Maharaja in 1929. Like Mrs Besant, Lilian Edger believed in Home Rule for India. She knew Gandhi and described him as a "saintly man" and that he "has the very highest motives."<sup>27</sup>

Lilian Edger finally returned to New Zealand for good in 1938.

Read more about inspiring Theosophical trail blazer, Lilian Edger, in the June issue of *TheoSophia*.

...lecturing in all the lodges in Australia and New Zealand with co-founder Henry Olcott;  
[Lilian Edger wrote] those months "were amongst the happiest of my life."



Richard Sell joined the Theosophical Society as a teenager. He is President of the Auckland branch and is Chair of the Governance Board for the New Zealand Section. Richard has presented both throughout New Zealand and internationally and contributes articles to theosophical magazines. He is active in promoting theosophy as a founder of the theosophy.world resource website.

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# THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES

## *The Hidden Light and Life of Ancient Egypt*

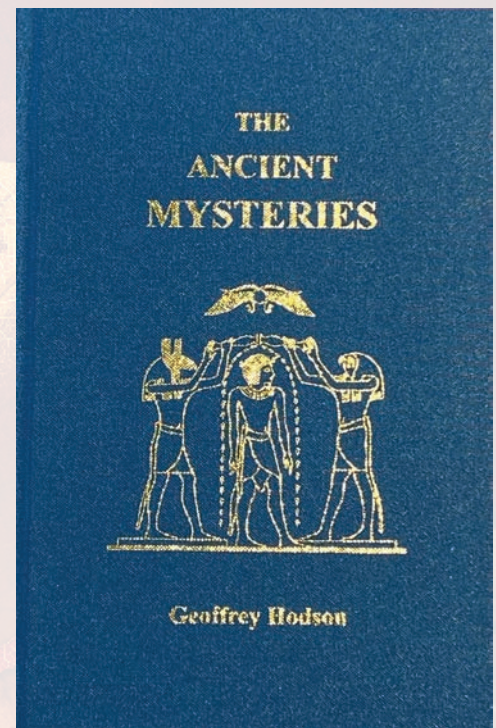
by Geoffrey Hodson

A SPECIAL BOOK REVIEW BY AMERICAN ACADEMIC ROBERT ELLWOOD

When I lived and studied in New Zealand in 1988, Geoffrey Hodson (1886-1983) had departed from our visible world a few years before, but this great exponent of the Ancient Wisdom remained a vibrant legend among Theosophists and others who knew of his prolific writing, clairvoyant powers, healing gift, and dedication to Theosophy and related causes like vegetarianism, right up to the end of his long life. He seemed still a presence, a reality reinforced by the ongoing publication of talks and papers he had left behind. *The Ancient Mysteries: The Hidden Light and Life of Ancient Egypt* is the latest in this series, and a fine tribute it is to Hodson's Theosophical wisdom and inner sight. The work is vividly illustrated, including colour plates, taken from ancient Egyptian art. The editors are not named, but clearly this fine production took considerable time and effort. We owe them a tremendous debt.

Who was Geoffrey Hodson? He was born to a loving rural family in Lincolnshire, England. From an early age he seems to have had remarkable perceptions in a half-dreamlike state, sometimes of strange ominous entities. When in his parish church they were visions of a luminous and benign character. Although raised a devout Anglican, upon reading Annie Besant's *Esoteric Christianity* and hearing her lecture, he became a Theosophist in 1912, and later a Liberal Catholic priest. After the First World War he found his calling as a lecturer and writer for the Theosophical Society, around the same time commencing to perceive the stunning apparitions of the angelic and faerie realms for which he was soon to be well known. His beautifully illustrated book *The Kingdom of the Gods* is an ever-popular classic of this unique genre. Several of Hodson's works, however, are devoted to his clairvoyant and Theosophically influenced investigations of the past, or of symbol systems carried over from the past, like the profoundly inspirational *The Christ Life from Nativity to Ascension* or the Masonic *At the Sign of the Square and Compass*. *The Ancient Mysteries*, primarily representing an interpretation of the myths and religion of ancient Egypt, is in this category.

While chiefly devoted to newly-published papers and lectures on the secret lore of old Egypt, *The Ancient Mysteries* quite appropriately includes introductory material from other books about the wisdom of the past as well as two concluding chapters on more recent developments. The timeless mysteries, according to Chapters one, *The Ancient Wisdom (An Introduction)* and two, *The Mysteries of Predynastic Times*, had several functions, from educational to religious, but the most significant



*The Ancient Mysteries* belongs in all Theosophical libraries and on the shelves of all students of the Ancient Wisdom.

purpose was “to hasten the natural processes of spiritual, psychological, and cultural unfoldment, to increase the speed of the evolution of Initiates” (p. 31). In this capacity they could, like all real initiations, work on several levels, conveying the sacred message through symbol and allegory and at the same time bring the candidates through sensory, sometimes painful, experiences that deeply implanted the event in consciousness, while opening them to an emotional and intellectual awakening that can quite properly be called “unfoldment,” the opening up of a new inner state.

The bulk of this volume by Geoffrey Hodson presents affirmations of ancient Egyptian mystery unfoldments in Theosophical language. As an example, we may take Hodson’s study of The Barque of Ra. The sun boat of this supreme solar deity was said to transport the orb of light across the heavens during the day then enter the underworld to return that luminary from west back to east. In the lower realms, Ra must defeat Apep, a monster embodying chaos who appears as a giant serpent, before returning to our skies; the battle is waged every night, and every night Ra wins. According to Hodson’s Theosophical usage, the macrocosmic meaning of The Barque of Ra is that it is Ring-Pass-Not of our Solar System, centred in the Solar Logos which appears as the Sun but including our Earth and all other worlds subject to that mighty being. The esoteric ship does not actually move, but appears to do so to those who wrongly think the sun rather than the earth is in motion. Apep represents the material substance of the universe, *Prakriti* in Sanskrit; the greater power known as *Purusha* shapes that jumbled mass into forms, and so Apep is always overcome by the god (p. 124). In the microcosmos, The Barque of Ra is the Auric Envelope for the Monad or Causal Body, here symbolised as Ra, that sun within us which is everlasting and reincarnates from one vehicle to another. On this level the place of Apep is taken by Set, the chaotic desert-deity always in opposition to Osiris, Isis and Horus, the figures of light and order. Much else is interpreted in this way, not only the major Egyptian divinities but also such mystery-laden edifices as the Great Pyramid, a place of initiation, and the enigmatic Sphinx.

