PHILOSOPHY · SCIENCE · RELIGION · THE ARTS

TheoSophia

December 2025 | Volume 86 No. 4
SUMMER ISSN 1177-8032

LIVING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

AN INNER REVOLUTION TOWARD EMBODIMENT OF THE PATH

THE JOURNEY TO WISDOM

DAILY LIFE AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

TheoSophia

FREEDOM OF THE SOCIETY

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organisation entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organisation.

Resolution passed by the General Council of The Theosophical Society in 1949.

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 all Life.

July 2018 General Council meeting of the Theosophical Society.

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

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS
President ..... Richard Sell
Vice-President ..... Melanie Closs

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.

Published by: The Theosophical Society in New Zealand Inc.
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Cover
Kurinui
Pexabay NZ

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129th National Convention of the Theosophical Society in NZ Inc.

THEME: THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY AND THE UNFOLDING OF CONSCIOUSNESS

DATE: 15 – 20 January 2026

VENUE: Longburn Adventist College, Palmerston North

As we travel our own unique paths on the spiritual journey, we each contribute to the greater story of the unfolding of consciousness of Humanity. We might well enquire, 'What is this great unfolding and how do we play our part?'

At the 2026 National Convention, we will explore the many facets of the spiritual journey – examining the stages, insights and practices that shape our growth, both individually and collectively. Through inspiring talks, experiential workshops and heartfelt discussions, we will delve into the nature of consciousness and how we can be active participants in this shared adventure of awakening.

SPECIAL GUEST: DR GRAHAM MEAD

Graham is a South African-born former medical doctor whose career path has evolved into an exploration of consciousness, the mind, and the essential connection between physiological awareness and personal well-being. He has three decades of martial arts experience, along with post-graduate studies in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture.

Graham's work synthesizes breathwork, movement, subtle energy therapy, and meditation, offering a holistic perspective on health and self-awareness. He sees the body-mind as a dynamic, sensory and vibrational phenomenon, with an innate drive to thrive and an infinite capacity to do so.

His work is inspired by a sincere pursuit of truth and embodied self-awareness, through which he cultivates practical methods that lead to measurable experiential insight.

We are fortunate to have Graham presenting as well as facilitating an experiential workshop at the 2026 National Convention.

VENUE

The 2026 National Convention will be held at Longburn Adventist College, located in the rural town of Longburn, 7 kilometres south of central Palmerston North.

Longburn Adventist College is set on expansive park-like grounds, in a peaceful environment surrounded by neighbouring farms. Accommodation is twin-share in the school's dormitory rooms, also located on the school grounds. Meals are available during the convention and are included with the cost of accommodation, or can be purchased separately as required. There is ample free car parking on site.

ALSO

- A variety of presentations, guided meditations and workshops
- Evening entertainment and supper
- A special Theosophical Order of Service update
- An outing in Palmerston North
- Time to share and chat over a cup of tea

REGISTRATION: To register for the 2026 National Convention, complete the registration form in this issue, or visit ***www.theosophy.nz/2026-convention***

SPEAKERS

Dr Graham Mead (whose biographical details are on page 2) will be speaking on the topic Authentic Internal Change is Biological not Intellectual, and will facilitate a workshop titled A Visceral Experience of the Nervous System as a Gateway to the Unknown.

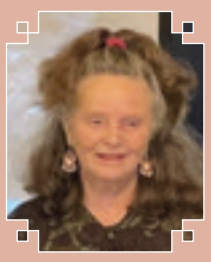
Other speakers contributing to the Convention are:

GUEST SPEAKER: TENZIN CHOSANG

Russell Shipman (also known as Tenzin Chosang) grew up in Zimbabwe and later South Africa where he qualified as a secondary school teacher. In 1976 he settled in New Zealand. At various times he taught Maths and English, acted professionally and ran his own desktop publishing enterprise. In 1997, Tenzin was ordained by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as a Buddhist monk. For the following 22 years he served as a monk in temples in Auckland and Hamilton. Now, he is a retiree at Trashi Gomang Buddhist Centre in Auckland.

LOCAL TSNZ SPEAKERS

Richard Sell
National President



Helen Sussmilch
Palmerston North

Kirsty Morton
Whanganui

Renée Sell
National Vice-President

Donna Willard-Moore
New Plymouth

Susanna Roskilley
Canterbury

Wendy Rapp
Auckland

TSNZ SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY

2 – 6 May 2026 • Directed by Pablo Sender

Originally from Argentina, Pablo Sender worked at the international TS headquarters in Adyar, India and is now at the National Centre of the TS in Wheaton, Illinois, USA. He leads seminars in USA, Canada, South America and Europe. A microbiologist, Pablo holds a PhD in Bio-Science. See: https://pablosender.wordpress.com/

Further information on this event will be found on the website: www.theosophy.nz

A THEOSOPHY NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL EVENT

OPENING OUR HEART TO DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM

TWO-DAY WORKSHOP

PRESENTED BY
NICKY BASSETT AND TONY PETCOPOULOS
National Lecturers, Theosophical Society in Australia

Join us as we explore our heart's capacity to achieve higher states of consciousness and our soul's journey that leads us to becoming more open-hearted spiritual beings guided by love.

AUCKLAND
SATURDAY 28 FEBRUARY & SUNDAY 1 MARCH 2026

PALMERSTON NORTH
SATURDAY 7 & SUNDAY 8 MARCH 2026

CHRISTCHURCH
SATURDAY 14 & SUNDAY 15 MARCH 2026

For details and registration visit www.theosophy.nz/events

Love, Joy and Peace

The fruits of the spirit are love, joy and peace, wrote St Paul. Right now, in this season meant to be about love, joy and peace and in this world often loveless, joyless and unpeaceful, those inspired fruits are surely needed as we seek to live a spiritual-filled life.

In this issue of *TheoSophia*, writers considering this theme are Richard Sell (p.6), Tim Boyd (p.8), Graham Mead (p.12), John Vorstermans (p.18), Ravi Ravindra (p.22) and those whose books are listed on the Recommended Reading (p.27). Note the TSNZ Annual Convention notice (p.2) and 2026 workshops (p.4). Feedback from Immersion Weekend (p.16) may encourage you to participate.

The Editorial Team at *TheoSophia* wish you and yours a happy holiday season and New Year as you relax, read and contemplate the spiritual life.

Pamela Zane
Editor
editor@theosophy.nz

Contributions of poems or articles 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

TSNZ YouTube site: https://www.youtube.com/@theosophynz

POHUTUKAWA

Round northern coves you gather
Gnarled and twisted, like old men
Hanging convivially round
Their favourite bar counters, yarning.

In other places you are more
Upright citizens, but counting for
Much of the population.

Then, rather suddenly, your
Grey-greenness explodes into
Feathery, fiery, festive scarlet
In-your-face redness
And we know our southern
Summer has arrived.

Let the celebrations begin!

Penelope Foster

Murmurs from Within: Inspired verse from Hawke's Bay members of the Theosophical Society

NATIONAL SECTION ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to the following people who will be taking up officer roles in 2026.

National President – Richard Sell

National Vice-President – Kirsty Morton

Governance Board – Melanie Closs and Paul Henderson

As per the Society's Rule 19.4(d)(i) each candidate is declared elected by the Returning Officer.

DIARY DATES

2026

January 15-20	129th National Convention in Palmerston North
January 16	TSNZ Annual General Meeting
Feb 28 & March 1	Opening the Heart Workshop - Auckland
March 7 & 8	Opening the Heart Workshop - Palmerston North
March 14 & 15	Opening the Heart Workshop - Christchurch
May 2-6	School of Theosophy with Pablo Sender

Information can be found on our website under *events: https://theosophy.nz/events*

FUTURE ISSUES

Date	Theme	Deadline
2026		
March	Ahimsa / kindness	1 January
June	Art and Theosophy	1 April
September	Healing	1 July

Contact the editor at editor@theosophy.org.nz or visit our website for the guidelines: www.theosophy.nz

National President of TSNZ, **Richard Sell** examines…

Simplicity in Spiritual Living

There is a saying, an esoteric law even, that when someone is travelling the Spiritual Path they must take someone else along with them on the upward journey. Just as we ourselves have been bestowed with invaluable assistance by an elder or mentor, in our turn, we too provide help to those who have come to the Path later on. Ideally, this is the person closest to us in the various human relations. This small aphorism recognises the Path of Unity as one being signposted by unselfishness and altruism, rather than attention focused on one's own individual progression. Altruism towards others, reverence for nature and all life and opening the heart to whispers from the Divine, is reading the signposts well and travelling the right road.

Occultist, Geoffrey Hodson wrote, "Treading the Path is far more than succeeding in yoga exercises and practices. It is a gradual enrichment and beautification of the whole nature of the aspirant, including self-sensitisation to the presence of the divine life in all other beings and in Nature herself, if only at the physical and intellectual levels at first." [1]

As progress is made, there is an unfolding of the intuitive nature and a broadening of the intellectual nature, so the aspirant begins to *know* the great Laws and Principles underlying the evolutionary scheme of our solar system. We understand that meditation and development of qualities such as love, compassion and discriminative wisdom are requirements for unfolding of the higher nature. The element of true-heartedness is an absolute essential in the spiritual life. True-heartedness means being sincere, loyal and honest in one's feelings and actions.

While there is much to work on in the development of character, no-one is expected to do more than they are capable of in any given moment and place they find themselves in. This is comforting to know, because sometimes we may feel that what is before us is too much, an insurmountable burden to overcome and then the crucial right step might not be taken. To actively live the spiritual life is of upmost importance. When Jiddu Krishnamurti was about 14 years old, he wrote a small book called *At the Feet of the Master*, which describes the spiritual life and the qualities needed to pursue it. In the introduction he spoke about living the life, not merely the reading of it... *"It is not enough to say that they [the words] are true and beautiful; a man who wishes to succeed must do exactly what is said. To look at food and say that it is good will not satisfy a starving man; he must put forth his hand and eat."* This speaks of the Intention to live such a life. Intention produces clarity of purpose and one-pointedness, it provides the impetus for the direction the life will take. Then in action, practical spirituality becomes the key to the door.

