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Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasise the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none of which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H.P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties.

The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (1924)

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 (1949)

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November 2011 volume 75 number 4

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The Theosophical Society welcomes students or seekers, belonging to any religion or to none, who are in sympathy with its Objects. The motto of the Society is *There is no Religion higher than Truth*. The word *Religion* in this statement is a translation of the Sanskrit *dharma*, which among other things means practice; way; virtue; teaching; law; inherent nature; religion; and that which is steadfast or firm. The word *Truth* in the motto is a translation of the Sanskrit *satya*, meaning among other things, true, real and actual. It derives from the root *sat*, sometimes translated as boundless unconditioned existence.

Theosophy is not defined in the Constitution of the Theosophical Society, or in any official document. It literally means divine wisdom, *theosophia*, but members of the Society are left to discover what it is for themselves, taking as guides whatever religions or philosophies they wish.

The Three Objects of The Theosophical Society

*To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without
distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.*

*To encourage the study of Comparative Religion,
Philosophy and Science.*

*To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the
powers latent in the human being.*

From the National President ...



Dara Tatray



The more things change the more they stay the same, so the very apt saying goes.

According to Arthur Waley, at the time that the *Tao Te Ching* was written China consisted of a large number of warring kingdoms, a state of affairs that reached back into the dim recesses of history. Only in the pre-historic mythic period is there any suggestion of peace. Permanent violence and conflict was the order of the day practically since time began. Perhaps to compensate, or by way of wishful thinking, there existed a widespread belief that in the mythic past things were different. It was supposed that in ancient times the Ancestors exercised undisputed sway over everything under heaven, employing the universal, all-embracing power—*tê*—a kind of moral and spiritual force or energy, sometimes translated as virtue, but also meaning stored creative potential. In possession of this power, the Ancestors maintained harmony and order. Every school of thought, including the Confucians, the Mohists and the Taoists, argued that they had rediscovered the Tao or the way by which the Ancestors attained that power and ruled the world. China was awash in philosophers and schools of thought each claiming to possess the secret art of ruling whereby the Ancestors controlled everything under heaven. Then, around the middle of the third century a suspicion arose among the Realists in China that it was not possible to return to past times, during which the Ancients effortlessly held everything together (Waley, *The Way and Its Power* p.69-70).

Some members of the TS look back to a time when the Theosophical Society was peopled by

what now seem like gods and giants, sometimes imitating the language and espousing the concerns of that time. We tend to base ourselves on the literature of the past and the work of others; and much of that literature purports to hold a key to the power by which things and lives and minds are ultimately ruled. Many members seem to feel that back in the day, things were different, and if only we did as the Founders did, or as previous leading figures did, the Theosophical Society would ride high again. But as the Chinese Realists once asked: can we recreate the past? Or, does each individual and each generation have to plumb the depths of life and mind in order to reach the source of power, virtue, and insight anew? We live in a time in which innumerable minor gurus, some with major egos, claim to possess the secret art of happiness, Enlightenment and material prosperity. Some peddle the wares of others at inflated prices (an insidious form of misappropriation); others may truly have experienced something numinous and profound, once upon a time; but now, who knows? One can fall off the perch at any stage, right to the very end.

T.S. Eliot once said: 'Any poet, if he is to survive beyond his twenty-fifth year, must alter; he must seek new literary influences; he will have different emotions to express'. The Theosophical Society is one hundred and thirty-six years of age on November 17. If it is to survive then surely it must alter; it must seek new literary influences; it must speak to different emotions and address the world anew. Should it not do that, it will remain stranded on the sandbank while life flows right by.

Hypatia of Alexandria

Martyr of Science

(Circa 370 - 415 CE)

Mike Vallis

Reserve your right to think, for even to think wrongly is better than not to think at all.

Reputed quote by Hypatia.



Preamble

In the spring of 334 BCE Alexander the Macedonian crossed from Europe into Asia at the Hellespont. Immediately at the Granicus river, he won his first and decisive battle against the Persians whose empire he intended to conquer. He then fought his way to Egypt which welcomed him as a liberator. There at the western coastal corner of the Nile delta he founded Alexandria, soon to become a centre of Greek civilization that rivalled and at times surpassed Athens in thought and innovation. With the death of Alexander in Babylon ten years later Egypt came under the control of one of Alexander's generals, Ptolemy, who became King/Pharaoh Ptolemy I Saviour, first in a long line of Ptolemaic successions.

Six and a half centuries later in 312 CE just before the battle at the Milvian Bridge near Rome, Emperor Constantine I (306-337 CE) had a night vision of the Christian Cross bearing the legend 'In this sign, conquer'. He had the sign painted on the shields of his soldiers and in the ensuing battle he vanquished his opponent Maxentius. Constantine then created a new capital of the Roman Empire at Byzantium on the Bosphorus not far from where Alexander had crossed over to Asia Minor. During the reign of Emperor Theodosius I (379-395 CE) the Trinitarian Christian Creed was declared the official religion of the empire, and ten years later paganism was declared illegal. No wonder then that both Constantine and Theodosius

are described as Great. By this time, however, the Roman Empire was in dire straits. Some historians signify the beginning of the end at 378 with the defeat by the Visigoths at the battle of Andrianople in the Balkans; others date it to 31 December 406 when a mixed horde of Germanic tribes crossed on ice over the frozen Rhine and poured into Gaul, Spain and North Africa. In any case the Western Roman Empire was at its end during Hypatia's lifetime (the Eastern Byzantine Empire was to last, at least nominally, for another one thousand years).

Alexandria

Alexander's vision for his empire was a fusion of the best traits of West (Greek) and East (Asia). This is attested by his actions during his short reign and by the assessment of his contemporary and later biographers. He encouraged his officers and men to marry Asiatic women and settle locally; he himself married in mass ceremonies at least three prominent women. With his death the intermingling of Greek and foreign cultures continued and as the trade routes by land and sea opened up, the flow of people and ideas increased in both directions East and West.

Alexandria was one of the melting-pot commercial cities that generated what is now known as the Hellenistic Era. But compared to other flourishing Eastern cities, Alexandria had one important advantage: the Museum and its

associated Library, which at its peak boasted half a million manuscripts. The Museum at Alexandria was a study and research centre not unlike our present day universities, and the Library engaged in the systematic collection and preservation of known and developing knowledge. From these institutions original thinkers emerged: Euclid and Archimedes the mathematicians, Plotinus and Porphyry the Neo-Platonic philosophers, Ptolemy and Eratosthenes the astronomers. The list is far too long to relate. Through this remarkable institution the city of Alexandria fostered new schools of thought, including Scepticism, Epicureanism and Stoicism—the latter especially exerting a lasting influence with the Romans. Mathematics and Astronomy also developed in new directions. At the same time there was an influx of Eastern mystical religions that penetrated all the way to Rome. To top it all off, the Ptolemies combined the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh worship with the Greek Olympian polytheism, and a multitude of new spiritual beliefs sprang up.

Hypatia

Onto this stage of scientific, philosophical and religious activity, Christianity entered as an offshoot of Judaism. Alexandria soon found itself embroiled in destructive conflict, first amongst the various Christian doctrines of the Arianists, Novatians, Nestorians and Monophysites; and then against all the other religions and/or philosophies. By the time of Hypatia in the latter part of the fourth century, there was uncontrolled open civil war among the followers of various religions. Hypatia eventually fell victim to the conflict between secular and ecclesiastical authorities.