It must be acknowledged that Hodson’s decodings would probably not be shared by most mainstream Egyptologists. That hardly seems to be a problem. All myths and symbol systems of any importance have been construed in numerous ways, from those of ancient allegorists to modern psychoanalysts and this only asserts the eternal power of the original image. Cultures new and old, near and far,

including the Theosophical, read them in terms of their own worldviews and needs. Insofar as Theosophy sees an Ancient Wisdom behind the forms projected onto the screen of consciousness by each in its own way, one can rightly compare and translate. Hodson does this magnificently not only in this book, but in his similar esoteric studies of the Bible, world mythology, and traditions like Freemasonry.

*The Ancient Mysteries* ends with chapters on *The Mysteries in More Recent Times* – more recent, that is, than ancient Egypt and *Exploring the Mysteries in Modern Times*. The first offers brief glances into occult moments in Crete, Greece, the Gospels and *A Group of Jewish Rabbis of the Early Christian Era*. They are actually accounts of visions Hodson observed as he looked down the centuries to those important times and places plus short accounts by his own inner teacher, the Master Polidorus Isurenus, of Egyptian ceremonies and the Master Jesus. The chapter on the mysteries in modern times gives us the Theosophical Society and particularly affiliates such as the Co-Masonic Order and the Liberal Catholic Church, as settings for today’s mystery rituals. It goes on to deal with methods of training today in contrast to ancient, with dangers inherent in mental development, and “the path of men and women in the world.”

The book concludes with valuable and extensive glossaries and bibliographies, plus information on the life and work of Hodson, a piece on *The Founding of the Great Hierarchy* based on Hodson’s and C. W. Leadbeater’s writings, and an Index. Much there is here to assist and enlighten the diligent docent of the mysteries, together with the all-encompassing Theosophical view of the world.

*The Ancient Mysteries* belongs in all Theosophical libraries and on the shelves of all students of the Ancient Wisdom. May it find the many readers it deserves.

Geoffrey Hodson, *The Ancient Mysteries: The Hidden Light and Life of Ancient Egypt*. Compiled from the Talks and Study Notes of Geoffrey Hodson. Auckland, New Zealand: Theosophical Publishing House, 2020.



Robert Ellwood received a Ph.D. in history of religion from the University of Chicago and is Emeritus Professor of Religion at the University of Southern California, where he taught for 30 years. He was Vice-President of the Theosophical Society in America. He and his spouse Gracia Fay lived for 20 years at the Theosophical community of Krotona in Ojai, California. In 1988 Robert and his family lived in Wellington under a Fulbright grant to study Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand; one result was a book, *Islands of the Dawn: The Story of Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand*.

Tuning in to service is essential, claims **Betty Bland** as she reflects on helping others.

## Light as a Feather

**M**y morning walks often yield tidbits for further contemplation. I relate to the Native American tradition that nature has many secrets to reveal if she is observed with sensitivity. Sometimes, it is just the inspiration of peace and beauty flowing gently into view. But at other times, an object or event triggers some specific insight, or at least fanciful meanderings that reveal a meaningful message.

On one particular morning, a startlingly large feather adorned my otherwise ordinary path of pebbles and weedy grass patches. Almost automatically it found its way into my hand for further examination and contemplation. The feather was quite unremarkable except for its size – mostly black with indistinct striations of a brownish hue. For a feather to be so large, it must surely be essential for flying – either a large tail or wing feather. Could the bird have been injured in a fight, perhaps protecting its nest? Or was it merely moulting and had already grown a replacement? In either case, to try to catch the bird to return the lost item would be detrimental to all concerned. Once dislodged from its original location, its usefulness to the bird had ceased.

In being committed to helping a fellow human being, we might feel that we know just what they are missing and feel quite justified in attempting to replace their seemingly missing feathers (or other qualities) just where we think they should go. Of course, this is ridiculous for either a bird's feathers or a person's qualities.

Growth and healing can only be organic, arising from within. If we want to help another, we have to let go of our particular biases and tune into their circumstance and soul's essence. It might be called empathy, or a recognition of our essential unity with the other, but by whatever name, it is an essential quality for being able to benefit others.

Colonel Olcott recognised this when he immersed himself in improving the plight of the native-born Buddhists in India, Sri Lanka, and other lands under the rule of European colonialists. He became one with them, working diligently to help them reclaim the religious tradition into which they were born and the dignity of their culture. He expressed this empathy in the following statement in Volume II of *Old Diary Leaves*:

The most difficult lesson for a white man in Asia to learn is, that the customs of his people and those of the dusky races are absolutely different, and that if he dreams of getting on well with the latter he must lay aside all prejudices and hereditary standards of manners, and be one with them, both in spirit and in external form. (p.382).

He accepted that he had to rid himself of his Western cultural prejudices in order to be in full harmony with the plights and needs of the people, and thus be able to render true assistance. With an understanding heart he was able to become one with them and work to help them from an inside perspective. Much to the amazement of the other colonists, the Colonel was accepted almost instantly into the homes and hearts of the Buddhist people.

This first step of fully empathizing is certainly an important one when trying to be of service, but there is another point of consideration that can be overlooked. In order to make a difference in the world, we, ourselves, must be whole – or at least be working in that direction. The feather also points to this important lesson. When helping another, we have to be careful not to pull out

our own feathers in the process. If we damage ourselves, our usefulness to others is greatly diminished. A bird which has lost some of its feathers surely cannot fly as fast. In fact, birds are far more vulnerable during the moulting season. To assure that we do not lose the feathers of our being, we always have to remember to nurture the core of our being. The basic principle underlying our beneficial effectiveness is an attitude of wholeness which grows out of an inner connection with our higher nature.