The manner in which the seeker conducts their spiritual life as they 'Seek out the Way' and resolve to 'do the right thing' is both simple and powerfully outlined in the Precepts of Gautama Buddha, Madame Blavatsky's *Golden Stairs* and her mystical treasure *The Voice of the Silence*. In applying these universal principles, one of the powerful tools we have at our disposal is our attitude towards life. It is important to accept the world as it is instead of complaining about every little thing because they are not unfolding according to our personal desires. Instead, look to create new and better conditions. Life can be a serious business at times, and resentment and bitterness may prevail as a consequence. Rather, when facing difficulties, maintaining a sense of equilibrium and at times a sense of humour, is essential. A happy smile for all, an encouraging word to those you see are struggling is greatly more beneficial to the world than gaining advantage for oneself.

Possessing an open heart and positive attitude cultivates optimism. We then allow ourselves to see the hand of the divine in all and we move toward understanding that the divine plan is unfolding as it

should. With this outlook in mind, never feel sorry for oneself when strife arrives on the doorstep – don't foster the feeling that life has singled '*me*', the personality out in some unfair sort of manner. The Soul created a plan for the incarnated being and the lessons to be learned by it long in advance; these are now playing out. The Soul reaps the rewards of these experiences as a broadening of consciousness on the planes of Nature. It does not view these experiences as good or bad, it does not personalise them as fair or unfair, rather it transforms the acquired learning into Wisdom. This is how the Soul grows and exerts greater influence over each personality, life and after life. We see the evidence of this process in those we term as 'old Souls' whom we come across occasionally and in those deemed as great sages and philosophers. Such teachers and Rishis once stood where we now stand, and in time, we will stand where they stand as we apply the effort needed to get there. 'The Way' has been given out in the various mystical works or books. Humanity is fortunate that this Way is already tried, tested and available to those who knock.

Then a second vital requirement is needed – *Effort*. Madame Blavatsky talked of the personal effort required to walk such a road in the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine* where she stated, "The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man, save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations."

Recognising the importance of these two aspects, 'The Way' and 'Personal Effort' in traversing the Spiritual Path is of inestimable value to the aspirant. Armed with such knowledge, the aspirant sets forth into the practical landscape. Geoffrey Hodson tells us "It is not the important occasions which matter so much, useful though they are; it is the hourly, daily attention to the details of life, to the work and to the character building without desire, which really constitutes treading the Path." [2]

What are some of the signposts that Mr Hodson tells us to pay attention to? By way of example, he provides some simple advice that not only helps others but also the giver – advice that Mr Hodson said also helps prevent illness and disease:

1. Cultivate a state of goodwill to all people – harmlessness through thought, word and deed, not hurting others, being harmonious;
2. Develop a habit of happiness as an attitude towards life – this can be infectious;
3. Do not nurse grievances – forgive and move on;
4. Send out affection and goodwill to all – loving kindness cures disease and suffering;
5. Link up daily with the Higher Self – this is yoga or 'union'. [3]

Underpinning all this are Ethics. Ethics, the foundation on which the spiritual life is lived, must come first. Manly P. Hall wrote, "most failures in mysticism and philosophy result from neglect of the ethical basis. The Superstructure of esotericism must be raised upon the solid rock of virtue and integrity, for without this foundation it inevitably falls." [4]

Being watchful is an indispensable dynamic to righting harmful behaviours and pursuing positive ones. Some people maintain a spiritual diary, some are watchful about their behaviour and motives as they enact them out. Awareness is key. By appropriately addressing small issues confronting us daily, we develop the character and stamina required for later stages when the pathway to the summit becomes more challenging. Nevertheless, progress is made with each step taken and each difficulty surmounted. The peaks come closer by imperceptible movements with a few occasional rapid ascents, and perhaps many a detour along the way.

To close, this idea of acute awareness concerning our mode of living is beautifully illustrated by A.T. Barker in his book, *The Hill of Discernment*, under 'Awareness in the Moment of the Day':

> All the great teachers have laid stress upon the importance, not of envisaging an enormous period of time before you to do the difficult things of the spiritual life, but to pay attention to the little passing moments, the minutes and hours of each day. Therefore, they taught: Fill the day full; watch over it, guide it; regard each single day as if it were the last day that you knew you were going to live. It has a wonderful effect upon the inner spiritual life, if we live each single moment with that awareness, that watchfulness, which has the feeling in it that after all we would not wish to leave an inharmonious impression upon those with whom we are associated, if at the close of the day we were leaving them not to return. It is an idea that is worth remembering and bringing to bear on every single moment and every single hour of the day.

REFERENCES

1 *The Yogic Ascent to the Spiritual Heights*, Geoffrey Hodson

2 *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition*, Geoffrey Hodson

3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vi6Ud8x7bwc

4 *An Essay on the Fundamental Principles of Operative Occultism*, Manly P. Hall

CYCLES AND LONGING

Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society, discusses a fundamental impact on the spiritual journey.

In the first chapter (Proem) of *The Secret Doctrine* (SD) H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) makes a couple of important statements. One of them consists of three fundamental propositions. Her assertion is that a clear apprehension of these three fundamental ideas is a prerequisite for an understanding of the overarching occult system of thought. In brief the fundamental propositions are:

1) The one Absolute reality, said to be unthinkable and unknowable.
2) Periodicity, or the cyclic nature of everything.
3) Karma and Reincarnation "the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul ... through the Cycle of Incarnation (or 'Necessity') in accordance with cyclic and karmic law."

The second of these Propositions relates to 'periodicity', more familiarly called 'cycles' – in Nature, within ourselves, and cycles of consciousness. The fact that something is described as "fundamental" or as a "law" should be more of a motivation for us to ask questions than to sit back and accept.

What is it about cycles that make them so fundamental? Anyone who gives even the slightest attention to this matter will be very familiar with cycles as they impact us individually. Every day we wake up in the morning, every night we go to sleep. Sleeping and waking links with the broader cycle of the Earth's rotation on its axis resulting in day and night. Within our own body there are circadian rhythms, our 'biological clock', that correlate with this greater cycle of day and night. From the physiology of the body's organs right down to the individual cells, there are interlinking daily rhythms. Seasons come and go, and come again.

The idea of pointing our attention in this direction is that the process of consideration links us with the greater body of Ageless Wisdom teachings. We tend to think of these cycles as repetitive. It is the nature of cycles that they repeat. Sometimes we become fixed in our understanding such that we see day and night, or sleeping and waking, as an on-going fixture of reality.

The ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, made the statement that "No man ever steps in the same river twice", for the reason that each time we put our foot in the river not only are the waters composing the river not the same, but the person stepping into the river has changed. This idea of cycles should cause us to think of change. Although they are repetitive, they are not static. There are three things that HPB says are eternal – space, duration (from which we derive our understanding of time), and motion. Movement and its corollary, change, are eternal.

In Buddhism there is a strong emphasis on understanding *samsâra*, the cycle or wheel of birth, death and rebirth, we are trapped in by virtue of our ignorance. Life after life it repeats and we experience similar self-caused sufferings. But, it, too, is not static. As we recognise the possibility for enlightenment, we enter a different, more expansive cycle, beyond our current capacity to understand.

HPB's purpose in presenting these three fundamental propositions was so that we could properly introduce ourselves to the system of thought that underlies occultism, which involves more than thinking. Confinement in the realm of thought severely limits our interaction. We can be knowledgeable without being wise. So, for our purposes, particularly as members of the Theosophical Society (TS), what draws us here is some deeper purpose than mere acquaintance with a system of thought, however vast it may be. The question arises: What is it that not only leads us to this system of thought, but which transforms such a system into a spiritual path? What is the catalyst that transforms knowledge, even of the highest type, into something more?

In the language of mystical traditions there is a term that comes up time and time again. Within us the catalyst that moves us toward some requested, even demanded, union with our source is 'longing' – sometimes expressed as aspiring or yearning. The great mystic Rumi made the statement: "I could have never known what love is had I never felt this longing." He was not talking about romantic love, but about the love of the Divine Beloved – the mutual love flowing between the lover and the Beloved. Our sense of separation is the beginning point. We know our connection exists, but somehow the linking thread has become weak.

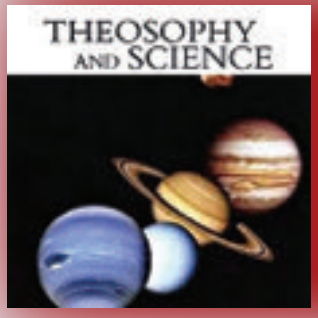
These are some of the ways that we see the influence of this catalysing factor of longing. I do believe that very often what moves us into this theosophical setting is a keen awareness of that quality within ourselves. Over time we allow what begins as a flame to be dulled down to an ember. In *Light on the Path*, Mabel Collins addresses the quality of longing. First, she says, "Desire only that which is within you"; then, "Desire only that which is beyond you." The two seem to be incompatible! Then she says, "Desire only that which is unattainable." We are asked to think about these graded steps. To clarify the idea of the unattainable she says: "You will enter the light, but you will never touch the Flame." If we persist, listen and actually hear, ultimately we "will enter the light", but its source is unattainable.

As a final point Mabel Collins speaks about the nature of "asking". We are told to ask, to request deeper wisdom, deeper connection. She says that people are always asking for something. It is the nature of being human to want and to ask for it. Mostly such requests go unrealised, because the request is made with the mind only. It is not made from the deeper sense of longing. She says that to ask in a genuine way is to feel "a hunger within", a yearning of spiritual aspiration. When we ask in this manner we are responding to a soul hunger that requires nourishment. The hunger is our aspiration to move in the direction of spirit. *Light on the Path* begins with the admonitions to "Kill out ambition", "Kill out desire of life", and "Kill out desire of comfort", then goes on to list the many things and many ways that we must desire. One deals with personality, another one with reality.