Meanwhile the glories of the Museum and the Library were almost completely eroded away. Theon, the father of Hypatia, was the last recorded curator of the Museum. With the destruction of the Temple of Serapis in 391 CE, by imperial order, the last remnants of the

Library disintegrated. Theon had made it his life's purpose to maintain for posterity some of the great books of the Library. It is thanks to him that some of the work of Euclid the mathematician has survived, to form the basis of all mathematics right up to Einstein and beyond. Theon also wrote various commentaries on the Astronomy of Ptolemy Claudius (no connection to the ruling Ptolemies) and it is from his dedication to the third book of the *Almagest* that we learn that this was the work 'of my philosopher daughter Hypatia'. In this third book, Hypatia employed long division based on a mathematical table similar to a modern Excel file. It is a unique form of division for astronomical calculations that had not been seen previously. Its significance becomes even greater when one considers the clumsy numerical notation of numbers, based on the letters of the Greek alphabet combined with the sixty-digit methodology of the Sumerians. Indeed, in my opinion, Hypatia's scientific excellence has not been surpassed by any other female scientist right up to Mme Marie Curie, the atomic scientist and researcher of the 1920s.

All the contemporary sources refer to Hypatia as a philosopher in the classical meaning, that is, a speculative thinker of the arts and the sciences combined. John of Nikiu, Chief Abbot and Bishop of Upper Egypt, writing many years after Hypatia's murder says the following:

In those days there appeared in Alexandria a female philosopher, a pagan named Hypatia, and she was devoted at all times to magic, astrolabes and instruments of music, and she beguiled many people through her satanic wiles. And the governor of the city honoured her exceedingly; for she had beguiled him through her magic.¹

Bishop Nikiu once punished a monk so severely that he died ten days later. I chose this quotation as an indication of the prejudice, animosity and ignorance of the times. Yet Synesius of Cyrenaica, also a bishop, who knew Hypatia

personally since he was one of her admiring students, addresses her in one of his letters as ‘mother, sister, teacher and withal benefactress, and whatsoever is honoured in name and deed.’² Despite having converted to Christianity and been ordained as Bishop of Cyrenaica (present day Libya) Synesius remained a thoroughgoing Neoplatonist. It is not unlikely that Patriarch Anthemius patronised Synesius exactly for this reason: the contribution that could be made to the Nicene dogma by Aristotle’s logic of the unity of godhead and Plato’s spirituality of ideas. Through Synesius’ association with Hypatia we surmise that she also was a Neoplatonist. The *Suda Lexicon* notes that: ‘The lady made appearances around the centre of the city, expounding in public to those willing to listen on Plato or Aristotle or some other philosopher’. She also taught at her own house:

There was a great crush around the doors, a confusion of men and horses, of people coming and going, and others standing about ... for Hypatia the philosopher was now going to address them.³

It was also said of Hypatia that ‘she frequently had interviews with Orestis the Prefect’, and:

she not infrequently appeared in public in the presence of the magistrates. Neither did she feel abashed in coming to an assembly of men. For all men on account of her extraordinary dignity and virtue admired her the more.⁴

This last characteristic of Hypatia—of being publicly known as a Greek philosopher and her association with Orestis—was to become the pretext for her demise. Cyril succeeded his uncle Anthemius to the Patriarchal throne of Alexandria and without delay he suppressed the Novatians on account of differences in creed and took over their churches. Then he turned his attention to the Jews of Alexandria and managed by sheer force to expel them. All this he was able to do in defiance of and against

the objections of the civil authorities over which Orestis presided. At the same time the offensives against Pantheism and Polytheism—so-called paganism and idolatry—continued unabated. Cyril had in his possession three new powerful weapons: the Gospels, viewed as the single source of truth; the dogma derived from the Ecumenical Synods of Nicaea and Ephesus; and most important, the power of the monasteries. Cyril could call on the monks to enter the city *en masse* and interrogate anyone in the streets regarding their faith. If words and admonitions did not achieve adherence to Christianity, then sticks and stones would be utilised to the same end. Although Orestis was an openly declared Christian, even he just survived an attempt on his life by a throng of monks.

Orestis was weakened, the pagan aristocrats in disfavour: and when an easy target was needed to get at Orestis, Hypatia was singled out. Her death was particularly gruesome. Her carriage was stopped by a band of Nitrian monks; she was dragged into a church and there stripped naked and killed with roof tiles. Her body was dismembered and paraded limb by limb through the streets of Alexandria and burned outside the city walls. Then the culprits gathered around Cyril and proclaimed him a saint, ‘for he had destroyed the last remnants of idolatry in the city’.⁵

We cannot claim that Hypatia or Theon, her father, come even close to the scientific giants of Alexandria’s earlier heydays. Their contribution is a different one. During very hostile times when the main intellectual pursuits were the justification of the new religion and the practice of the new-found discipline of monasticism—both Theon and Hypatia made it their life’s mission to preserve the ancient knowledge for posterity. They did their best under opposing circumstances while they could see their world collapsing. Even though, with the exception of the third book of Theon’s commentary on the *Almagest*, no work of Hypatia has survived (a not unusual occurrence especially for a female

author) there are references to her work in various other sources.

The *Almagest* is the translation to Arabic of Ptolemy's *Mathematical Syntaxis*, which was an astronomical treatise on the movement of the celestial bodies. Its accuracy and detail are outstanding, all the more so given the rudimentary technology then available. Astronomy is as old as humankind and was of vital necessity to the agricultural societies of the Nile delta, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley Civilisation that depended on annual flooding. Well before Ptolemy, astronomers were able to construct calendars and predicted not only floods but also eclipses and other heavenly occurrences. The planets and constellations were assigned to gods, after which it was just a small step to conceiving of their influence on human affairs (Astrology). Hypatia was thoroughly acquainted with the mathematics of Astronomy and is credited with designing an astrolabe which Synesius constructed and gifted to one of his friends. An astrolabe is a mechanical device similar to a sextant that measures longitude and position on Earth based on the measurement of angle from a star or planet. Emperor Theodosius' edict prohibited oracles, divinations and worship of gods, astronomy also was banned. Such was the narrow-mindedness of the zealots that they could not distinguish astrology from astronomy. Then, by association, arithmetic, geometry and mathematics were also condemned either as meaningless or as evil: hence the accusation against Hypatia that she was a witch and practiced magic.

The *Suda Lexicon* refers to a treatise and commentary on the *Conics* of Apollonius of Perga (a third century BCE geometer) and on the *Arithmetica* of Diophantus of Alexandria (third century CE mathematician) written by Hypatia.⁶ Apollonius had expounded on the geometrical shapes that are derived when a two-dimensional plane intersects a three-dimensional cone. That is to say, parabolas, hyperbolas and ellipses of various proportions. These could be used to

calculate the rotation of the planets. Diophantus was the precursor of Algebraic mathematics. His work is partly preserved due to Hypatia's commentary. The works of both mathematicians went into total oblivion until the seventeenth century. So we see that Hypatia was at the forefront of mathematical knowledge and also commented on the works of others.

Synesius in his last letter to Hypatia, probably from his deathbed, writes, 'I am in such evil fortune that I need a hydroscope. See that one is cast in brass for me and put together.'⁷ Then he gives a description of the instrument, which is intended to measure the specific gravity of liquids. It has been presumed by some modern commentators, that Synesius might have died from a bladder or kidney infection. Once again we encounter Hypatia being not only a theoretical philosopher-scientist but directly involved in the development of scientific technology.

Postscript

Between the reigns of Constantine I and Theodosius I, Flavius Claudius Julian (360-363 CE) the last non-Christian emperor who was named 'the Apostate', tried in vain to turn the clock back to Greek classicism. In 361 he sent an envoy to the Oracle of Delphi and received the following reputed last oracle:

Tell the king, the edifice has fallen to the ground. Phoebus has no home, nor Pythia bay leaves. The talking spring is no more and the talking water has vanished.

Obviously the Christian clergy was in control. The god of the desert had exiled the sun god Apollo. With the subsequent abolition of Polytheism, Olympic Games, Philosophical and Mystery Schools and all practices not relating to Christian dogma, darkness descended over the West that was to last a thousand years and counting.