This wholeness results from recognising and cultivating our own spiritual needs, taking into account all aspects of our lives, health, responsibilities, circumstance, and relationships. Each one of us has to discover the meaning of wholeness for ourselves as we explore the unity of all life and our place within that wholeness. We have to find the balance point in which we can be the cup that is never empty, always giving, but always filled again. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky cautioned us to maintain this balance point in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Beware, lest in the care of Self thy Soul should lose her foothold on the soil of Deva-knowledge.

Beware, lest in forgetting SELF, thy Soul lose o'er its trembling mind control, and forfeit thus the due fruition of its conquests.

The study and meditation that we theosophists are exhorted to do is a part of that process of educating ourselves for more balanced and effective action. Action which springs from this centre will be more useful and less tiring. In fact, when done well and in harmony with ourselves and our world, it can be energising. This sounds easy, but it is a process of constant learning and readjustment. Service to others flows out of a concern for their well-being, but we can become so immersed in trying to help that we forget our own needs. As I can attest, the self is an ingredient never to be forgotten or it will call attention to itself in most inconvenient ways. When one is fatigued, one cannot be as effective, and things can go awry.

We can, however, keep the goal before us, and at the very least, have the intention to nurture ourselves as we nurture others. Moreover, besides the usual physical needs, we also have a deep spiritual need for meaning and purpose. So it follows that performing action for the benefit of others completes the circle of a meaningful existence, which restores the soul.

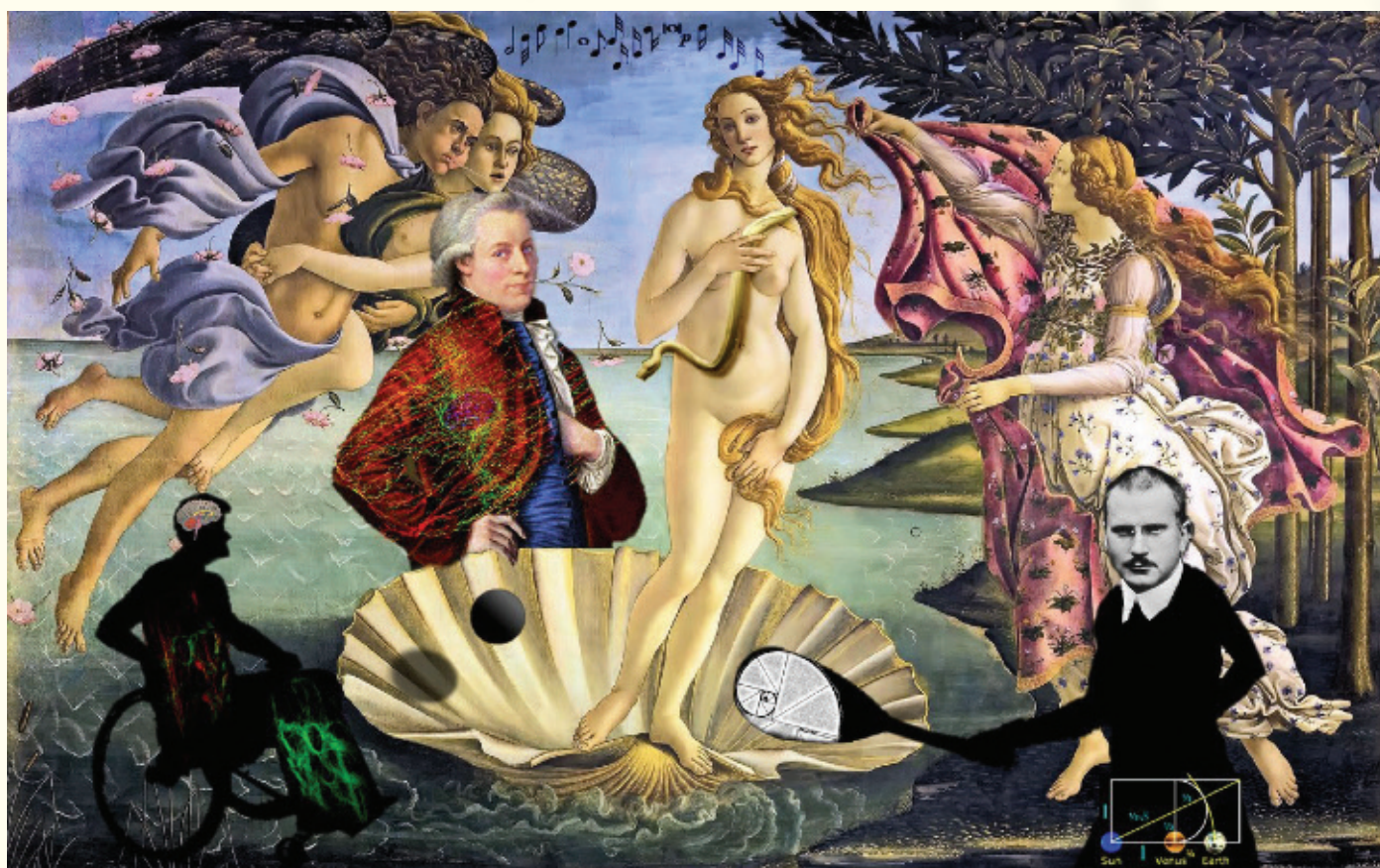
When seen in this way, service can become the joy of living, not the drudgery. It can flow from a balanced heart full of understanding and compassion. There may be and most probably will be some sacrifices required along the way, but these are the sacrifices of lesser pleasures and self-centeredness. To unburden ourselves of these things brings a kind of lightness to life. As we learn to give from an inner abundance, we discover that work performed in service can feel as light as a feather.

First published in *Quest* magazine's *Viewpoint*.

... we discover that work performed in service can feel as light as a feather.



Betty Bland, past National President of the Theosophical Society in America, has presented workshops and lectures on the spiritual life both in the United States and abroad. Professionally, she has worked as a teacher, employment counsellor, systems analyst and entrepreneur. In addition to being a social activist, Betty sings in the choir and plays the bells at her local Episcopal Church, is a cat rescue volunteer and chairs a local Theosophical Study Centre. Betty's emphasis continues to be on the practical applications of Theosophical principles.



## *You say “Mozart”, I say “Microtubules”*

Scottish theosophist, writer and researcher  
**Mike Hall** shares some esoteric science...