We are told to ask, to request deeper wisdom, deeper connection.

First published in *The Theosophist,* December 2022.

Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society was born in New York City and studied at Brown University then at the University of Chicago. In Chicago Tim joined the TSA in 1974 and co-founded a Theosophical spiritual community in Chicago's inner city. They held classes on the Ageless Wisdom, meditation and healing and formed a business which helped stabilise neighbourhoods through the training and employment of local youth and creation of affordable homes. Tim has been involved in Theosophical work at many levels: from lodge member, to TSA president and president of the Theosophical Order of Service USA. He has spoken across the USA and every continent except Africa. Tim's articles appear in journals around the world.



THEOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

The motto of the Theosophical Society is "There is no Religion higher than Truth", a sentiment to which a scientist can equally well subscribe. The scientific and mystical modes of search are complementary rather than antagonistic. Physicist Fritjof Capra has said that science does not need mysticism and mysticism does not need science but we humans need both.

For more, see:https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/statics/theosophy-and-science

THEOSOPHY IN ACTION

A report by **Richard Sell** from the amazing World Congress of the Theosophical Society, held in Vancouver.

Vancouver 2025 World Congress Participants.

The 12th International World Congress held 23 – 27 July 2025 at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada was a resounding success. The forward-looking theme *Towards Insight and Wholeness: Our Role in Shaping the Future* explored the influence of consciousness in shaping the future. This Congress was a very special occasion because it was also the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875. The programme was full of activity and connected members from throughout the world. There were many wonderful presentations, panels, workshops, meetings, special events and celebrations over five days.

Some of the highlights of the Congress included International President, Tim Boyd, launching his book *On the Verge of Wisdom*. Theosophical historian Michael Gomes also launched a new book, *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings – Russian Serials*. Michael Gomes, a prolific researcher and writer, received on stage the Subba Row medal awarded for outstanding contributions to theosophical literature. I had the opportunity to sit down and talk with Michael who has many fascinating stories to tell about theosophical history. These books are both available for loan from our Theosophical National Library.

One Fire, an amazing documentary film, was premiered. It runs for approximately two hours. This presents Theosophy and the Theosophical Society across a wide vista encompassing spiritual concepts, the Adyar estate and the Society's influence in art, music and other fields of a contemporary and historical nature. The film will be released shortly in different formats.

Opportunity was offered for attendees to do local sightseeing and on one of the evenings we were treated to lovely Indian dancing. The attendees heard from local indigenous Canadians who spoke to us on aspects of their history and their spirituality. We heard some drumming and one of the group sang from her heart, which was very moving.

The weather played its part too, with pleasant balmy days in Vancouver. It was an amazing experience for the 16 New Zealand TS members who attended the World Congress, with many new friendships made.

Main Hall at UBC in Vancouver, where the 12th International World Congress was held.

Renée Sell from NZ chairing the Intercultural Dialogue at the International World Congress.

International President, Tim Boyd showing the new Michael Gomes book.

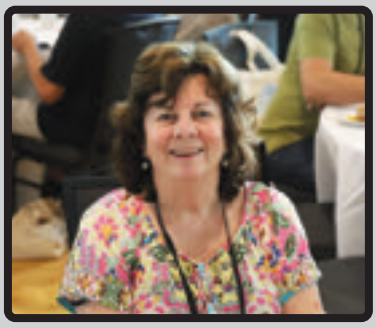
TSNZ National President Richard Sell introducing one of the speakers.

TS New Zealand members who attended the World Congress.

Richard Sell thanking speaker Vicente Hao Chin Jr from the Philippines for his presentation.

Rosel Doval-Santos from the Philippines with Renée and Richard Sell.

Opening premier evening of the new 'One Fire' documentary film. Left to Right: Pablo Sender (USA), Terhi Ahava (Writer and Director), Tim Boyd (Int'l President), Lily Boyd, Marja Artamaa (Int'l Secretary Adyar).



Melanie Closs, National Vice-President New Zealand Section.

Front row: Francis Lim and Leo Ta from Australia, middle row: Renée Sell and Carol Collier, back row: Richard Sell and John Vorstermans, all 4 from New Zealand.

Vicente Hao Chin, Jr and wife Tess from the Philippines.

Simon and Sushma Webber.

Louise Black (Wellington) and Savita Bhana (Auckland-HPB).

NZ Members Barbara Zanarb (Waikato), Widge Rowden and Orlanda Endicott (Whanganui).

Special guest speaker at the January 2026 TSNZ convention, **Dr Graham Mead** challenges us to develop further.

AN INNER REVOLUTION TOWARD EMBODIMENT OF THE PATH

…the path has to become who and what we are.

Embodiment in spirituality appears to be a universal challenge with many people pursuing scholarly knowledge often at the expense of direct insight through proper, progressive practice. This is not only disillusioning, but also somewhat irrational.

All too often we pride ourselves on our rationality when we pursue and discuss teachings of spiritual teachers and enlightened beings. Yet when it comes down to it, much of our discovery often remains in the realm of mind. In my view there is nothing rational about this.

And yet here I am writing about such things, mostly because I feel words have the power to direct us to practice, to enliven and possibly enrich our practice and to guide us away from the many pitfalls on this inner path. However, it's the actual walking of this path, the inner discovery, the enlivening of our cells, that ultimately enables us to embody that which we so passionately seek.

I recently spent seven months travelling through Southern and East Africa, first by four-wheel-drive vehicle with the whole family followed by two months of off-road motorcycling with my son through Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda. Almost entirely unplanned, the trip was epic. The people, animals, scenery and unexpected circumstances touched us deeply. We slept in the bush, hostels, airbnb's, ate in a variety of shacks where the only thing identifying it as a place you can eat was the fact it had a big water container outside where you had to wash your hands before entering and encountered incredible human beings along the way. We were charged by an elephant, had lions in our campground, held a pangolin, encountered a two-week-old rhino on a walking safari where the mother mock-charged us when his inquisitiveness brought him too close to us, got lost in the worst part of a town at the edge of Lake Victoria late at night and had the most incredible conversation with a man teaching children about forgiveness after his family was brutally murdered in front of him during the Rwandan genocide.

All of these encounters had an extraordinary impact on my family and me. It opened our children's eyes to a world they had been sheltered from here in New Zealand. Concepts they had been exposed to on Social (and other) Media, through friends and through their education became real, often in a contradictory manner nullifying much of what they had heard and read, through their

own direct, first-hand experience. They found this very liberating and it permanently altered their perception of the world they live in. I distinctly observed my son's perception on our motorcycling trip, learning to distinguish fear from danger, reading the inherent 'vibe' of certain towns we may choose to avoid (and having it confirmed in retrospect), 'feeling' people and their intentions and marveling with deep appreciation at the unexpected kindness we were so often proffered by random individuals. All of this came through direct experience. We 'read the map' and walked the terrain. We didn't just keep repeating what we were told about it, as if we had been there. To me, this is the key to embodiment in Spirituality…the path has to become who and what we are.

Since being unexpectedly exposed to 'chi' at age 16, I have been walking an inner path for well over 35 years – yes that makes me quite old! That path has had many detours, dead ends and deceptions, all of which appear to have led me to what I do and teach today. After school I completed my Medical Training as a doctor in a very conventional medical system with firm boundaries between science and non-science. After five years of practice, I realised this was not the path through which I would help people and I decided to leave and start my own independent exploration. Since then, I have worked with a few thousand individuals in different contexts and formats to help them find their way on a path towards harmony through inner cultivation. Of course this was accompanied, influenced and facilitated by my own journey and left me highly critical of myself, my own process and what actually worked in a lasting manner. In short, I was completely disillusioned by the mass movement spirituality and psychology, it's largely corrupted concepts and it's utter lack of embodied truth.

Most of the individuals I met were sincere in their desire to change, though that sincerity varied significantly from one to the next. It seemed many people wanted to experience change in their life experience, but without having to change themselves. Quite the conundrum. Often times, people had spent years with therapists analysing their past and 'working through it' only to realise it was all still alive and well inside them, surfacing unexpectedly though consistently in their lives via recurrent patterns of behaviour in relationships as well as in the state of their body's physiology. What to do? I would often hear the statement: "I have tried everything". Which just seemed ludicrous to me as the obvious untruth of that statement seemed glaringly obvious. It should rather have read: I have tried everything that is convenient to my current identity and circumstance and without jeopardising any of the material objects I have around me at present. It would often come as a surprise to my clients when I would suggest that rather than just talking, they start a specific daily practice that would enable them to transform their mind, their current habit pattern, perception and awareness of themself and gain control of their mental impulses and reactions. How else could such change come about? If it were through talking or reading, nearly everyone

… do you actually want to get to know your true self, to explore directly the essence of your existence, to awaken and enliven your spirit?

around us would be enlightened or at least sovereign-minded individuals. This I would liken to wanting to learn to play tennis and then proceeding to watch numerous YouTube clips on tennis, listen to interviews and podcast with professional tennis players, read books on tennis, talk to others about tennis, but never actually setting foot on a tennis court nor finding an experienced tennis coach to teach you. The learning is all in the mind, but the fact remains you cannot actually play. The tennis player can play anywhere, in any conditions, day or night, sunshine or rain. It's in their biology, their muscle memory, it's part of who they are.

This may seem mundane to you if you are already actively pursuing an inner path. However, I want to stress the widespread common occurrence of this phenomenon in the huge variety of spiritual seekers I have encountered over the years, experienced and inexperienced alike. Our modern approach seems to encourage us to search a little bit here, a little bit there, collecting knowledge so we can "put it together in my own way" and reinvent the wheel that generations of seekers before us spent lifetimes discerning and developing.