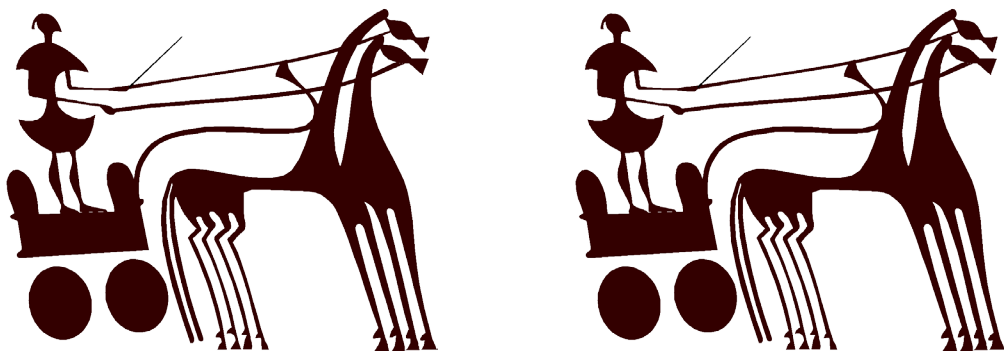
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Mike Vallis has been a member of Melbourne Lodge for almost twenty years. During his investigation of the connection between Theosophy and the Neoplatonists he came across Hypatia.



THE TROUBLE WITH THE WORLD IS THAT THE STUPID ARE COCKSURE AND THE INTELLIGENT ARE FULL OF DOUBT.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

Society for Psychical Research

News Release (Not for publication before 8 May 1986)

MADAME BLAVATSKY, CO-FOUNDER OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, WAS UNJUSTLY CONDEMNED, NEW STUDY CONCLUDES

The “exposure” of the Russian born occultist, Madame H.P. Blavatsky by the S.P.R. in 1885, is in serious doubt, with the publication in the S.P.R. Journal (Vol.53 April 1986) of a forceful critique of the 1885 report.

The case has been re-examined by Dr. Vernon Harrison, past president of the Royal Photographic Society and formerly Research Manager to Thomas De La Rue, who is an expert in forgery. The 1885 report was written mostly by Richard Hodgson, an Australian pioneer of both the British and American S.P.R.’S, who became widely known through the case.

Central to the case were two sets of disputed letters. One set, provided by two dismissed employees of The Theosophical Society at its headquarters in India, were apparently in the handwriting of Madame Blavatsky and implicated her in fraudulent psychic phenomena. The other set, were ostensibly written in support of The Theosophical Society by members of an oriental fraternity, popularly called Mahatmas. Dr. Hodgson accepted the genuineness of the first set. He argued that the Mahatma Letters were spurious productions by Madame Blavatsky and occasional confederates.

Dr. Harrison on the contrary, suggests that it is the incriminating letters that are forgeries, concocted by the ex-employees for revenge; while the bulk of the Mahatma Letters, now preserved in the British Library, are not in Madame Blavatsky’s handwriting, disguised or otherwise.

Dr Harrison concludes:

As detailed examination of this Report proceeds, one becomes more and more

aware that, whereas Hodgson was prepared to use any evidence, however trivial or questionable, to implicate H.P.B., he ignored all evidence that could be used in her favour. His report is riddled with slanted statements, conjecture advanced as fact or probable fact, uncorroborated testimony of unnamed witnesses, selection of evidence and downright falsity.

As an investigator, Hodgson is weighed in the balance and found wanting. His case against Madame H.P. Blavatsky is not proven.

Much of Dr. Harrison’s paper is an examination of the handwriting evidence presented in the 1885 report. He believes this was so weak, partisan and confused that it might just as easily show that Madame Blavatsky wrote “Huckleberry Finn” – or that President Eisenhower wrote the Mahatma Letters.

In an introductory note to the paper, the Editor of the S.P.R., Dr. John Beloff, recalls that other researchers have criticised the 1885 report, and that it had wrongly been taken as expressing an official view of the S.P.R., when in fact the S.P.R. had no opinions. Noting that Dr. Harrison is not a member of The Theosophical Society, but a long-standing member of the S.P.R., Dr. Beloff says:

Whether readers agree or disagree with his conclusions, we are pleased to offer him the hospitality of our columns and we hope that, hereafter, Theosophists, and, indeed, all who care for the reputation of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, will look upon us in a more kindly light.

Responding to the publication of Dr. Harrison's paper, Dr. Hugh Gray, General Secretary of The Theosophical Society in England, said:

We welcome the publication of Dr. Harrison's findings, which independently confirm what many Theosophists have pointed out in the past century. We hope the Theosophical message in general, and Madame Blavatsky's work in particular, can now be studied without the distraction of the Hodgson allegations.

Background Note

The Society for Psychical Research, as noted above, has no collective views. Thus it was not the S.P.R. which condemned Madame Blavatsky in 1885, but only an S.P.R. Committee, whose report was mostly written by Dr. Hodgson.

Similarly, Dr. Harrison's paper represents only his personal views.

Cordial relations have existed between psychical researchers and Theosophists in England for some time. In 1982, the S.P.R. chose as its centenary president, Professor Arthur Ellison of the City University, a distinguished engineer, psychical researcher and Theosophist.

Madame Blavatsky founded The Theosophical Society with others in New York in 1875, and it is an international body active in more than 60 countries with its headquarters in Adyar, Madras, India. The Society exists to promote a knowledge of Theosophy, a word of Greek origin meaning Divine Wisdom. Madame Blavatsky's main work was *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). She died in London in 1891 at the age of 59.

If anyone regards the above media release as just history, please think again. The matter is still current. Even well-meaning amateur researchers ignore Harrison's report, which exonerated HPB of charges of forgery, instead, making extensive reference to the Hodgson report (usually without reading it), thereby perpetuating a gross injustice. Vernon Harrison's affidavit outlining his findings was published in his book *H.P. Blavatsky and the SPR* (1997). Harrison worked as a research physicist for some years, before taking up a position as Research Manager with a printer of banknotes, postage stamps, passports, and other highly sensitive documents. A study of forgeries and how to circumvent them formed a major part of his work. A professional handwriting expert, Harrison studied the Hodgson report and all available evidence, including The Mahatma Letters, for some fifteen years, concluding, among other things that: the Hodgson Report is not a scientific study and does not conform to basic principles of English justice; it is in fact riddled with uncorroborated statements of unnamed witnesses, and citations of documents not capable of identification. Harrison's final conclusion is that the scripts of KH, M and HPB certainly belong to three different persons; and that future historians, compilers of encyclopedias and dictionaries [we might add, journalists] should read Hodgson's report with great caution, if not disregard it altogether.

Alas, few can resist a good story, even if it be devoid of truth. And so the mud is likely to stick. All things considered, I think it was a mistake for the TS General Council of the time not to allow HPB to take the matter to court, as she wished to do. There is a good chance that her name would have been cleared once and for all.

- Dara Tatray

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 1 SEPTEMBER 2010 TO 31 AUGUST 2011



PREAMBLE

It has been my privilege to serve as National President since January 2009. As this term of office begins to draw to a close, allow me to thank all those who have expressed concern at my not seeking re-election. One positive side-effect of that decision is that, as *Education Coordinator*, I will have the opportunity to carry on with some of the work with which I have been engaged, with even greater gusto: and I believe that will be of some benefit.

Two and a half years pass swiftly but I am pleased to be able to report on a number of developments and initiatives. In addition to engaging in a great deal of correspondence, organizing a record number of events, chairing the national Executive, lecturing and all the usual duties of the *National President*, the following work has been undertaken over the past two and a half years:

- Significant headway has been made on a suite of short courses to be made available to members of the Society in print form and in PowerPoint—material that can be used for short talks, workshops and discussions covering key areas of interest to many members. The availability of this material will be a first for the TS in Australia. As *Education Coordinator* I hope to be able to conduct workshops based on that material around the Section, with a view to encouraging a number of people in each Lodge/Branch or Group to feel confident and skilled enough to do the same.
- *Theosophy in Australia*, the Section's website, and our new leaflet, *Theosophy: Revisiting the Ancient Wisdom*, showcase a fresh presentation of Theosophy and of

the Society, which many members of the Society have embraced with enthusiasm, and which highlight the contemporary relevance of Theosophy, without detracting from its mystique.