Last year saw the launch of a four-part BBC Scotland TV series on the history of art and religion. The presenter was a previous neighbour of mine, Richard Holloway, formerly Bishop of Edinburgh. Seeing Richard again on television took me back to 1997 and the day I moved in next door to him.

“Hello! How are you settling into your new home?” the imposing figure inquired in a booming voice. “I hear that you are a pianist.”

My immediate reaction was that this was a clear case of mistaken identity. I have never played the piano in my life. Shaking this genial new neighbour by the hand I revealed my true identity and occupation and returned indoors to stare blankly at my CD player and ponder if the Bishop had assumed that the Beethoven piano sonatas blasting out from my speakers were being generated by my own hands. It’s a mistake anyone could make, or could they?

A week later I found myself in conversation with another ‘stranger’, an Austrian gentleman who had been described to me as a “world leader” in the field of Transpersonal Psychology. Our small talk had begun to dry

up when suddenly he asked me, “Are you gifted in the art of music? During our conversation, the movement of your hands and fingers mimics the actual playing of a piano.”

This Austrian therapist and my local Bishop must know each other, they’re both having a laugh at my expense, I concluded. If they’re not, I will shortly end up ripe for the madhouse. Ironically I knew that Carl Maria von Weber had stated that Beethoven was also “ripe for the madhouse” after he witnessed the first performance of Beethoven’s *Seventh Symphony*. His amanuensis [*literary or artistic assistant, in particular one who takes dictation or copies manuscripts – Ed*] Anton Schindler said that the *Seventh Symphony* “was one of the most important moments in the life of the composer.” For Richard Wagner, the symphony was the “Apotheosis [*the highest point in the development of something; a culmination or climax – Ed*] of the dance.”

In a programme note for a concert performance of Beethoven’s Seventh at Greyfriars Chapel in Edinburgh in June 1997, I discovered that the second movement of the symphony contains “encrypted passages” which, according to musicologist Donald Tovey, “are untranslatable.” I was perplexed and wanted to understand why a deaf composer would wish to compose music which was not meant to be heard.

During London’s Albert Hall *Promenade Series* of 1997 the BBC Radio Three broadcast concluded with a performance of Beethoven’s *Seventh Symphony*. For me, this was an opportunity which was too good to miss, so I sacrificed a warm August evening to stay indoors in an attempt to translate the ‘untranslatable’.

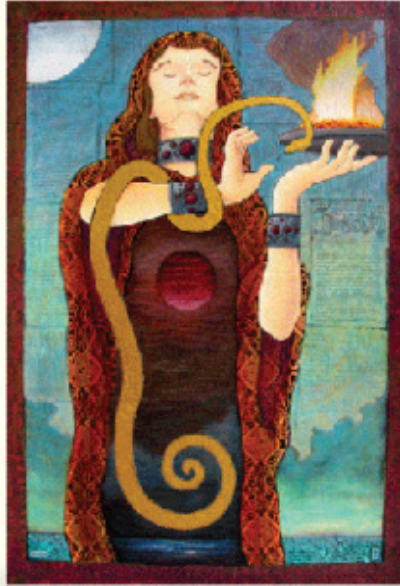
At 8:30pm the BBC Radio Three presenter announced the arrival of the conductor on to the platform. Fifteen minutes later the first movement had come to an end. Had ‘The Master’ left any clues to help any listener who wanted to decipher his ‘encrypted passages’?

I had read that the first movement was in the key of A Major. The second movement is in A Minor taking the listener into an inner sound world of reflection, nostalgia and contemplation – “to a place of other-worldly pathos,” as Richard Osborne expressed it. I closed my eyes and waited for the second movement to begin. Within five minutes my attention was being drawn by the rhythmic melody of a solo flute. I also became aware of the sound of the flautist’s own breathing pattern. Detecting these fine adjustments to her respiratory tract was an intimate moment in my musical education. Within a couple of minutes the sweet sounds of the flautist’s passages had begun to fade and I started to return from that “place of other-worldly pathos.”

It is said that travel broadens the mind and my inner journey from A Major to A Minor had opened up a new mental territory. I became convinced that these ‘untranslatable’ sounds were the same untranslatable sounds employed by the Hindu fakirs to enchant serpents.

Life has taught me never to ignore my intuition, but then one’s logical, cognitive mind always tries to do so. Had I really cracked the ‘hidden code’ within Beethoven’s second movement of his *Seventh Symphony*? Is there anyone else who has travelled on this same journey of enquiry?

Life has  
taught me  
never to  
ignore my  
intuition...



Greek Goddess Hygieia

Madame Blavatsky describes her own experiences with serpents in *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. 1, page 382:

Music is a delight to every person. Low whistling, a melodious chant, or the sounds of the flute will invariably attract reptiles in countries where they are found. The snake would not be enticed by the “charming” of the Arabs, but kept slowly moving in the direction of the flute-player.

Also in *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. 2, p. 489, we read:

Toth was the first to regard the serpent as the most spirit-like of all the animals... The interpretation of the primitive serpent-worship, as given by the initiates, is the correct one... We quote from the serpent Mantra in the Aytareya-Brahmana, a passage which speaks of the earth as the Sarpa Rajni, The Queen of the Serpents, and The Mother of Everything that moves. These expressions refer to the fact that before our globe had become egg-shaped or round it was a long trail of cosmic dust or fire-mist, moving and writhing like a serpent.

My understanding was that I was able to hear the initiate’s serpent mantra in Beethoven’s *Seventh Symphony*. So why, I asked, would Beethoven wish to keep this initiation mantra a secret? In *Isis Unveiled* Vol. 2 Ch. 12 p. 623, we read:

Chanting a mantram [the fakir] went straight to the beast... This is the way the fakirs tame the wildest beasts in India. Can the European tamers, with the white-hot iron rods do as much? How they are trained to these requirements will remain an eternal secret to all, except the Brahmans and adepts in occult mysteries. There is not a single European in India who could have, or has ever boasted of having, penetrated into the enclosed sanctuary within the pagodas.

“Remain an eternal secret to all”? Except perhaps to a composer who was unable to hear. A composer who was able to hear sounds which he understood were to “remain an eternal secret from the ears of a single European.” Maybe, just maybe, Beethoven is also having a laugh, just like my next-door neighbour, the Bishop who’d “heard” I was a pianist. Is Beethoven also trying to say that there has been a case of mistaken identity with regards to his own true identity?