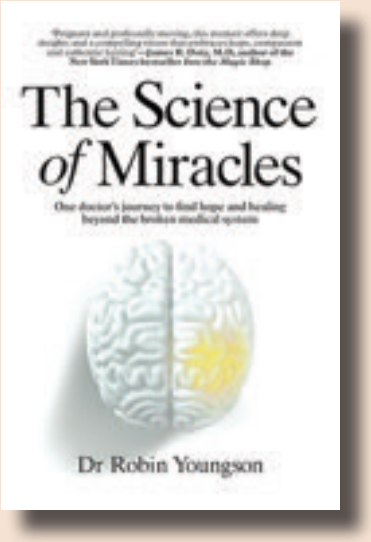
So, we return to sincerity. What do you actually want? Do you just want to be a little more comfortable in your life, have a semblance of occasional calm or fix a relationship struggle or physical ailment? Or do you actually want to get to know your true self, to explore directly the essence of your existence, to awaken and enliven your spirit? In my view this is critical. I am not at all implying you "should" want the latter. I am merely emphasising the importance of clearly identifying what you desire so that it can guide your pursuit, your engagement, the development of your will and determination, the depth of your enquiry and the willingness to let go of whatever identity you have built to date. Sincerity is the key and absolute sincerity is rare, unstoppable and largely unfathomable.

On the inner Path, real change is biological. It permanently changes the Psyche, the chi matrix and the body. It can be tested or checked, it isn't fickle or circumstance-based and it doesn't follow the familiar algorithms of the collective mind. We live in a time where real truth has become near obsolete, ostracised for its offensiveness. We are inundated with the false, the fake, the corruption of what is real. Our attention and in many cases our life force is being harvested and sold and we are left powerless, limp and longing for salvation, yet we keep engaging in the same familiar way, encouraging the algorithms that are 'learning us' and reinforcing who we were yesterday. To what end? We have exhausted the intellect and now we are on the verge of being vastly surpassed on that level of our existence. In my view our deeper calling has never been stronger or more necessary. But there is no short cut and this truth has to sink in. Going deep inside to find the truth of self and reality is the greatest task you will ever undertake and it probably isn't going to happen because you took Ayahuasca a few times, did an ice bath and watched some conspiracy theory clips on YouTube.

Start with something real, find it and pursue it with your whole being. Create a revolution within your mind and body. Integrate the two harmoniously so that your house is clean and perhaps, if you are fortunate, your spirit can awaken within it.

For more on Dr Graham Mead's part in the TSNZ convention, see page 2.

THE SCIENCE OF MIRACLES



One doctor's journey to find hope and healing beyond the broken medical system

The Theosophical World View states that "The Universe and all that exists within it are one interrelated and interdependent whole". As a reflection of this statement, *The Science of Miracles* by Dr Robin Youngson leads us on his personal journey from separateness and alienation as a young medical doctor to a compassionate approach within the medical system.

As an anaesthetist, Robin promoted the power of human connection through redesign within the health system by treating the patient as a whole conscious being and not just a medical condition.

Reading his book, we experience amusing stories and frustrations of rejection on the author's journey to become the innovative Manager of Waitakere Hospital, a presenter to the National Health Service in England and the Australasian Integrative Medical Association.

Robin eventually leads us to his discovery of the Havening Technique which he found to be effective for dealing with trauma, something which is so prevalent in the community.

This is an inspiring book, which shows what can be achieved when societal myths are challenged to overcome the separateness that exists in our society.

Reviewed by Melanie Closs.

The Science of Miracles by Dr Robin Youngson
Published: Rebelheart
Email: sales@rebelheart.biz
NZ paperback: 978-0-473-73056-7

The Technique of the Spiritual Life

A free study course based on the book by Clara Codd.

Clara Codd begins *The Technique of the Spiritual Life* with an overview of human nature and the "field" of becoming. She then explores preparation of the Way, addressing the powers of will, body, emotions and mind. A lengthy section on the 'ancient and eternal Way,' explored elements of spiritual consciousness. Her final sections address method and include meditation instructions.

Each course lesson begins with commentary by Maria Parisen, along with study and practice suggestions. Selections from Clara Codd's *The Technique of the Spiritual Life* follow Maria's commentary.

Download Free Course: www.Theosophy.nz *The Technique of the Spiritual Life.pdf*

The Pilgrim and the Path: *Living Theosophy*

TSNZ Immersion Weekend group photo

FEEDBACK FROM THE TSNZ IMMERSION WEEKEND.

Coming together at the recent Immersion weekend at HPB to explore "The Pilgrim and the Path" was a unique experience of connection, care and intimacy. Many aspects were covered by presenters and the energy created – including a very evocative painting of *World Mother* by Suzanne Vesty – took us to a deeper level of unity which was very beautiful. A real feeling of love-filled Oneness.

Thank you to the wonderful team who create such a welcoming space. It always feels like coming home at HPB.

Trish Lynch

Loved it, and especially staying at the grand Vasanta House adjacent. Found the speakers highlighting Grace and Courage absorbing plus the mandala/musical/poetry evening quite beautiful. My favourite talk was Donna Willard-Moore's incorporating Art into our Soul's response. It was quite enlightening – a look beyond the paintbrush! Each brush-stroke a touch on our consciousness – a memory, a feeling... or perhaps a buried memory. Now a knowing.

Val Sandford

We were treated to wonderful talks from Richard Sell, Donna Willard-Moore, Kirsty Morton, Susanna Roskilley, Wendy Rapp, Renée Sell, Trish Lynch and Carole van Weede. Saturday night saw some trying the therapeutic colouring-in or creation of mandalas. Over delicious catered lunches, there was time for catching up and meeting new people.

Jim Scrivener

The calibre of our National Speakers is really rising. Many thanks for the effort that went into developing this programme of such thoughtful, heartfelt and accessible presentations

Toni Weir

After lunch awakening

Meditative evening

Trish Lynch

Susanna Roskilley

Library visit

AND FROM A REGIONAL GATHERING IN TARANAKI

Regional Gathering in Taranaki attendees

The theme was "Exploring Latent Human Potential". Held in a lovely Retreat Room, in a rural setting on the outskirts of New Plymouth with beautiful sea views, it attracted a total of 17 keen members from National Office and the regions. Speaking on a wide range of related topics were: Richard Sell, Simon Webber, Kirsty Morton, Steve Lewis, Benjamin Upton, Sushma Webber, Jim Scrivener and Donna Willard-Moore, while Renée Sell led a beautiful attunement. All who attended helped to create a wonderful experience.

Jim Scrivener

New Plymouth Lodge hosted the most wonderful regional gathering. A highlight (apart from the glorious space and delicious food!) was the spectacular local speakers. Their dedicated study really showed in the informational detail and truly startling synergistic discoveries they brought forth in their talks.

Toni Weir

The Journey to Wisdom

Writing from personal experience, **John Vorstermans** describes the way ahead for the sincere student of theosophy.

There is a path that all humanity must walk on the journey…

The Theosophical journey often begins with reading the numerous books found in Theosophical libraries or downloaded from online resources. I recall spending time reading them at night, often until the early hours and during breaks at work, which opened a new way of looking at myself and the universe. The knowledge gained changed the course of my life, as it has for many over the last 150 years since the Theosophical Society came into existence. I recently came across an article published by Joy Mills in *The Theosophist, Volume 95, February 1974; The Path From Knowledge to Wisdom* which has inspired me in the writing of this article.

Over time, through reading, we become well-informed about the material we've explored and might even deliver presentations on different topics. Some who study deeply can even become experts on a particular subject. It's similar to reading a book about people who have undertaken pilgrimages or travelled abroad; we can become 'experts' on these topics and speak about them as if we've been there ourselves. However, gaining knowledge through reading is quite different from experiencing it. We must not confuse factual knowledge about things and events with what can be called essential knowledge. For instance, everywhere in the world, you hear of suffering that may spark compassion in us, but it's very different from visiting such places, seeing it firsthand, and trying to help ease the pain, ourselves. The Buddha, when he first ventured into the world, experienced suffering for the first time, which transformed his life and set him on the path to Buddhahood.

H. P. Blavatsky, in *The Voice of the Silence*, clearly differentiates between "head-learning" and "Soul-Wisdom" – the second-hand knowledge gained from external sources – and the core knowledge that emerges when we undertake the inward journey to wisdom. This is a journey from knowledge to wisdom, which each person must experience for themselves. There is a path that all humanity must walk on the journey, and it doesn't matter much where we are on the road as long as we have

set our course firmly and clearly. Ultimately, as we walk, we come to understand that we are in the most amazing company. Along the way, we may discover a most astonishing truth: "Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become the Path itself."

The journey to wisdom is illustrated by the Three Objects of The Theosophical Society, as they represent the progress woven into our path. In the Third Object, each of us must awaken within ourselves those divine powers that alone lead to an understanding of the universal – an understanding that relates to wisdom and the inherent truthfulness of all external things and processes. The truly human powers, the faculties dormant in humanity, are the abilities through which we perceive the wholeness of things. They are the powers of love, understanding and compassion, out of which wisdom emerges as a fragrance arises from a rose, to perfume the air around it.

In the First Object, the recognition of kinship (brotherhood) is not just an idea but a fundamental aspect of all existence. Kinship is supported and confirmed by examining various religious traditions. The Second Object, emphasising study and the gained knowledge, relates to a vital part of our journey towards wisdom. However, merely collecting facts about religion, philosophy and science will not create wisdom nor uncover the true nature of kinship. Nonetheless, such study is important. Without it, the truth of kinship would lack a firm connection to humanity's cultural experience. The Three Objects can be seen as deeply interconnected. It might be unwise to treat them as just three separate statements. Instead, they form a powerful light guiding us along the path from knowledge to wisdom and pointing towards the spiritual regeneration of humanity. There are latent in every individual powers of comprehension which give rise to knowledge of universals, of first principles, of primary truths. These are the powers hinted at in our Third Object, which should move us onto the journey from knowledge to wisdom.

Joining the Theosophical Society, after we begin to understand the wisdom tradition, often leads to a form of rebellion against established authority, whether religious or scientific. We insist on the right to say "no" to conventional ways of thinking. We reject the authoritarian dogmatism in which we may have been brought up. Instead, we embrace the Theosophical philosophy to free ourselves from past conditioning, as our studies open new perspectives that promise true freedom of thought.