- 'Theosophy and the Dissenting Western Imagination' has been published in *Literature & Aesthetics* (vol. 21, no.1), a peer-reviewed academic journal based at The University of Sydney. Authored by the *National President*, this paper situates Theosophy and the writings of H.P. Blavatsky in the context of science history writing which, since the 1930s, has undergone extensive revision in its attitude to occult science and esoteric philosophy. This seems to be an opportune time, therefore, to reevaluate the work of the early pioneers of the theosophical movement. One conclusion of 'Theosophy and the Dissenting Western Imagination' is that the so-called alternative West of William Blake, Paracelsus, Madame Blavatsky and the New Age is beginning to look more like the regular West, now that consciousness and the soul have re-entered the modern arena in many respects.

H.P. Blavatsky made a most useful distinction between the working member and the merely ornamental one. As I grow older and less ornamental with each passing day I am at least pleased to be able to say that I am a working member of the TS and intend to stay that way, no matter what position I should hold, if any.

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

The past twelve months have been marked by change. On the 1st of November 2010 Donald Fern retired as *National Secretary*, after fifteen years of service to the Society in that role. In January 2011 he accepted nomination

as *National Treasurer*. Zehra Bharucha was appointed *National Secretary*, effective 1 November 2010. However, at the beginning of July 2011 she took leave for the remainder of the year. Donald Fern was then appointed *Acting National Secretary*.

As the national headquarters has not hired any additional staff to take up the duties of those who are not presently working at the headquarters (the *National President* doubling as *Education Coordinator* since the departure of Edi Bilimoria), the reader can perhaps imagine the degree of flexibility and cooperation that the remaining staff must have shown, in order to keep the national administration running smoothly. Befitting what is largely a volunteer-based organization, we have all taken on extra work, and I would like to thank each member of staff and each office-bearer, most sincerely, for shouldering that extra burden: in particular, Jennifer Hissey, Richard Larkin and Gil Murdoch, who are always willing to take on extra duties as and when required. Donald Fern requested that I remove any special mention of him here, which I have, only just hinting at it, for the sake of truth in reporting.

National President's Work

In the past year to August, I have given talks at the following Lodges/Branches and Groups:

- October 2010 members only, Sunshine Coast Lodge.
- November, Blavatsky Lodge.
- June 2011 Northern Beaches Group.
- July, Canberra Branch and Blavatsky Lodge.
- August, Sunshine Coast Lodge, Brisbane Lodge and Toowoomba Group.

And at the following events:

- September 2010 workshops at Hobart Branch and Launceston Lodge *New Ways of Presenting Theosophy and Best Practice in the Theosophical Society*.
- 1 October, *Legacies of Theosophy* conference at The University of Sydney.

- October, Springbrook event led by Michael Gomes.
- October, Sunshine Coast *Alchemy, Music and Dance event*.
- November, Canyonleigh *Light on the Path* weekend.
- February, 2011 Melbourne Theosophy and Science event.
- February, Canyonleigh weekend *Living With Nature*.
- April, Mt Helena Easter Retreat (sole presenter).
- School of Theosophy April/May Springbrook.

Since the beginning of July the *National President* has also been fulfilling the duties of the minute secretary for the national *Executive Committee*; overseeing the design and layout of *Theosophy in Australia* now outsourced to Kwik Kopy; and providing assistance to the *Acting National Secretary* (gladly).

Early this year the national headquarters was approached by City of Sydney Oral Historian Margo Beasley, with a view to interviewing someone from the TS, in addition to representatives of other religious and secular organisations in the City of Sydney locality, for its oral history project on 'Belief'. The *National President* directed Dr Beasley to the Section's website and explained that the Theosophical Society does not hold any beliefs or doctrines, with the consequence that no beliefs are incumbent on the members. It was also pointed out that not holding beliefs is a highly skilful art that, unfortunately, few of us have mastered. Dr Beasley thought this an excellent basis for an interview and a date was set for March. The interview took place in the boardroom at the national headquarters over two hours.

National Headquarters Staff—

The main duties of the headquarters staff and volunteers during the year were:

- Donald Fern, *National Secretary* to November

2010 (Headquarters office administration; accounting; maintenance and management of Section properties; *Administrator* of both the Springbrook and Canyonleigh properties; *Chair of the Rules Committee*; *Secretary* of The Theosophical Foundation Pty. Ltd. and *Secretary* of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust); *National Treasurer* from January 2011; *Acting National Secretary* from 1 July 2011.

- Zehra Bharucha, *Assistant Secretary* (assistant to the *National President* and the *National Secretary*; minute secretary for the *National Council*, national *Executive Committee*, The Australian Section Theosophical Trust and The Theosophical Foundation; design and layout of *Theosophy in Australia* magazine; *Convention Secretary*; overseeing Headquarters office computers); *Acting National Secretary* from November 2010; *National Secretary* from January 2011 (with duties as outlined above); on leave from 1 July 2011.

- Edi Bilimoria, *Education Coordinator* to January 2011 (assisting the *National President* with organising tours for a number of lecturers; research for the Third Object Project; proofreading *Theosophy in Australia*; lecturing).

- Jennifer Hissey (entering data for the Online Public Access Catalogue; handling enquiries for material from the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives; networking with other libraries in Australia; liaising with Softlink in order to improve OPAC; *Convention Secretary*).

- Gil Murdoch (*Webmaster* for the Australian Section's website; maintaining sound equipment and data projectors; updating the Union Index of Periodicals; assisting in the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives).

- Richard Larkin, *Membership Secretary* (preparing membership reports, maintaining the membership database; banking; responding to DVD and course orders; general office duties, with particular assistance to the *Education Coordinator*).

- Lucile Crocker (bookkeeping duties).

- Dai Trandang *Theosophy in Australia*

quarterly mail-out; work on the Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals (both very kindly as a volunteer).

- Barry Bowden *Supporting Lecturer* (Adelaide Lodge, Melbourne Lodge, Blavatsky Lodge, the Gosford Group and Canyonleigh).

- Noel Bertelle *Supporting Lecturer* (Canberra Branch, Blavatsky Lodge, Melbourne Lodge, Hobart Branch, Launceston Lodge, Sunshine Coast Lodge, Springbrook School of Theosophy and the Toowoomba Group).

- Simon O'Rourke *Supporting Lecturer* (Atherton Lodge).

Some of our Supporting Lecturers are invited to speak at Lodges and Groups independently of the national lecture program. Those talks are not listed in this report, but do partly determine where they will or will not be sent on behalf of the Section.

National Council —

As most readers know, our Annual Convention had to be cancelled due to the Queensland floods in January of this year. The Convention Business Meeting was therefore held in Sydney, with relatively few members in attendance. The January National Council meeting was also held in Sydney due to the cancellation of the Convention. As is our usual practice, a comprehensive agenda was sent out in advance, with all relevant documents attached, so that decisions could be given careful consideration at the meeting. All routine business matters were dealt with on the first day of the meeting, with a discussion on weightier matters on the second. Each *State Representative* is asked to send a written report on the meeting to his or her constituents, so that all concerned are kept informed.

A highly sensitive matter arising at the mid-year meeting significantly delayed the production of the June 2011 minutes out of concern that any mention of it would further compromise the election process then underway. For the

record, a Concerns Notice, with a request to apologise and desist, had been sent to two influential members who had made a number of disparaging and damaging remarks about the *National President*, calling into question her qualifications for the job and suggesting that she had not been pulling her weight. With no way of ascertaining how many voters had been influenced by these remarks, made over several months, it would not have been possible to hold a fair election without disclosing to the members what had taken place. This would have been extremely divisive, and disadvantaged any other candidates, so the *National President* decided to withdraw from the election, with a certain degree of sadness.