... why ...  
would  
Beethoven  
wish to  
keep this  
initiation  
mantra  
a secret?



Wilfrid Mellors states in David Tame's *Beethoven and The Spiritual Path*: "There is a quality in Beethoven strictly comparable with the zaniness of the Zen masters." In *Isis Unveiled* Vol. 2 p. 407 it is said that the number seven is the most sacred of all and is of Hindu origin. Everything of importance was calculated by, and fitted into this number by the Aryan philosophers.

I will leave the last word to Swami Muktananda. In his autobiography, *Play of Consciousness*, he describes his experiences in belonging to a "secret tradition of perfected masters."

Every day during meditation I heard the sound of many, many nadas [divine tones]. At this stage when he hears the nada, the yogi discovers an ability to dance. There would often be the sweet tones of the flute. What a divine attraction that music holds. As a devotee of Krishna he pleads: "Oh my Lord, stop playing your flute! For when you play... I am not good for anything. I forget my children, I can't make myself go home. Have mercy; stop playing your flute."

Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*: The Apotheosis of The Dance? Surely, we can't all be ripe for the madhouse?

NOTE: See also a short documentary Mike created with Jacobite Historian, Iain Grimston for the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth in 2020, <https://youtu.be/9f25XcLehes>



Mike Hall is Vice-President of the Edinburgh TS Lodge. Mike's research into the relationship between mind, body and energy was recently featured in *New Scientist Magazine* and a new BBC Radio 4 science series: *Frontiers*. Mike has also written two Edinburgh Festival plays. This article is based on a talk he gave at the Theosophical History Conference in London, 2003.

## Theosophical Digest



**The Theosophical Digest is a quarterly magazine which condenses wholesome articles on meditation, comparative religion, Ancient Wisdom, art of living, health, science, theosophy, spirituality, philosophy and more.**

The compact format of short articles, snippets and humour from authors around the globe makes the *Theosophical Digest* a great read for short relaxing interludes at any time. These books also make great gifts – perhaps as a subscription to an organisation, or someone you know who would appreciate some thoughtful inspiration in a busy world.

**Subscriptions** in New Zealand are \$25 annually, and the magazine is sent out quarterly. Back copies of individual Digests can also be ordered for \$5 each, and are subject to availability. The *Theosophical Digest* is published by the Theosophical Publishing House in the Philippines and reprinted in India.

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# TSNZ Convention 2021

National President, John Vorstermans' review...



National President, John Vorstermans and Vice-President, Renée Sell at the closing ceremony, where supporters and helpers were thanked for their contributions.

Having returned from the Annual National Convention at *Our Lady's Home of Compassion* in Island Bay, Wellington in early January it is good to be able to reflect on the peace of the lovely venue, the pearls of wisdom that came through various presentations and the wonderful people that came together to make this a warm and inspiring event. It is always a busy time for National Vice-President, Renée Sell and myself and once again we have been privileged to organise our Convention. Holding such an event during these difficult times of the international pandemic is special. We are one of the only countries in the world where people could come together physically to share theosophy.

International President Tim Boyd gave the opening address for the Convention called *Darkness to Light: Sleep to Waking* which he pre-recorded especially for us in New Zealand. This set the tone for Convention with the theme: *Awakening Compassion, Deepening the Connection*. Tim explored several key aspects of being human including freedom to choose/or choice on our journey in the process of unfoldment of our own awakening. This was followed up by a live session with Tim the following day. Tim beamed in via Zoom for the Live Question and Answer session and he

seemed to enjoy it. He commented that it was especially good to see a unique mask-free gathering of familiar faces at a TS meeting.

One of the highlights of the Convention was an evening with invited guest Buddhist nun Kelsang Shechog, from the modern Kadampa Tradition. Shechog shared with us some of the Buddhist perspective with respect to the importance of compassion and meditation on the journey to awaken and deepen our connection.

There were also presentations from a range of NZ members. I presented in an interactive dialogue on *Deepening the Connection* by exploring the views of H.P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant, St Paul and Rumi on how to connect with a greater awareness. Renée Sell shared with everyone on *Entering the Stream of Consciousness* that is Eternal, from the beginning of spiritual unrest through to becoming a spiritually Enlightened Being.

A number of newer and younger members from around the country gave presentations, such as Ben Upton from New Plymouth who gave a very clear talk entitled *Unmasking the Void*. Ben has the gift of taking a complex scientific subject and making it relatable and understandable in everyday language to the audience. It

was a very well received session. We also had two younger members from Wellington, Hillary Reid, who is a US/NZ artist and dancer exploring the connection between dance and spirituality and Arzoo Syeddah, a facilitator and Alumni Lead at the PopUp Business School Aotearoa presenting *Every Trigger is a Teacher* and how that leads to compassion and deepening connection with oneself and others. Hillary also demonstrated her art through beautiful dance movement at the closing ceremony of the convention.

A group of nine younger members came together at the convention in a private session to get to know each other better and discuss exploring theosophy options. The group are keen to meet up again during the year and are supported in this by myself and Renée at National Section. We are aware of the importance at this stage of building connection and friendship among the group, to not rush and allow space for growth. The future lies in the hands of the young. Importantly, this activity is supported in the TSNZ strategic plan.

There were many speakers/presenters who shared at the convention such as Penelope Foster from the Hawke's Bay, who spoke on *Is Humanity becoming*

*humanKIND*, exploring our compassion and relationship with each other and Richard Sell from Auckland whose amazing presentation was on the life of Lillian Edger, a remarkable woman who grew up in New Zealand with high academic achievements in her early years going on to be an accomplished international theosophical speaker, alongside contemporaries Colonel H.S. Olcott, Dr Annie Besant and Countess Wachtmeister to name a few. Lillian both established and was the first General Secretary of the NZ Section, a real trailblazer of her time (see her story on page 12). Clive Conland from Wellington shared with us some *Classic Spiritual Gems* which he uncovered from his father's long-lost collection of books. Clive read quotes that inspired him and gave us glimpses of theosophy from C. Jinarajadasa, International President of the TS during the 1950s.