Still, we may fail to see that our new studies can be a subtle trap. We might find ourselves free from one set of ideas only to be enslaved by another. We may swap external authority for another external authority. Instead of quoting scripture or the latest scientific discovery to support our arguments, we quote H. P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater, the Mahatma, *The Secret Doctrine*, and a host of other authorities. If we get stuck at this point in our studies and believe we are free when we have merely exchanged one authority for another, we will soon find ourselves halted on our journey and no closer to wisdom than before encountering Theosophy. We must be willing to move forward and discover that the only true authority is our own inner knowing. This authority can be best described as the ability to be fully present where we are.

We can view it this way. Usually, when someone asks us a question or presents a problem seeking our opinion, we become distracted not by the person in front of us but by many other concerns. We are not truly present in the moment, because our mind may be prematurely thinking about how to dismiss this person or move them out of the way so we can carry on with whatever we were doing. Or we might be searching in our mind for a suitable quote from our studies to respond – "HPB said...." or "Annie Besant said...." or "The Mahatma says...." or whatever else we've stored away in our mental archives. The truth is, we haven't truly given anything, because we haven't truly given ourselves. Only when we are genuinely present with the person before us, fully where we are, can we give ourselves – our own understanding – and it's this kind of giving that is the only genuine response to any question asked of us. Authentic authority belongs to the individual who has journeyed from acquiring knowledge through study to gaining the deeper insights that collectively embody wisdom.

H. P. Blavatsky, in the first issue of *The Theosophist*, wrote an article titled *What is Theosophy?* She stated: "Theosophy develops in man [and woman] a direct beholding." She continues suggesting

Truth is not external … but is a quality of mindfulness present when the mind is free…

Theosophy is no longer simply a set of beliefs…

that "under the influence and knowledge" of the Theosophical philosophy "man thinks divine thoughts" and "views all things as they really are." HPB implies there is a way of viewing everything that is essentially a Theosophical outlook, and that this manner of observing life follows the development of a mental state where consciousness is free – free from attachment to anything, even free from the notions and ideas that may have sparked the process of the mind's liberation. In the article, HPB also summarises the teaching of Plotinus, pupil of the "God-taught" Ammonius, who related that "The secret gnosis or knowledge of Theosophy has three degrees – opinion, science and *illumination*." These are the three stages on the path from knowledge to wisdom. The individual who has this internal authority, this illumination about him as an aura or authentic presence, looks at all things in a new way, a way that may be called, as HPB defines it, "direct beholding."

How can we attain that "direct beholding", a way of perceiving the world? The key must lie in the quality of the mind that is doing the perceiving. The mind has the remarkable ability to attach itself to whatever it observes and, as a result, transform into the likeness of the perceived object. The first task in facing this challenge, if we are to develop that "direct beholding", which is the essence of wisdom, is to free the mind from its tendency to adhere to things. We must, if possible, remove the stickiness – or at least the tendency towards stickiness – so that the mind can move freely, without prejudice or attachments, perceiving things as they truly are, without any cloud of like or dislike obscuring the object. Then, truth arises as a natural state within consciousness. We no longer look outward and say, "That is true," or "This is true," as if truth were in an object, an idea, or an experience. Truth is not external, residing in things, but is a quality of mindfulness present when the mind is free. It is in this state that "direct beholding" becomes possible.

To one who observes the world in this manner, with a "direct beholding", all things are perceived as divine in essence, and only the One Reality is perceived. To see That; to awaken the divine within every human heart; to perceive not the shimmering colours of psychic auras, but the pure white light of Spirit. The message of the One Life expressed boldly through all manifestation – this is the core of that "direct beholding" which Theosophy can inspire in the student. HPB reminds every aspiring Theosophist: "Let him [or her] study the philosophy and the 'Science of the Soul', and he [and she] can become one of the modest benefactors of humanity, without any 'superhuman' powers." This is the path to wisdom, the way of "direct beholding", which leads from knowledge and awakens in the student the realisation that, to continue with HPB's words, "true Occultism or Theosophy … is ALTRUISM", and it throws they who practise it out of calculation of the ranks of the living altogether. "Not for himself [or herself], but for the world, he [or she] lives", as soon as they have pledged themselves to the work.

The third aspect of the Theosophical system of Ammonius Saccas, *[illumination]*, is called "Theurgy," "divine work," or "producing a work of gods." As HPB states in *The Key to Theosophy*, this is the mystic belief "that by making oneself as pure as the incorporeal beings, i.e., by returning to one's pristine purity of nature, man could move the gods to impart to him Divine mysteries." If we are able to recover the pristine purity of our original nature, it is the quality of consciousness in which there is that direct beholding that is of the nature of wisdom. The human being has been called the transformer of energies, and it is their function and responsibility to engage in the great alchemical work by which the transformation of the material into the spiritual is effected.

The would-be Theosophist must be a modern alchemist, transforming first lead of the lower nature into pure gold of essential being and then transforming the base metal of the world's sorrows into the golden elixir of universal kinship. This is a task of centuries of growth, where our whole nature must be used wisely: every faculty, every power, every aspect of our humanness committed irrevocably and absolutely.

To progress towards an enlightened kinship [brotherhood] must be fostered on all levels and the grand strategy of Theosophical endeavour requires us to continually expand our understanding and deepen our compassion. From the experience of unity with our own nature, we recognise our close kinship with all living beings. Our circle of compassion constantly broadens its reach.

This is the royal road to wisdom; its achievement is not made by changing many conditions, external factors, or reforming the world, but by changing only one condition. The mental vision that has been focused outward must now be turned inward. We must reconnect with the living universe as a whole. We need to start seeing things as they truly are, not as we assume them to be. We must understand the nature of our own soul and, through its journey in both the inner and outer worlds, encounter the reality of its source. Students of the Ageless Wisdom must be taught by the Immortal self, the God within. In the familiar words of Robert Browning's *Paracelsus*:

> Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
> There is an inmost centre in us all,
> Where truth aboded in fullness ...
> ... and to know
> Rather consists in opening out the way
> Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
> Than in effecting an entry for a light
> Supposed to be without.

This is no different from a remark of the Mahatma KH to Mr Sinnet who, impatient for the final secrets of the Occult philosophy, was reminded that "The illumination must come from within." For the true "*theodidaktos*", Theosophy is no longer simply a set of beliefs, a knowledge lofty of the nature of the human entity and the universe. It is an experience, the supreme experience of wisdom, essentially incommunicable and yet forever communicated by the authentic presence of the one who had been possessed by the experience and been transformed thereby. The experience that is Theosophy comes to possess us, shaking us to our very roots, stirring us, moving us, at times making us very uncomfortable, but ultimately transforming us so that we may, in turn, transform the world. Consider these words spoken to the neophyte in *The Idyll of the White Lotus*, by Mabel Collins:

> Life has in it more than the imagination of man can conceive. Seize boldly upon its mystery, and demand, in the obscure places of your own soul, light with which to illumine those dim recesses of individuality to which you have been blinded through a thousand existences.

Travelling onward, one with the Path itself, we hear the external paean as in *The Voice of the Silence*: "Behold! Thou hast become the Light, Thou hast become the Sound, Thou art thy Master and thy God."

John Vorstermans has held many offices within the Theosophical Society including: National President, National Speaker, Governance Board member and Indo-Pacific Federation President. John is an Ayurvedic Practitioner with a passion for herbal medicine as a way to stay in balance. He is also an Internet Consultant and Founder of Actrix Networks and Fellow of InternetNZ. John has a deep interest in the ageless wisdom tradition with a focus on transformative processes that help people understand themselves and create change in their lives.

Ravi Ravindra shares some of his experience and learning.

Daily Life as Spiritual Practice

My view of spiritual practice in daily life has been well tested during the last three days. Three days ago I arrived in Delhi, but my baggage has still not arrived. So, this is a good occasion to practise my own beliefs. It is very important to think about spiritual things when one is in this kind of everyday situation.

One always takes oneself everywhere.

It is always the profound truths that are really the lifeline to sanity; otherwise the triviality of ordinary daily life can submerge one completely. In fact, our soul is almost starved if we do not come back to those truths. If I have not thought about or read about a great idea for about 24 hours, I begin to feel as if I have been bereft of something, literally as if I am hungry. No doubt, each one of us has a certain frequency with which we need to feed the spirit.

During the past three days I have had a lot of occasions to ask Krishna what would he actually do in the situation I am now in. It is easy for him to say big things and it is necessary for us to hear big things, but what would he actually do? Let me begin with a remark of his from the third chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* (3.30):