Lodges/Branches and members may make representations through their *State Representative* to the *National Council* regarding issues of concern. Dates for receipt of representations appear twice a year in this magazine. The time and energy given to the work of the Council is greatly appreciated.

As at 31 August 2011 the *National Council* comprises: three *ex officio* members (the *National President*, *National Secretary* and *National Treasurer*) and six elected State Representatives, each of whom may serve up to three consecutive two year terms:

Dianne K. Kynaston — New South Wales/
Australian Capital Territory
George Wester — Western Australia
Kari Torgersen — Victoria
Geoffrey Harrod — Queensland
Denise Frost — Tasmania
Patricia Hale — South Australia/Northern
Territory

Denise Frost was appointed Chair of the *National Council* and *National Vice-President* until January 2012. The continuation of the appointment of the *National Secretary* is at all times subject to the determination of the *National Council*.

In January 2011 the *National Council* made the following appointments for a 12 month period:

Executive Committee – see next item
National Treasurer – Donald Fern
Education Coordinator — Dara Tatray

National Executive Committee —

As in previous years, the national *Executive Committee* met monthly during the year except in January. Its members include the *ex officio* members, the *National President*, *National Secretary* and *National Treasurer*; as well as those members appointed by the *National Council*: Beatrice Malka, Marlene Bell (Adelaide), Ken Edwards (Melbourne), Dai Trandang and Dianne Kynaston. The time and support given by the members of the *Executive Committee* is gratefully acknowledged, particularly those travelling from interstate to attend every second meeting.

Members of the national *Executive Committee* are also required to be Directors of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust, which is responsible for the Section's properties except for Theosophy House in Sydney.

In December 2010 the following appointments were made by the national *Executive Committee*:

Assistant Treasurer – Beatrice Malka
Editor, Theosophy in Australia – Dara Tatray

The *Executive Committee* also appointed several committees for 2011: *Finance*, *Public Relations and Promotions*, *Website* and *Rules*.

GENERAL COUNCIL

The General Council is the governing body of the Theosophical Society with headquarters at Adyar, Chennai; just as the *National Council* is the governing body of the Theosophical Society in Australia. It is made up of the international

President, the Vice-President, the Treasurer, the Secretary, and the General Secretaries (National Presidents) of the component Sections of the Theosophical Society. It also includes a minimum of five and a maximum of twelve Additional Members nominated by the President and voted on by the members of the General Council at its annual meeting.

As mentioned in my report last year, a number of initiatives were taken at the General Council meeting in 2010 which promise to have a significant impact on the running of the Theosophical Society. In order to help “internationalise” the international headquarters, and bring the TS closer into line with current best practice, the General Council voted to institute a Policies Document and gradually also to revise the Rules of the Theosophical Society. As part of the policies committee, Linda Oliveira, Tom Davis and I have been working on a first draft of policies, to be voted on this year. Valuable suggestions have been made by the International Treasurer and the International Secretary and incorporated accordingly. The draft will be submitted to the Council at its December 2011 meeting. Working with agreed policies will allow for greater transparency and greater efficiency.

On behalf of the Australian Section, I placed several new items of business on the Agenda for the 2011 Council meeting, including the possibility of reducing the number of Additional Members on the General Council. There were seven Additional Members on the first General Council, when Henry Steel Olcott was President. Three of those names may be familiar to most TS members even today: Annie Besant, G.R.S. Mead and Francesca Arundale. The Additional Members, if nominated on the basis of their skills and expertise, have a great deal to offer; but there could be something said for limiting their number to perhaps a maximum of five.

The TS is a big ship and it will change direction only slowly. Instituting changes, even those

generally agreed upon, will take a lot of work. Most members of the General Council do not receive a salary for the work that they do in the Section in which they serve. To ask them to take a more active role in the running of the Society internationally may therefore seem like a big ask. But each of them is by virtue of the office held in their Section a member of the governing body of the Society. It is essential that all those who have accepted that office, even if at some personal sacrifice, participate in making wise decisions on behalf of the Society worldwide.

I regard my work on the General Council as perhaps the most significant element of my term as *National President*. Unfortunately, this is one aspect of TS work that as *Education Coordinator* I will not be able to continue, but my sincere hope is that the national Executive, the National Council and the members of the TS in Australia will expect each *National President* in the future to take their place on that Council as a working member. A former campaign slogan of the Australian Democrats would so succinctly put what is needed, but it would not be appropriate, even for an outgoing *National President*, to use such language. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of each working member to keep the TS honest, so to speak; and to keep it on track. I wish everyone involved all the very best.

EDUCATION

Projects underway but on the backburner due to pressure of other work this year will be taken up next year in earnest. No Study Paper was issued in the year under review.

Website

There has not been a dramatic change to the Section’s website since it was redesigned three years ago. Calendar event pages are regularly updated, and new links are added from time

to time as a matter of course. One new link is to *PsyPioneer Journal* founded in England by Leslie Price in 2004, which has also been added to the Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals. Gil Murdoch has undertaken the considerable task of indexing each issue. You can access *PsyPioneer* from our website by clicking on the link under Newly Added. The page you will be directed to may not grab your attention at first glance but perseverance will reward you with interesting stories about the chief personalities and organizations in the field of psychic research, in some cases consisting of material not readily available elsewhere. As it happens, there is quite a lot of Australian content. In 1985 Leslie Price founded *Theosophical History*, an independent journal that has published some excellent research into the history of the Theosophical Society and related movements. That too is available for researchers in the Campbell Library.

Our quarterly journal *Theosophy in Australia* continues to be uploaded in PDF one month after each issue goes to print.

Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)

Jennifer Hissey, at the National Headquarters, and Pamela Lloyd at Melbourne Lodge, continue to work steadily on this project, even though Jennifer has taken on various other office duties due to a temporary lack of staff. The catalogue has now been added to the Australian National Bibliographic Database (Libraries Australia), which has given the Theosophical Society a wider, contemporary profile, nationally and internationally. To date, close to eight thousand titles have been listed on the catalogue, from the collections of Melbourne Lodge, the Campbell Library, Adelaide Lodge Library and in early stages, the Brisbane Lodge library. Launceston Lodge and Hobart Branch will be added soon. OPAC can be accessed through our website at www.austheos.org.au > Resources > Library Catalogue. Enquiries about our holdings now come in from around the world.

International lecturers

The historian and author Michael Gomes, and David Lorimer, Programme Director Scientific and Medical Network, each undertook extensive tours of the Section in the past year. Michael Gomes was invited by the Theosophical Society to speak at the *Legacies of Theosophy* conference in October, after which he gave talks at Lodges/Branches in Sydney, Canberra, Launceston, Hobart, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Michael also conducted an event at Springbrook that afforded those fortunate enough to attend it a new insight into the work of Madame Blavatsky, and into methods of occult research. Travelling with an extensive and rather weighty library (*very* nineteenth century is he in his work habits) Michael gave of himself unstintingly during and after all of his talks. David Lorimer was our guest presenter at a successful Canyonleigh event in February. He also gave talks/ seminars in Melbourne, Hobart, Launceston, Sydney, Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth: a fairly demanding schedule that he executed with aplomb, while working on a forthcoming publication at the same time.

Supporting lecturers

At its meeting in June the National Council reappointed Noel Bertelle, Barry Bowden and Simon O'Rourke as Supporting Lecturers for 2012. Richard Larkin, Pedro Oliveira and Dianne Kynaston were also appointed. With this number of national speakers available to Lodges/Branches and Groups, we may take a break from inviting international lecturers for a while; instead concentrating on building up the skills-base of the TS in Australia.