National speaker, Murray Stentiford, spoke on *Finding the Treasures Within* in a world where separation and individuality are so strongly emphasised and how the fabric of life can be strengthened and nurtured by the healing balm of Compassion. Don Harrison kept us spellbound in his inspiring presentation on *Heart over Head*, sharing from his own experience. Sushma Webber, President of Wellington Branch, gave a presentation entitled *There are No Others* about some of the great souls who have influenced her from her youth at home in India. Gloria Henderson, Treasurer of Wellington Branch, led us in a wonderful interactive *Meditation Workshop* including a compassion process to help heal others.

The *Breakout Session* on the last day was magical. Everyone gave feedback in their group discussion. This feedback was then shared with everyone. We garnered much from the brilliant ideas and will be referring to them as we move forward.

Wellington Branch was the host lodge for the convention with members working

together as a team behind the scenes, ensuring everyone had access to refreshments and making everyone feel welcome. Our thanks go to Wellington members for their hard work during this time and a special thank you to all involved with the 124th Summer National Convention of the TSNZ.

**EXTRACTS FROM PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK...**

Wow! This Convention was very different ... no overseas speakers in person, but a Zoom meeting with Tim Boyd... many thanks to those who participated in early morning walks along the walkway by the sea ... a great way to start the day. Being chauffeured to the Centre made for interesting chats and varied routes thanks to modern technology. The talks were engaging ... interactive delivery kept us all involved and very much part of it. Lunches and dinners were special events ... another opportunity to renew friendships and kindle new ones. There was a depth of unity, harmony which was palpable ... brother and sisterhood, with a common purpose in mind ... sharing wisdom and compassion. Roll on 2022 ... start putting funds aside ... enrol early ... apply for financial assistance if necessary. But don't miss it ... it's a very special time.

**Helen Susmilch**

The Convention for me, assisted a greater awareness of how we relate to others and more importantly, what we observe (in ourselves and others) that could pave the way for healing relationships and fostering new ones, including knowing when and how to be there for others...The 'futuristic' movie *Infinite Potential* on David Bohm and the link between science and spirituality, followed by a powerful presentation on current scientific discoveries where our world of knowledge has led us today was a wow! factor for me. Ben Upton's knowledge was impressive... Keep a lookout for it on our website, friends. A big impression on me, was the presence and active vitality of our newer, younger members. TS now has a



International President of the TS, Tim Boyd, presents his keynote Zoom address.



After 'a fantastic session' of group discussions, leaders shared their group's views.



Renée Sell spoke on *Entering the Stream of Consciousness that is Eternal.*



Meeting of young theosophists at TSNZ Convention 2021.



Richard Sell, Chair of the Board for TSNZ gave an amazing presentation enjoyed by all: *History Corner ~ Lillian Edger.*

wonderful balance of male, female and age-assorted members with a cohesive relationship between all. A positive and happy environment was at this Convention and a lot of hope held for the future ... Thank you TSNZ and all our attendees!

**Carole Van Weede**

As a new TS member, this was my first annual convention and it was quite a marvellous experience. Set in a beautiful space, we were all looked after ... Apart from the rich array of speakers and talks, the social side of the convention really appealed to me. I got to connect with other members and make connections that will last a lifetime. Thank you to the National Office for making it a memorable experience for me.

**Arzoo Syeddah**

I very much enjoyed all of what the Convention had to offer. The venue was superb, the energy of the place peaceful and full of kindness and compassion... The accommodation was comfortable and thanks for giving me such a good room-mate. I enjoyed all the sessions and felt (and still do) the benefits of the *Loving Heart* meditation and healing I received at the time. Thank you all for organising such a great experience.

**Katherine Kingsbury**

Wonderful to reconnect the TS family in the tranquil and beautiful surrounds of the Sisters of Compassion Centre. The variety and quality of the presentations left me inspired and moved... the connection deepened and compassion heartfelt. Thank you for a marvellous convention.

**Susanna Roskilley**

At a time when nothing can be taken for granted, the opportunity to meet in person as kindred Beings is very special, as was 'seeing' Tim Boyd. Attending was a really lovely opportunity to remember, learn, recharge the 'mojo' and connect with increasingly valued friends. Great organisation and venue. Thank you.

**Kirsty Morton**

Spending time at the Convention was a profound and special experience... I enjoyed the richness of so many conversations with wonderful people. I was inspired by the variety of presentations, attunement meditations and two very special presentations on Meditation with Healing techniques. Do we need to focus on Meditation more and provide teaching for this challenging time? ... We were blessed by the number of gifted young people who gave generously and have so much to teach us. My grateful thanks to our National Section ...

**Trish Lynch**

I was looking forward to visiting Wellington ... and the city turned on unexpected beautiful weather to make our stay a very pleasant one. The Sisters of Compassion retreat was more than appropriate in both name and atmosphere, as we made a unique-in-the-world gathering of theosophists... We heard from members ... fascinating and challenging ideas – just what a TS convention is for! We caught up with old friends and forged new

friendships ... This Wellington convention will be a hard act to follow, but Auckland 2022, I'm sure you're up to the task!

**Jeanette Blackburn**

Friendly, focused and fun! A great opportunity to connect with people consciously exploring this human existence with wisdom shared at many levels with kindness and compassion. See you next time!

**Widge and Orlanda**

Convention was a wonderful and happy few days in many ways. The venue was beautiful with a lovely atmosphere, the fellowship truly warm and, as always, much to learn and reflect on. Thank you!

**Penelope Foster**

I enjoyed and was inspired by all of it ... I loved the energy of the chapel and meditated with others there... The accommodation from the Sisters of Compassion suited our theme spectacularly. All of the talks were very worthwhile, especially the young ones...

**Catherine Austin**

... An outstanding success... theme *Awakening Compassion – Deepening the Connection*. And connect we did. Presenters covered a wide range of interesting topics ... heartening to see younger members 'stepping up' and sharing their passion for theosophy. Two young guests providing entertainment ... were fantastic. Love and gratitude ... for... an amazing success. Theosophy is alive and well in NZ.

**Carol Collier**

Big congratulations to our extremely hard-working Convention organisers! We have been refreshed with a wide variety of presentations, centering on the theme of *Compassion*.