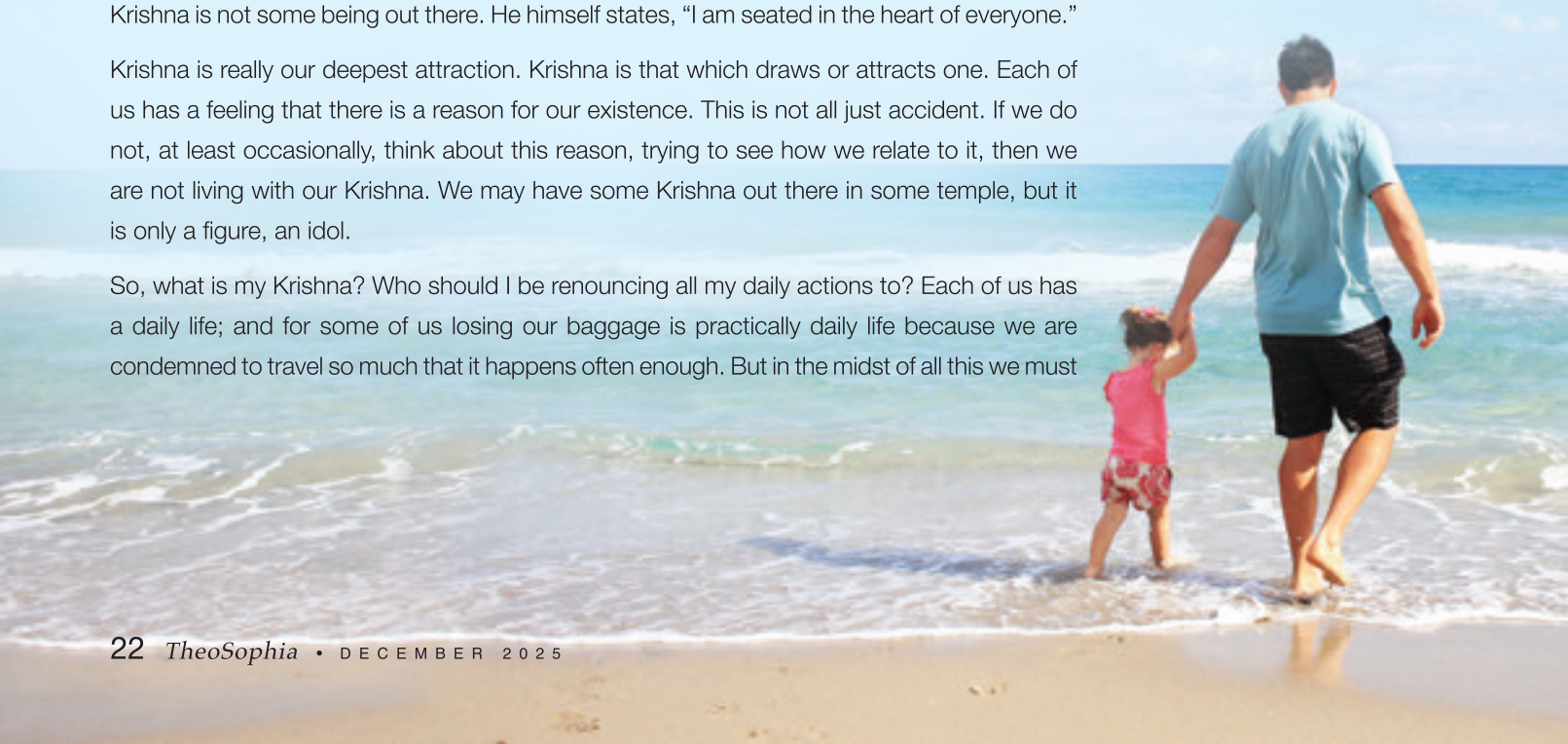
> Renouncing all actions to me, and being mindful of your deepest self, without expectation, without egotism, struggle without agitation.

Now, how do you struggle with the bureaucracy of Air Canada 1200 miles away without agitation, I would like to ask Krishna. Krishna's ideas are profound, but it is necessary to put them into practice. And if we do not appreciate that they are not easy to put into practice, then we will not be practical about them. We can quote the ideas, but how do we live them?

First of all, we each have our own Krishna. It would be a shame if we thought of Krishna as some kind of sectarian God, whom we need to obey. Sometimes devotees have this tendency and they make him one God among other Gods. But anybody who has read the *Bhagavad Gita* with care and not excessive reverence but a joyous wrestling with Krishna, knows that Krishna is not some being out there. He himself states, "I am seated in the heart of everyone."

Krishna is really our deepest attraction. Krishna is that which draws or attracts one. Each of us has a feeling that there is a reason for our existence. This is not all just accident. If we do not, at least occasionally, think about this reason, trying to see how we relate to it, then we are not living with our Krishna. We may have some Krishna out there in some temple, but it is only a figure, an idol.

So, what is my Krishna? Who should I be renouncing all my daily actions to? Each of us has a daily life; and for some of us losing our baggage is practically daily life because we are condemned to travel so much that it happens often enough. But in the midst of all this we must



occasionally consider who is the Krishna to whom all of our actions are to be dedicated or renounced. In answering that question, there is much help in the next phrase: "being mindful of your deepest self." Being mindful of our deepest self is a way to attend to the purpose of our Krishna.

What is one's deepest self? This question is also not so easy. It is easy to see what is one's worldly, superficial self. Almost constantly one is fantasising about what took place in the past, or what should have taken place, or what will take place in the future.

Such fantasy is really much of one's ordinary life. And this is so even in the monasteries. Those who have a hankering to become an ascetic and escape from the world should spend a week or two in a monastery, any monastery – Buddhist, Christian, or Hindu. Hindu ones are the easiest, but you can take any monastery, even pre-Counter-Reformation monasteries in Europe.

The daily life in monasteries is much the same as that outside them. And so it was even in the presence of Jesus Christ himself. We are told in the gospels that the disciples worried whether they were going to sit on his right-hand side or his left-hand side when they got to heaven. This is the kind of concern that occupies our daily life: competitiveness and concern about what I have gained or what I have lost. Am I looking good today? Am I being approved of? That is the concern of our daily life, and this daily life goes with us wherever we are. My daughter told me of a proverb from the west African Republic of Mali: "Wherever I go, there I am." One always takes oneself everywhere.

So, in the midst of these daily activities, periodically one needs to think of Krishna, renouncing these activities to him. Otherwise, essentially what one is doing is trying to arrange one's life so that one always comes out on top. For example, speaking in the first person, I presume that the galaxies will so turn that sooner or later Ravindra is on top, a winner, a handsome fellow who everybody admires. Therefore, I need to renounce all this, at least occasionally, to Krishna, which requires first of all being aware of one's inner landscape.

What way is my life actually lived? It almost does not matter what religious beliefs one has or to what dogma one subscribes. If you look at a person's checkbook and datebook, you know what their religion really is. Everything else is just theory. In the *Bhagavad Gita,* Krishna is asked: "How does a person of steady wisdom sit, how does he stand?" Our ordinary actions in daily life are really the heart of the matter. And it would be a mistake to imagine that daily life is a means to something extraordinary. Daily life is a practice. Daily life is also the goal of all spiritual life, rather than living in some cave in the Himalayas. If a person cannot actually practise this steady wisdom in the market place; when one's baggage is lost and no one knows where it is, one cannot practise it at all. It is not easy to do so, but there is no other practise.

Krishna's injunction is that we should "struggle without agitation." Elsewhere in the *Mahabharata*, Krishna says there is no real choice between struggle and the absence of struggle. He says the choice is really only between one and another kind of struggle or struggle at other levels. This is much like St. Paul's remark in one of his letters, that we have our struggles not only

To know yourself is primarily to understand how one's energies, including one's time and resources, are being spent.

with human beings, but with principalities, with powers, with potentates, and so forth.

There are different degrees and kinds of struggle, whether it is the struggle to retrieve one's baggage from Air Canada or the struggle that takes place in one's mind, especially when there are mosquitoes or when one is hungry or thirsty. Each one of us is so occupied with little flea bites that we forget the very *raison d'être* for which we are here. Even the great Buddha, after so many incarnations that he was just about to become the Buddha, had enormous struggles. To be sure, the Buddha had to struggle with big devils, whereas in our lives there are only mosquitoes, because we have only little devils who worry about us. Similarly, Jesus Christ had his struggles with the big Devil: temptations in the wilderness. The opposing forces are just about equally matched to the quality and strength of our effort. However, there are also forces that help us.

Much of our life is essentially a play of forces within our psyche, and these forces are both upward and downward. Of course, we do not always think of daily life negatively, because when one is in love, there seems to be nothing wrong with daily life, which is perfectly fine. Negativity is therefore an indication of what is wrong with our usual daily life. It is a lack of passion, lack of intensity, lack of engagement, and therefore a consequent dullness that we associate with a humdrum life. If one eats, sleeps and procreates, then there is a certain kind of dullness to life. And this is what one wishes to escape from.

There is also a life of freedom, which is not occupied with reward or punishment and in which I do not do something just because it advances me in some way. Instead, one does something for the sheer joy of it. All the great scientists, philosophers, writers, poets and artists, in their best moments, do their work because they find it ecstatically beautiful. It is almost as if their life is not complete without doing these things.

It is only then that one can be said to be living a spiritual life. A spiritual life is anything that assists us in understanding our own Krishna. A spiritual life is one in which we intuit, even dimly, that there is a reason for our existence and that it is not merely accidental and in which this intuition is given more and more concrete form in our lives.

However, spiritual life also has a certain verticality to it. It is not merely changing impressions or changing countries, it is not even simply a change of scale, although that also helps very much. For example, just to remind ourselves of ordinary facts, every year more than 120 million human beings die. I am not thinking of any great wars or pestilences or famines, nothing dramatic. In this quite humdrum daily life, people just like you and me, with their children and grandchildren, their hopes and fears and ambitions, 120 million of us die. Even during the next hour or so, several thousand people will die. To be sure, more than the same number will also be born, because the population is increasing. This is a matter of a scale, not a change of level.

The vastness of the universe gives us no reason to be carried away with our own self-importance. But on the other hand, we see that everyone is dedicated to the idea that "I am the centre of the universe, everything turns around me!" Part of the meaning of a sacred or

All philosophy is dangerous without some practice to go with it.

spiritual life is a displacement of this idea. This is not so easy, because when I realise I am not the centre of the universe, I am immediately anxious: "What meaning does my life have?" Or if I think I am the centre of the universe, then I am also very anxious. Anxiety is really a law of each human being's existence, at least at our level. If Descartes was looking for a truth that is more universal than "I think, therefore I am," he should have said, "I worry, therefore I am." It is more or less everybody's psychological situation all the time.

Nevertheless, I have a place, I have a purpose for my existence, and I must fulfil my responsibility. To know yourself is primarily to understand how one's energies, including one's time and resources, are being spent. Meanwhile, so Krishna claims, he is seated in the heart of everyone. Even in the hearts of the employees of Air Canada, who cannot keep the baggage straight; even they, deep down, are representing Krishna. In the midst of all the superficiality of life and its little flea bites, deep down there is a reason for my existence. And Krishna sits there, somewhere, reminding me of this.