FINANCE

Despite the current economic situation we have posted a surplus for the year. A cautious, conservative approach to our investments has enabled The Theosophical Society in Australia

to weather another difficult year financially unscathed. The *Finance Committee* and the *National Executive* are mindful of the need to conserve the Section's resources. The *Finance Committee* comprises Donald Fern (*National Treasurer*), Beatrice Malka (*Assistant Treasurer*), Zehra Bharucha (*National Secretary*) and Dara Tatray (*National President*). The Budget for the year ending 31 August 2012 was approved by the *National Council* at its mid-year meeting. The Annual Accounts and the Budget appear as a supplement to the November 2011 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

ANNUAL FUND

Donations to this fund received during the year were matched \$ for \$ by The Theosophical Society in Australia, up to \$10,000. One third of the cost of the Online Public Access Catalogue work is paid out of this fund. In the year under review copies of *The Secret Doctrine Commentaries* (I.S.I.S. Foundation, The Hague 2010), transcribed and edited by Michael Gomes, were purchased for each Lodge/Branch in the Section with a functioning library. The Annual Fund was also used to finance our presence at the *Legacies of Theosophy* Conference held at The University of Sydney.

MEMBERSHIP

As at 31 August 2011 there were 1,133 members of the Australian Section, including 147 National Members.

As there continues to be some misunderstanding regarding the difference between Lodge membership and national membership, with a corresponding confusion as to who is to collect which dues, it may be worth pointing out the following: There are two categories of membership of the TS in Australia, Lodge membership and National membership. We encourage as many people as possible to

become Lodge members rather than National members, because it supports the Lodges/Branches around the Section. But people may choose to become National members for various reasons. National members pay their dues directly to the membership secretary at the national headquarters, who routinely reminds them to do so. Lodge/Branch members pay their dues to the Lodge/Branch of which they are members. Lodges must not collect the dues of National members.

Of our membership dues, 15% is sent to the International Headquarters in India, and an additional 1% is contributed annually to the work of the Indo-Pacific Federation to which our Section belongs. These tasks are taken care of by the national headquarters.

SUPPORT TO OTHER SECTIONS OR INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

The Theosophical Society in Australia lends support to other Sections or the International Headquarters in various ways. As mentioned above, 1% of membership dues go to support the Indo-Pacific Federation. The Australian Section also makes a regular donation to the International Headquarters, to be utilised at the President's discretion. The base rate of this donation is \$3000 annually, but it can be considerably more, as approved by the *National Council*, depending on the Section's finances, and on need. Such funds may be used for building repairs at Adyar, contributions to the wages of workers at Adyar approved by the *National Council*, and contributions to international travel for International Officers residing at Adyar. In the year presently under review the amount donated for these purposes was \$36,553.

NATIONAL CENTRES

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook, Queensland

This centre continues to be well managed and cared for by Barry Hora, the resident *Caretaker*, with regular help from a dedicated band of TOS volunteers from Brisbane Lodge. Kay Schiefelbein looks after the centre when Barry is away on leave, and provides assistance throughout the year.

We are able to keep the cost of Section-run events at Springbrook to a minimum mainly because of the good grace and hard work of a number of members who regularly step up to cater for those events on a voluntary basis. In the past year the volunteer caterers were Kay Schiefelbein (Sunshine Coast), Lynden Thomas (Toowoomba Group), Rohzi Hicza (National member), Janet Blake (Sunshine Coast), Megan Spence and Karen Shakespeare (Sunshine Coast), left out of last years' report.

Spring event, October 2010:

Unlocking the Secrets of The Secret Doctrine and Tools of Occult Research.

Presenter, Michael Gomes.

School of Theosophy, April/May 2011:

Revisiting the Ancient Wisdom—A Sketch of the Principal Sources on which Madame Blavatsky Based Modern Theosophy. Dara Tatray presenter, with assistance from Noel Bertelle in the afternoon training sessions.

While Section-run events at Springbrook have always been heavily subsidized, without complaint, especially the annual School of Theosophy—which is provided at an absolute bargain-basement price—there has been a distinct and worrying downturn in the number of members registering for these events. One reason could be that the Lodges in Queensland utilize the premises to run their own events

(which is a most welcome development) and that they naturally promote those events with more enthusiasm. Another reason routinely given is that TS members want to be entertained, that they do not want to “study” and that the Lodge events are lighter than things like the School of Theosophy. That is a perception with which I do not in the least agree, but the fact remains that if TS members do not want to meet at Springbrook for the purpose of enquiry, exploration and study, then the long-term viability of the centre will inevitably be called into question. At the same time, one has to give due credit to the energy and enthusiasm of the TS in Queensland.

Canyonleigh Centre, New South Wales

Charlotte and Ron Stahl, our nearest neighbours at Canyonleigh, continue to work at the centre on a casual basis. In addition to the preparation of meals when required, and giving the house a spring clean before each event, they take care of all regular garden and building maintenance. They have now completed the stone amphitheatre, which displayed superb acoustics at a test run at our last event. The past few Canyonleigh weekends have been capacity-filled.

October 2010: The *National President* ran a speakers' workshop at Canyonleigh, attended by the Supporting Lecturers, Barry Bowden, Noel Bertelle and Simon O'Rourke.

November 2010: *Light on the Path* presented by Dara Tatray and Edi Bilimoria. This event was fully subscribed.

February 2011: *Living in Harmony with Nature* David Lorimer, Barry Bowden and Dara Tatray presenters. Fully subscribed.

UNIVERSITIES

John Cooper Memorial Prize, University of Sydney: The Australian Section continues to fund a prize for research into the perennial philosophy in its Eastern and Western traditions, in memory of John Cooper, who died in 1998 while working on a scholarly edition of the correspondence of H.P. Blavatsky. John had a strong research interest in the Society, and frequently lectured at Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney and elsewhere, on various aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism and the Gnostic tradition. I was unable to attend The University of Sydney Prizes and Awards Ceremony this year, due to other commitments. The winners of this year's John Cooper Memorial Prize were Alan Morgan Boag, for his Master's thesis on J. Krishnamurti and Sally James for her undergraduate essay on issues of gender and language in indigenous societies. The prizes are awarded by the university with no interference from the TS. They are supposed to be awarded for research into the perennial philosophy. Where gender issues come into play may remain a mystery until the essay is lodged in the Campbell Library.

CONVENTIONS

The 2011 National Convention was to be held in Brisbane but was cancelled due to extensive flooding. A decision was therefore made, jointly with Brisbane Lodge, to hold the 2012 convention in Brisbane instead of Melbourne as originally scheduled. It will be Melbourne in 2013 come what may. The 2012 Convention theme is *Current Thinking in Evidence of the Third Object*.

There has been some disquiet due to the apparent shortening of the convention by several days. It is not in fact shorter by several days but by one day, with the convention outing having been moved to the last day of convention instead of the middle of the week. Those who did want a shorter convention may regard the

outing as taking place on the post-ultimate day. So the convention is just one day shorter, with departures for those staying for the outing on the Friday instead of the Saturday as in previous years.

It was pointed out in the program of the cancelled convention, and thus seen by very few, that in the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia, the word Convention means the Convention Business Meeting. The lectures that traditionally follow it are an optional extra, as it were. Over the past few years there has been an increasing tendency for many of those registered for the Convention to not attend the Business Meeting, taking the opportunity to do a bit of sightseeing instead. According to our Rules, three of the functions and powers of the Convention are as follows:

1. To discuss ways and means of implementing the Objects of the National Society.
2. To further the religio-philosophical purposes of the National Society by providing an opportunity for the exchange of ideas arising from the study and practice of Theosophy and allied subjects and to discuss ways and means of spreading the knowledge of Theosophy.
3. To provide means of close association between the Component Lodges (Branches) of the National Society and to bring the individual Members of the National Society into closer contact and understanding with each other.

I sincerely hope that all those who register for the 2012 Convention will take the opportunity to further each of these aims, so that we can, indeed, find new ways of implementing the Society's Objects and new ways of showing the world that Theosophy exists. The matter is rather urgent, if the Society is to remain viable in the long-term. Otherwise it will cease to be in a position to offer to future enquirers what it so freely gave to each of us.