The age range, life experience and different skills reflected in approaches by presenters were engaging and greatly appreciated by those present. There was a beautiful peace and sense of upliftment from the environment which perfectly complemented the theme of this year's Convention.

**Susan Skarsholt**

It is a joy for me to attend the National Convention and witness the unfolding of energies as the programme develops. Encouraging new speakers in giving their presentation is a rewarding part of the work and I'm often blown away at the depth and experience.

Everyone who participated made our convention environment beautiful. There was space for us to discover many gems for ourselves and for the inspiration and catalyst for taking the next step. It was heartening to see younger members meeting and discussing theosophy in today's language. There is great Heart and Aroha Nui in Theosophy in NZ. This is the future!

**Renée Sell**



Catherine Austin from Orewa won the TOS raffle. Renée Sell presented her with a copy of the new Geoffrey Hodson book *The Ancient Mysteries*.



Ben Upton from New Plymouth spoke on *Unmasking the Void*.



A special invited Wellington guest was Kelsang Shechog, Buddhist nun and resident teacher of Kadampa Meditation Centre, Wellington.



Participants at the 2021 TSNZ Convention.



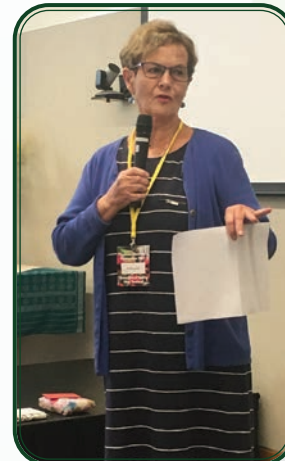
Don Harrison, President of Hawke's Bay Branch speaking on *Heart over Head*.



Invited speaker Penelope Foster from Hawke's Bay spoke on *Is Humanity becoming humanKIND?*



Sushma Webber, Wellington Branch President, spoke on *There are No Others*.



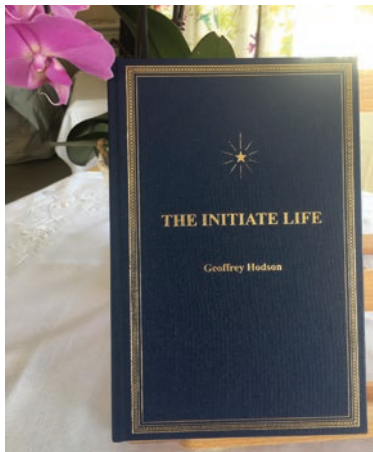
Trish Lynch from Auckland introduced Penelope Foster and Richard Sell in the Short Talks session.



Hillary Reid, Wellington based dancer, shared her creative expression through dance and it was appreciated by all.



Wellington Branch participants were thanked for their contribution during the convention.



## The Initiate Life

*A Guide to the Path of Hastened Unfoldment by Geoffrey Hodson*

*The Path of Hastened Unfoldment* is one of Geoffrey Hodson's key teachings and this new book, compiled from his talks and study notes, contains material on this very subject. It is relevant for the serious student, aspirant, disciple, or initiate. While many of the talks were addressed to Theosophical Society members and audiences, the message of the Ancient Wisdom and the Path of Swift Unfoldment is applicable to all humanity.

Geoffrey Hodson is acknowledged the world over for his near lifelong dedication to spreading the Ancient Wisdom, Theosophia, and for his depth of knowledge of its multifaceted aspects. He was so highly regarded that wherever he travelled, people sought his counsel and were guided by his unique insight.

Order online at: <https://theosophy.nz> Email: [nvp@theosophy.org.nz](mailto:nvp@theosophy.org.nz)

Book cost: NZD \$85; free postage within New Zealand;  
postage overseas: NZD \$40

The Theosophical Publishing House, Auckland (2018).

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## PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY Selected Works of John Sell



Two of John Sell's qualities that come through this book are his sincerity and his ability to engage the reader... This is evident in every chapter, providing uplifting support as the reader delves into what are often difficult and complex issues on the path to self-understanding and personal transformation.

*Practical Spirituality* also contains a useful article by Elizabeth Sell [who edited the work] titled *Service: A Dynamic Challenge*, that focuses on the importance of committing ourselves to practical activities that are of lasting value to both the local and world communities. In addition to illustrations by John Sell and Lionel Taylor, *Practical Spirituality* contains full-colour reproductions of rare paintings by Elizabeth Sell that are as beautiful as they are inspiring.

*Practical Spirituality: Selected Works of John Sell* offers a wealth of useful, step-by-step teachings of Theosophy that will challenge, inform and inspire. In addition to being important to the library of every theosophical lodge or study centre, this will be a 'core text' for individual students wishing to expand their insight, compassion and understanding of life's mysteries.

Extracts from review by Nathaniel Altman in the American TS magazine *Quest*, Fall 2019.  
See complete book review on line at [www.theosophy.nz/](http://www.theosophy.nz/)

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## Renée Sell, National Coordinator for the Theosophical Order of Service in New Zealand, reports activities...



Warm Autumn greetings. In January, TOSNZ was welcomed at the TSNZ Wellington convention where we raised project funds by selling great items and raffling a donated copy of Geoffrey Hodson's *The Ancient Mysteries*. I spoke about TOS, including updates on international work that we support. A big thank you goes to Vicki Jerome who oversees this activity and Sue Harrison who assists with finance management. If you are interested in TOS, are keen to sponsor a child, or would like to start a healing circle to radiate positive energies within your community and out into the world, please contact me if you would like some ideas or help.

Each year I write a report for TOS International Secretary, Nancy Secret about, for example, our maintaining programmes in India and Pakistan which sponsor over 50 children. We also support two literacy centres, the Qandeel Home Schools, in Pakistan (see *TheoSophia* December 2020). Recently we had a note from Mushtaq Ali Jindani, General Secretary in Pakistan, thanking TOSNZ supporters for their contribution and continued support. These funds go a long way in helping their work.



To help contact:  
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# Vegetarians Today

From the New Zealand Vegetarian Society, Margaret Johns looks to the future and how we can help heal our planet.