We all have a very deep-seated contradiction in the very centre of our hearts. On the one hand, we are reaching for the Light, we wish to be bathed in Truth. But on the other hand, we say, "Well, truth ... shoot, tomorrow. Today maybe I'll watch a football game or something." There is nothing wrong with football, but much of our life is dedicated in quite a mechanical way to the status quo.

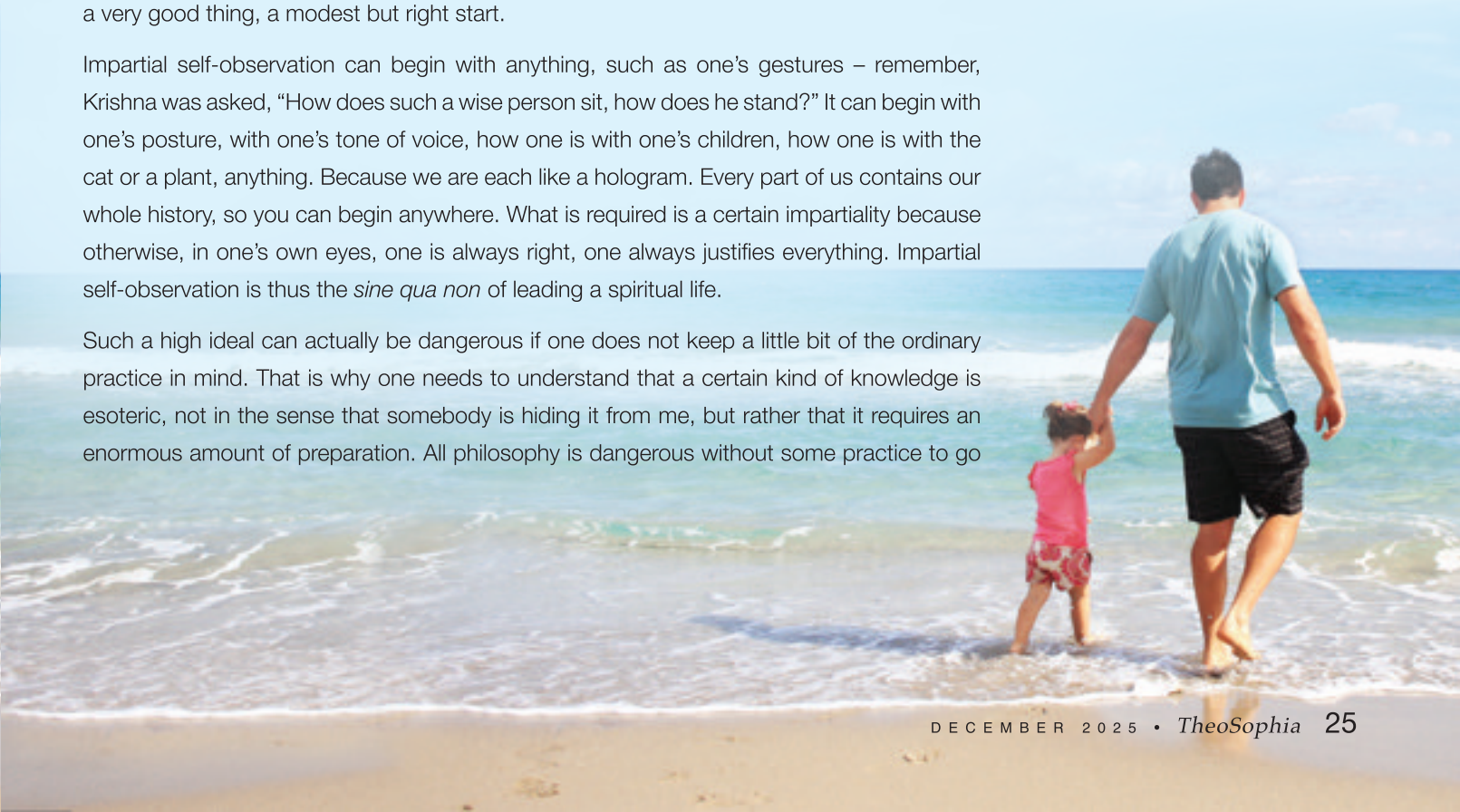
We talk about the search for truth, and it is practically a cliche to say that we need to undergo a deep-rooted transformation – especially in California, where 50 percent of the lectures and workshops seem to have the word 'transformation' in the title. Everybody wants it, but we want to be transformed without the bother of being changed because we have a very deep-seated commitment to the status quo. This is the contradiction in us.

The search for the sacred, or making one's ordinary daily life into a spiritual practice, does not require anything very fancy. It does not require any particular posture, or standing on one's head, or eating cream cheese, or whatever else. It really requires an impartial self-observation from moment to moment. And if you can practise that for even a few minutes a day, that is a very good thing, a modest but right start.

Impartial self-observation can begin with anything, such as one's gestures – remember, Krishna was asked, "How does such a wise person sit, how does he stand?" It can begin with one's posture, with one's tone of voice, how one is with one's children, how one is with the cat or a plant, anything. Because we are each like a hologram. Every part of us contains our whole history, so you can begin anywhere. What is required is a certain impartiality because otherwise, in one's own eyes, one is always right, one always justifies everything. Impartial self-observation is thus the *sine qua non* of leading a spiritual life.

Such a high ideal can actually be dangerous if one does not keep a little bit of the ordinary practice in mind. That is why one needs to understand that a certain kind of knowledge is esoteric, not in the sense that somebody is hiding it from me, but rather that it requires an enormous amount of preparation. All philosophy is dangerous without some practice to go

To search for the meaning of our existence is part of our purpose for being…



with it. It is good to have ideals, but keep in mind that action is only small, local, day-to-day, here-and-now.

Existentialists and scientists are not inclined to think that there is a predetermined purpose for our lives that we should fulfil. They are more inclined to think that we create our own purposes. Traditional religious belief is that we have a soul which needs discovering or saving. The existentialist mode of thinking is that we do not necessarily already have a soul, but that we can make one. The English word 'realise' is very happy from that point of view, because it contains both of those meanings. To realise ourselves as a spirit, whether we are creating it or discovering it, is the very activity that gives meaning to our existence and sense to our existence.

When we see a great deal of violence, we can easily lose heart. However, Christian Church fathers, whenever they talked about the seven deadly sins, included acedia, usually translated as 'sloth', but meaning 'losing heart'. To lose heart is to say that there is no order in the universe, no intelligent force. If you are religiously inclined, it is a way of saying that God does not exist. If one is not religiously inclined, it is a way of saying there is no order in the universe. To search for the meaning of our existence is part of our purpose for being and to lose that 'hope', to use the Christian expression, is really a sin against the Holy Spirit because it is denying something very deep, not only in human beings, but in the whole of the cosmos.

The heart of the *Bhagavad Gita*'s teaching is *nishkama karma*, which means literally 'desireless action', that is, acting without egotism, without selfish desire (or *kama*). Our ordinary life – I hope that Krishna will forgive me for saying this – is really *nishkarma kama* – 'actionless desiring'. So, what I am saying about daily life as spiritual practice is that it is to move from *nishkarma kama* to *nishkama karma* – from desiring without acting to acting without desiring.

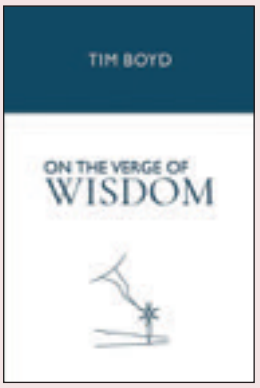
Based on a convention talk delivered at Adyar, December 1997, and printed in another form in the *Theosophist*, May 1998.

Ravi Ravindra was Professor of Physics and Chair of the Department of Religion at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada. His most recent books are *Yoga and the Teaching of Krishna* (Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, 1998) and *Christ the Yogi: A Hindu Reflection on the Gospel of John* (Inner Traditions, 1998).

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience;
we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

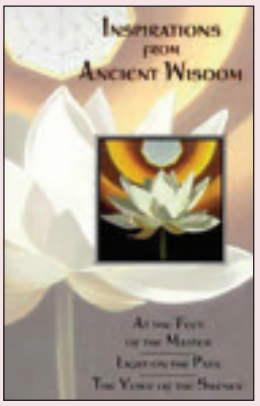
Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Recommended Reading



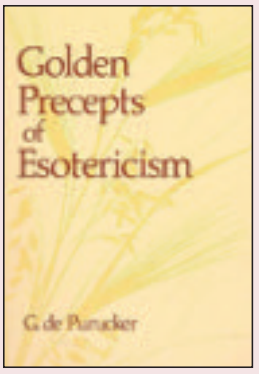
ON THE VERGE OF WISDOM by Tim Boyd

It's a real pleasure to present to you this little book by our own International President Tim Boyd. Tim discusses what it means to live a spiritual life and how we can move from 'seeking' to 'knowing', and from 'knowing' to 'being'. In his practical and no-nonsense way, Tim lays out the spiritual path with clarity and depth, rooted in Theosophical Ageless Wisdom. He encourages us to go beyond the study and contemplation of Theosophy, to the direct experience and application of its concepts. We know Tim as a warm, kind-hearted leader who brings a humanitarian approach to the spiritual path. You will enjoy reading his book.



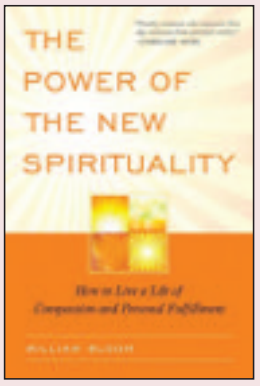
INSPIRATIONS FROM ANCIENT WISDOM

This is a compilation of three Theosophical Classics: *At the Feet of the Master* by Krishnamurti, writing under the pen-name Alcyone, *Light on the Path* by Mabel Collins, and *The Voice of the Silence* by our founder H. P. Blavatsky. While most of us are likely to be familiar with these texts, reading them together can solidify the spiritual teachings contained in these gems. *At the Feet of the Master* sets down simple precepts for right living in the Theosophical tradition. *Light on the Path* is a set of 42 aphorisms for right living. *The Voice of the Silence*, the final of H. P. Blavatsky's works and according to Blavatsky, a translation of fragments from a sacred book she encountered during her studies in the East, called *The Book of the Golden Precepts*, explores the preparation required for discipleship. Collected for the first time in a single volume, these three contemporary spiritual classics can set anyone on the path to spiritual wisdom.