THE LEGACIES OF THEOSOPHY: UNVEILING THE MYSTERY OF THE CREATIVE IMAGINARY 1-2 October 2010

This conference was jointly organized by the Sydney Society for Literature & Aesthetics; The Society for the Study of Religion, Literature and the Arts; and the Theosophical Society in Australia. The following report appeared, in part, in a previous issue of *Theosophy in Australia* but the event was held in the year currently under review. The conference proposal sent out with the call for papers was as follows: This conference will explore the cultural legacy of Theosophy and the wider theosophical movement in terms of its considerable impact on twentieth century spirituality, modern art, music, literature, politics and science. The works of H.P. Blavatsky sought to demonstrate the existence of a vast evolutionary scheme encompassing the whole of nature, physical and spiritual. Taken up and augmented by the likes of Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater, Rudolf Steiner and others, this broad outline, with its implications for the human potential, was highly influential.

The Theosophical Society has had an active presence in Australia since 1894. Alfred Deakin, Australia's second Prime Minister, was a member of the Society; as was Professor John Smith, one of the three inaugural professors of The University of Sydney. Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin, architects of the nation's capital, were members of the Anthroposophical Society.

The conference also seeks to explore the continuity and continuous renewal of some of the key ideas regarding spiritual evolution circulating around the modern theosophical movement, many of which date back to antiquity. It invites radical approaches to accepted perceptions and established ideas about Theosophy, The Theosophical Society, its offshoots and its key authors. It asks for new understanding of the great theosophical leaders and

spiritual teachers of the modern world, based on an objective and searching appraisal rather than undue bias whether positive or negative.

Papers mainly centred on the works and influence of H.P. Blavatsky, G.I. Gurdjieff, and Rudolf Steiner, with a tremendous appreciation displayed towards the influence of HPB on a number of philosophers and artists. The speakers and their topics were as follows:

- Garry Trompf, *Theosophical Macrohistory*
- Michael Gomes, *H.P. Blavatsky: A Reappraisal*
- David Pecotic, *Growing Higher Bodies—Gurdjieff, Evola and Schwaller de Lubic*
- Johanna Petsche, *Gurdjieff and Blavatsky*
- Vrasidas Karalis, *Gurdjieff and his Beelzebub*
- Neil Anderson, *On Rudolf Steiner's Impact on the Training of the Actor*
- John Blackwood, *Outcomes of Work in the Study of Morphology put forward by Rudolf Steiner*
- Luke Fischer, *Owen Barfield and Rudolf Steiner: The Poetic and Hermetic Imagination*
- Dara Tatray, *Theosophy and the Dissenting Western Imagination*
- Alex Norman, *Spiritual Explorers: Theosophical Travellers to the East and their Impact on Modern Spiritual Tourism*
- Christopher Hartney, *The Legacies of Theosophy: Unveiling the Creative Imaginary*
- Robert Tulip, *Blavatsky and the Great Year: Astrology in the Bible*
- Alan Boag, *From Blavatsky to Krishnamurti: Hindu Chronology, Biblical Eschatology, Physiology*
- Fiona Fraser, *The Nature Studies of Phyllis Campbell*
- Morandir Armson, *The Transitory Tarot: An Examination of Tarot Cards, the Twenty-First Century New Age and Theosophical Thought.*

Some of the papers delivered at the conference, and some that were not delivered, made their way into *Literature & Aesthetics* (vol. 21, no.1).

REPORTS FROM LODGES/BRANCHES

The following report is based on information supplied by the Lodges or Branches, and represents just a fraction of the work that is done year-round by active members of the Society.

Hobart Branch, Tasmania (Chartered 1889)

Hobart Branch holds a public meeting once a week and provides assistance to an informal group in Kingston. Support is also given to the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS), with TOS meetings held bimonthly. Staffed by a long-time volunteer, the library is open before meetings on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons. Hobart Branch runs an Introductory Theosophy course and a Mandala workshop. David Lorimer, Michael Gomes, Noel Bertelle and Dara Tatray were the chief guest speakers in the year under review.

Melbourne Lodge, Victoria (Chartered 1890)

Melbourne Lodge now holds occasional public lectures on a Saturday, and a members meeting once a month. It does however offer an impressive range of study and discussion groups covering the science of yoga; astrology; healing; the Kabbalah; meditation; comparative religion/philosophy; *The Secret Doctrine* and more. One of the program highlights this year was the Theosophy and Science seminar arranged in conjunction with the national headquarters. David Lorimer, Richard Silberstein, Edi Bilimoria and Dara Tatray were the speakers at this well-attended event. Melbourne Lodge was also pleased to host talks by Michael Gomes, Barry Bowden and Noel Bertelle during the year. Like all bookshops in this country, that run by Melbourne Lodge is having to cut its cloth in accordance with dramatically reduced expectations for booktraders resulting from increased online shopping. It has begun a customer loyalty program, is moving towards

online sales, and has begun running author-talks and book-signing sessions. Melbourne Lodge continues to provide assistance to the Wodonga-Albury Group and to the Mornington Peninsula Group.

Adelaide Lodge, South Australia (Chartered 1891)

Adelaide Lodge has an innovative attitude to programming, with several initiatives underway. Chief among these perhaps is its Sunday at the TS format comprising three lectures interspersed with refreshment breaks and a shared lunch. It holds discussion/enquiry groups every Friday morning on a diverse range of topics covering, among other subjects, matters relevant to our three Objects; *Light on the Path*; meditation; and *The Secret Doctrine* (led by former *National President* Bev Champion). Adelaide is also host to our most active Theosophy-Science group, led by Victor Gostin. Two of its oldest members passed away during the year: Emma (Mick) Fearnside at 102 years of age, and Maria (Rie) von Krusenstierna (both of whom I had the pleasure to know). The Lodge however is fortunate to still have a significant number of long-standing members involved in Lodge activities, who decades ago were Young Theosophists and who have remained members of the Society ever since. In my experience the presence of such members makes a significant contribution to the atmosphere of a Lodge or Branch.

Brisbane Lodge, Queensland (Chartered 1895)

In addition to its weekly public lectures, Brisbane Lodge runs a range of study groups covering among other things, an Introduction to Theosophy; the works of J. Krishnamurti; meditation; and *Isis Unveiled*. There is also a study group for members only. The relatively new Theosophy-Science group got off to a strong start and is maintaining its momentum. The

meditation retreat at the Springbrook Education and Retreat Centre run by Dr Arunachalam has always been popular and continues to be fairly well-attended. Brisbane Lodge holds regular TOS meetings and regular working bees at Springbrook, to the benefit of all members of the TS in Australia. Visiting speakers to the Lodge in this period included David Lorimer, Barry Bowden and Dara Tatray, all of whom were warmly welcomed.

Perth Branch, Western Australia (Chartered 1897)

Perth Branch holds a members' meeting weekly, offering public lectures only when hosting a visiting speaker. It is however a very active Branch, running study groups on *The Voice of the Silence*, *The Seven Rays* and *The Secret Doctrine*, as well as organising several events annually at its Mt Helena Retreat Centre. Highlights of the year included a one-day workshop by David Harvey, visiting Perth from England, on *The Etheric Body and Human Energy Fields*; a study of *The Mahatma Letters* presented by Simon O'Rourke; and talks by Olga Gostin and Victor Gostin, from Adelaide. Visiting speakers sent from the national headquarters were Dara Tatray (for the Easter retreat); Michael Gomes and David Lorimer.