World-wide, more and more people are signing up for Vegetarian/Vegan/plant-based 21-day challenges or similar (see NZVS website for 21-Day Challenge details), following veg~n diets for a month or longer and finding, often to their surprise, that life is as enjoyable if not more so, without eating the flesh of dead animals. At best they continue to follow plant-based diets, or at least their general diets swing to less meat and more plant-based food.

This, coupled with the hundreds of New Zealand students who take the time to research projects for the Think Kind competition run each year by the NZ Vegetarian Society, gives hope that those students will make changes in the way they live, as well as encourage others to make similar changes to help mend the world and make it a better place for all.

People are finally waking up – not only to how connected we all are but also to the damage that has been done to this planet we call Earth. Documentaries like those produced by Sir David Attenborough reinforce how beautiful this planet was, is and still could be, if only humankind would take responsibility for repairing and avoiding further damage. Unfortunately, insisting that everyone should take up a plant-based (veg~n) diet will not instantly solve all the problems of the world.

Change has to come from within; changes of attitude and thinking lead to changes in the way we act, how we treat ourselves and others and how we treat the world. As Mahatma Gandhi said: “A man is but a product of his thoughts. What he thinks he becomes.”

Nature does not stand still. It is continually growing, changing and adapting. The history of the world itself shows constant change, through earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and what we call major disasters. History also shows that humanity can overcome or adapt to disasters by working together co-operatively.

It’s the action, not the fruit of the action, that’s important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there’ll be any fruit. But that doesn’t mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.

*Mahatma Gandhi*

For a delicious healthy loaf, try this Neat Loaf from the Revive Cafe Cookbook and for other tasty recipes and helpful information go to the NZ Vegetarian Society website: [www.vegetarian.org.nz](http://www.vegetarian.org.nz)

## NEAT LOAF (makes 8 serves)

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| ½ cup brown lentils        | 1 cup cottage cheese or 300g tofu mashed                     |
| 2 cups boiling water       | Up to ½ cup water  |
| 1 cup fine rolled oats     | 1 tsp sage   |
| 1 onion finely diced       | 1 tsp oregano  |
| 2 cloves garlic crushed    | 2 carrots grated   |
| ¼ cup soya sauce or tamari | 1 red capsicum (bell pepper) finely diced                    |
| 1 tsp salt                 | 3 cups tomato sauce  |
|                            | (see tomato sauce recipe in <i>TheoSophia</i> December 2020) |



1. Cook the lentils in the water for around 30 minutes or until soft. Drain so there is no liquid.
2. In a bowl mix all ingredients (except tomato sauce). The mixture should be sticky. You may need to add some water if it is dry.
3. Press into a lightly oiled oven dish approximately 3cm (1½ inches) deep.
4. Pour over 1 cup of the tomato sauce.
5. Bake for 40 minutes at 150°C (300°F) or until firm.
6. Cover with the remaining tomato sauce.
7. Cut into squares and serve so the tomato sauce cascades over the loaf.

See [www.vegetarian.org.nz](http://www.vegetarian.org.nz) for a variety of recipes, including immune booster recipes from Anna Valentine (*The Veggie Tree*), which have appeared in *Vegetarian Living NZ*.

More recipes, information and the NZVS revised and updated *Home Tried Favourites* recipe book, are now available from [www.vegetarian.org.nz](http://www.vegetarian.org.nz)





## Vasanta House Library



Books can be ordered from the library at TSNZ national headquarters by using the postal facility available and contacting the librarian at email: [library@theosophy.org.nz](mailto:library@theosophy.org.nz) or 18 Belvedere St, Epsom, Auckland 1051, or telephone 09 523 1797 (Saturday afternoons).

Cost to members is the return postage, non-members may join for \$10.

## Vasanta House Accommodation

Casual accommodation is available at TS National Headquarters, Vasanta House in Epsom, Auckland. There is a range of rooms: single, double and bunk rooms with and without en-suite plus kitchen and laundry facilities. We welcome those in sympathy with the TS Objects and willing to abide by vegetarian, smoke-free and alcohol-free requirements.

For bookings and more information please contact the office 09 523-1797.

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Cost: \$2.50 each or \$2.00 if bought in quantity

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**Send to: Theosophical Order of Service, c/o Richard and Renée Sell, HPB Lodge, Theosophical Society, 4 Warborough Avenue, Epsom, Auckland 1051. (Please refer to issue *TheoSophia* March 2007, Vol. 68 No. 1 inside back cover for samples.)**

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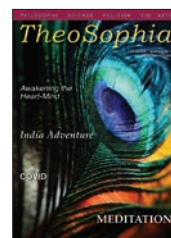
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# Theosophy

Theosophy is the body of truths which form the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guides its evolution.

Theosophy puts death in its rightful place as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the science of the spirit, teaching one to know the spirit as oneself and the mind and the body as one's servants.

*Theosophy* literally means divine wisdom: *theosophia*. Theosophy illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions, by unveiling their hidden meanings; thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone who is willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high and to work perseveringly, is welcome as a member and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

From *Exploring the Mysteries of Existence* published by The Theosophical Society - <http://theosophy.nz>

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# The Term THEOSOPHY

The term *theosophy* is derived from two Greek words: *theos* meaning divine and *sophia* meaning wisdom. However, Theosophy is not some system of thought prescribed by a deity ruling from on high, but the *Divine Wisdom* that dwells potentially and universally in the human spirit, unfolding gradually through the process of evolution. It is this Divine Wisdom within us that stirs our desire to discover who we are and to answer the other big questions.

The term *theosophy* was first used in English in 1650 for the teachings of some ancient sages, and was later applied to the teaching of Ammonius Saccas, an Egyptian philosopher and his pupil, Plotinus, who founded the Alexandrian school of Neoplatonism in the early third century after Christ. For them Theosophy was the divine knowledge that explained the experiences initiates had in the Greek Mysteries.

The term was later used by the Protestant mystic Jakob Böhme, one of the early Swedenborgians in England, and other 17th and 18th century writers on spiritual subjects.

It has also been applied to such schools of thought as Pythagoreanism, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Alchemy, Advaita Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism, as well as to such philosophers as Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64), Paracelsus (c. 1490-1541) and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600).

There is no other in this world.  
Each is a separate form,  
but One Spirit lives and moves in All.

*Annie Besant*



March 2021