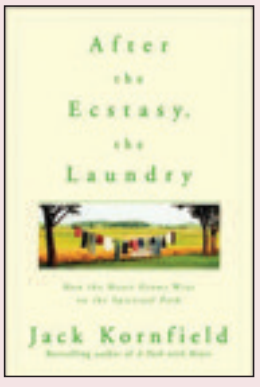
GOLDEN PRECEPTS: A GUIDE FOR ENLIGHTENED LIVING by G. de Purucker

Also published with the title *The Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, this little book covers a variety of subjects and is a comprehensive guide to the principles and practices of living a spiritual life. It delves into the hidden teachings of ancient wisdom traditions and explores the spiritual path towards enlightenment, explaining the fundamental concepts of esotericism, such as karma, reincarnation and the nature of the soul. It provides practical advice on how to apply these principles in daily life. The book also includes insights on topics such as meditation, the role of the teacher, and the importance of service. Excerpts from de Purucker's lectures contribute to a valuable guide for all who seek to deepen their understanding of the spiritual path and how to live a spiritual life.



THE POWER OF THE NEW SPIRITUALITY by William Bloom

William Bloom is founder and co-director of the Spiritual Companions Project in the UK, which provides pastoral care and interfaith spirituality training. In this book, he identifies the shared essence that lies at the core of all spiritual traditions and explains how everyone – regardless of background, beliefs, or personality type – can immediately put them into practice. William Bloom outlines how to develop key aspects of spirituality in a modern-day context, with day-to-day challenges, in order to gain greater meaning in our lives. This is a modern, readable book suitable for experienced and beginning Theosophists. A good book to share with friends and relatives.



AFTER THE ECSTASY, THE LAUNDRY by Jack Kornfield

Jack Kornfield, well-known meditation master in the Vipassana tradition, authored the very popular *A Path with Heart*. In this book, he draws on his experiences and insights from Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Sufi traditions. Jack Kornfield's writing is deeply centred in the practice of compassion, which makes the book a particularly heart-warming read. Jack delves into the question of enlightenment and, as the title implies, what happens after Satori. The book is filled with moving personal stories and perspectives as well as traditional tales which give us a heart-centred guide for navigating the spiritual path in the real world of family relationships, work, pain, sickness, loss and death. This book emanates joy and heart throughout.

To borrow any of these books, please email library@theosophy.nz or call/visit the library from 10am-3pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The online catalogue can be accessed from the library page on the TSNZ website www.theosophy.nz

'A Union of those who Love, in the service of all that suffers'

Carol Collier, TOS New Zealand's National Director has attended a heart-warming international conference.

International Conference

The fifth International TOS Conference was held in Vancouver, Canada in late July. The three-day conference followed on from the International World Congress, which most delegates had attended.

It is a joy for me to tell you what a wonderful success this event was, with 121 delegates from many countries. The event's main focus was to bring together TOS workers to share updates on their country and region. Both Carol Collier and Renée Sell provided an update from New Zealand covering the past few years. We met, for the first time, our contact in Pakistan, Mushtaq Jindani who was truly delightful. Mushtaq told us of the positive impact our sponsorships have made on the lives of many children that TOS NZ helps. We had liaised with Mushtaq for years and it was very special to sit down and discuss details of the child sponsorship programme that we have supported for such a long time.

We heard and saw reports from eleven countries. It was very heart-warming to see the work accomplished and the event was enhanced by hearing from various TOS workers speaking in their own languages, with translation software available by mobile phone live for us. This meant that more people could be involved and it opened up the sharing straight away for many countries.

The presentations themselves were very moving and you could feel the heart response of all those present. One presentation stood out in particular – the online update from Svitlana Gavrylenko from Ukraine. To see such workers as Svitlana show up in the most difficult of circumstances is a testament to the human spirit and love of humanity. Many countries have provided support to the TOS in Ukraine and neighbouring Hungary. These sessions were very special.

It was also very special to meet TOS workers from so many countries and to see the varying ways in which people serve and work with others, seeing so much 'love in action'. We made new friendships, caught up with old friends and spent time among a very caring group of people. Some New Zealand members stayed on for the TOS event and I can most definitely say how much everyone was moved, seeing the joy present, as we learned of worthwhile projects generated by many countries, the lives they save, and the lives they transform and help.

Nancy Secrest, International Secretary, International TOS

President TS and TOS International, Tim Boyd

Richard and Renée Sell, Tim Boyd and Carol Collier

Opening morning of the TOS Conference with International President Tim Boyd and his wife Lily Boyd, with members from New Zealand

TOS participants showing their appreciation

John Vorstermans

Renée Sell and Betty Bland from the USA

Carol Collier, Mushtaq Jindani (Pakistan), Renée and Richard Sell

Carol Collier and Renée Sell giving the TOS New Zealand presentation

Catherine Austin (Orewa) sharing from the floor

Louise Black (Wellington) sharing from the floor

TOS in NZ

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Vegetarians Today

From the New Zealand Vegetarian Society, **Margaret Johns** has suggestions for a harmonious holiday season and beyond.

The true meaning of the Christian festival of Christmas is fast becoming lost in a plethora of commercialism. Also, the world is suffering from an overdose of aggressive and violent behaviour on personal, national and international levels. While researching an article for the *Vegetarian Living NZ* magazine, I discovered a wealth of information on dietary habits and their effects on people's behaviour. Most of us are aware that what we eat affects the health of our bodies, but it also affects our mental and spiritual health and behaviour.

The website for the Youth Endowment Fund reported research undertaken as part of the YEF's commitment to finding what works to prevent children and young people from becoming violent. As part of this, the charity is exploring how health-based approaches – like improving diets and therapies – could support children who are most at risk. By reviewing studies from around the world, the YEF found that good nutrition programmes were linked to an estimated 38% reduction in aggression and a 52% reduction in anti-social behaviour in children.

What works for children can also work for adults. So, by changing what we eat to cause less harm to animals and the planet, we can also help ourselves and our neighbours to become more harmonious. Encourage those around us to celebrate Christmas or any other festival by inviting them to a vegetarian/vegan feast and provide deliciously tasty food for everyone to enjoy. Challenge others to come up with a suitable dish to contribute to the feast!

There are a huge number of vegetarian/vegan recipes on the internet and particularly on the NZ Vegetarian Society website (www.vegetarian.org.nz). I hope your Christmas is spiritually uplifting and your summer holiday enjoyable. Try this recipe from Rose Elliot's *The New Vegetarian Cookbook* for something different:

SAVOURY NUT ROAST

- 50g butter or margarine
- 2 large onions, peeled and finely chopped
- 100g cashew nuts, grated or 100g peanuts, grated
- 100g hazelnuts or almonds, grated
- 100g soft wholewheat breadcrumbs
- 1 Tbsp chopped mixed herbs
- 1-2 tsp savoury yeast
- Salt and freshly-ground black pepper
- Optional garnish: sprigs of parsley

Melt butter/margarine in large saucepan and fry onions gently for 10 minutes until tender. Take off the heat, then add the nuts, breadcrumbs, herbs, yeast and salt and pepper to taste. Mix together. Press into pre-prepared greased 20cm square tin or shallow casserole dish. Smooth the top. Bake for 35-40 minutes at 180°C (Gas Mark 4). When cooked, ease the nut roast out of the container and cut into wedges. Serve with gravy and garnish with parsley.

More recipes, information and the NZVS revised and updated *Home Tried Favourites* recipe book, are now available from www.vegetarian.org.nz

Vasanta House Library

Books can be ordered from the lending library at TSNZ national office by contacting the librarian by email: library@theosophy.nz or telephone (09) 523 1797. The library is open on Wednesdays or by appointment on a Thursday.

Cost to members is the return postage of books. Non-members may join the library for a joining fee of $50.

Vasanta House Accommodation

Short stay accommodation is available at TSNZ National Section, Vasanta House in Epsom, Auckland. Rates vary for members and non-members. The house requirements are vegetarian, smoke-free and alcohol-free. At certain times of the year Vasanta House is closed for events, Board and Management meetings etc. For bookings and more information please email the office at: office@theosophy.org.nz

I will rejoice that from all tormenting we can retreat always upon the Invisible Heart, upon the Celestial Love; and that not be soothed merely, but be replenished, not to be compensated, but to receive power to make all things new.

Attributed to Ralf Waldo Emerson 1803-1882

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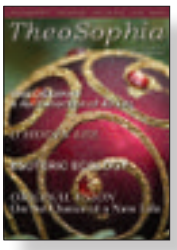

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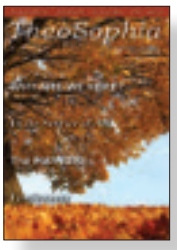

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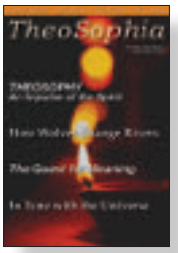

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Theosophy

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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Proofreader..... Vicki Jerome

Graphic Design ..... Kelly Bassett
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Printed by H&A Design & Print, Whanganui
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DESIDERATA

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here.

And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labours and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

Max Ehrmann, 1927, USA. Latin title means "things desired".

Om

Lead me from the unreal to the real,

Lead me from darkness to light,

Lead me from death to immortality.

May peace be, may peace be, may peace be.

A Shanti mantra from the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, also known as the *Pavamana Mantra* (pavamāna meaning ‘being purified, strained’). This ancient Indian mantra is introduced in the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* (1.3.28.)

December 2025