Launceston Lodge, Tasmania (Chartered 1901)

This is a small but active Lodge, with a developing tradition of enquiry and discussion. Launceston Lodge holds its meetings once a week and also conducts a number of study/discussion groups including: *The Perennial Philosophy*; *The Evolution of Consciousness*; and *What's On Your Mind?* Of late Launceston Lodge has been holding a half-hour meditation meeting before the public lecture each week. This has proven to be popular and most welcome. Program highlights during the year

under review included Dara Tatray's workshop on *New Ways of Presenting Theosophy and Best Practice in the Theosophical Society*. In addition to the *National President*, visiting speakers were David Lorimer, Michael Gomes and Noel Bertelle.

Blavatsky Lodge, New South Wales (Chartered 1922)

Blavatsky Lodge holds a members' meeting on the second Saturday of each month, and a public lecture each Wednesday afternoon. It hosts a range of study groups based on books, including *Ancient Wisdom, Modern Insight; The Chakras*; and *Seeking the Sacred*. In addition to these, an enterprising member is running a discussion group covering a wide territory traversing 'Theosophy in Hollywood,' to 'Plants and Animals as Our Teachers,' and 'the New Age from HPB to Julia Roberts'. No holds barred, I would say. Visiting speakers were David Lorimer, Michael Gomes, Barry Bowden and Dara Tatray. Other program highlights of the year were *Forgotten Origin (The Early Days of Gondwana Land)* a seminar led by Steve and Evan Strong; a lecture by C.V.K. Maithreya, President of the Madras Theosophical Federation, who was visiting Sydney with his wife Sunita; and the Barbara Blackman Temenos Foundation annual lecture, (this year) by Andrew Harvey, speaking on the poet Rumi.

A significant event for Blavatsky Lodge, and for many TS members in and around Sydney, was the retirement of Zora Marresh, who had served as Librarian at the Adyar Library for some four decades. For many of us, Zora had been a welcome presence throughout our TS membership. I am sure that her enthusiasm for literature (including detective fiction) and her knowledge of the Adyar Library will be greatly missed.

Newcastle Lodge, New South Wales (Chartered 1941)

Newcastle Lodge holds a public meeting once a month and an additional study group meeting once a month. Gerard Brennan and Simon O'Rourke, both of Blavatsky Lodge, gave talks in Newcastle in the year under review, to an enthusiastic audience.

Atherton Lodge, Queensland (Chartered 1950)

Atherton Lodge meets monthly for a public lecture and discussion preceded by a shared lunch. Seminars are held when national and international speakers visit the Lodge. Visiting speakers are also invited to give an additional lecture for members only, followed by dinner. Program highlights in the year under review included a presentation by Simon O'Rourke; talks by Geoffrey Harrod (*State Representative* for Queensland); and a presentation by Tina Hentisz, visiting from Perth Branch. A course/discussion was presented on Basic Theosophy over several months.

Canberra Branch, ACT (Chartered 1971)

Canberra Branch holds a public meeting once a month. A regular discussion group also meets once a month. Highlights of the present year included the lecture by Michael Gomes, whose talk on the Esoteric World of Mme Blavatsky inspired a series of discussion meetings; and a talk by Edi Bilimoria (one of his last in Australia). Canberra Branch was also visited by the *National President* and the *State Representative* for NSW/ACT Dianne Kynaston, each of whom gave a public lecture. The TOS group met (usually) once a month.

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Queensland (Chartered 2004)

Finally we come to our youngest Lodge, the Sunshine Coast Lodge, which meets at two

venues, each weekly: Buderim and Tewantin/Noosa. In addition to the weekly public lectures it runs regular study/discussion groups, presently based on the *Theosophical Glossary*; John Algeo's Introduction to Theosophy; and the Yoga Sūtra-s. Visiting speakers included David Lorimer, and Dara Tatray. A major highlight of the year was the Alchemy, Music and Dance festival held at the end of October, presenting a range of talks and performances to the public. This was a day-event attended by eighty people and run by Lodge volunteers (quite an achievement). Other notable events included the *Living and Dying* weekend held by the Lodge at Springbrook, presented by Dorothy Bell; and a seminar, *Integral Theosophy*, presented by Victor Macgill and Linda Watts from New Zealand. The Sunshine Coast Lodge is an active supporter of the TOS.

REPORTS FROM CERTIFIED GROUPS

In addition to the Lodges that make up the TS in Australia, a number of Certified Groups form part of the TS in Australia. A Certified Group has permission to use the name and seal of the Society and can have a significant role to play in the provision of meetings in an area not serviced by a Lodge. The following is based on reports received from the Certified Groups.

Blue Mountains Group, New South Wales

No report received.

Gosford Group, New South Wales

Gosford Group holds a public meeting once a month and an additional study meeting once a month. This is a small group with a strong community ethic, no doubt much appreciated by its more senior members. It receives steady support from Blavatsky Lodge, which supplied several speakers during the year under review, including Keith Howes, Simon O'Rourke and Terry Wayne. Dianne Kynaston, *State Representative* for NSW/ACT, also visited

Gosford Group this year, giving a talk on *Women of Spiritual Integrity*. Another highlight of the year was the talk by *Supporting Lecturer* Barry Bowden, which was very warmly received.

Northern Beaches Group, New South Wales

This group meets monthly for talks and discussions in the home of a member who kindly acts as host. Highlights of the year included a talk by Edi Bilimoria on Musical Yoga; a talk by the *National President*, on the interconnection of psyche and matter; and a visit from George Wester, the *State Representative* for WA.

Caboolture Group, Queensland

The Caboolture Group was certified less than five years ago and for the past two or three years has been really struggling. It currently meets fortnightly, but with very low attendance numbers. There is no study group as such but its meetings largely consist of discussions. A number of speakers from the Sunshine Coast Lodge and Brisbane Lodge have offered to present talks but there has been some reticence to accept, given the rate of attendance. This group is currently under review.

Toowoomba Group, Queensland

This well established group meets twice a month for talks, discussions and study (with an additional meeting in Warwick once a month). It also arranges an annual camp at Somerset Dam, and regularly holds a stall at World Environment Day, so this tight-knit group is kept busy. When they run out of other things to do a few members get together for a movie discussion. Talk/discussion topics included an introduction to the life of J. Krishnamurti; human consciousness and thought forms; and the early history of the TS in Toowoomba. Highlights of the year included talks by Noel and Marie Bertelle, Betty McAllister, Geoffrey Harrod, Simon O'Rourke and Dara Tatray.

Mornington Peninsula Group, Victoria

This group meets monthly with a strong emphasis on meditation and discussion. On the group's annual report the coordinator wrote nil in the study/discussion and social activities fields. I am however reliably informed that most, if not all, meetings of this cohesive group involve a certain amount of both. Topics covered during the year included Annie Besant: Her Life and Oratory; the art of storytelling and listening; the four states of consciousness; and the works of Alice Bailey.

Wodonga-Albury Group, Victoria

The Wodonga-Albury Group meets once a month for a discussion group, holding an additional meditation meeting of a Monday. Its library is open for four hours a day, Monday to Friday, staffed by volunteers. The present study is focused on *The Secret Doctrine Commentaries*, and *The Mahatma Letters*. For various reasons of scheduling, regrettably, no speakers were sent to this group in the year under review.

THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

Theosophical Order of Service activities continued to be conducted in association with nine TS Lodges and Groups. The annual TOS working bee to maintain the buildings and grounds at the Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre at Springbrook was again energetically supported by members. Several people attending the School of Theosophy in April/May remarked on how spruce the centre looked, thanks to a working bee that had been held not long before. The place had obviously had a very thorough spring clean, which was appreciated by all.

TOS members contributed time and raised funds for a range of activities in their local communities including tutoring refugees in

English, knitting knee rugs for nursing homes, supporting a refuge for homeless women, working in soup kitchens for the homeless, putting together packs of clothes and toys for babies and children going into care, helping in animal shelters, collecting for relief appeals and volunteering in aged-care centres and cancer support groups. Through conducting seminars, talks and petitions they raised awareness about social and animal welfare issues.

Support of three major projects continued into 2010-11. The TOS raised funds for four Literacy Home-Schools for children and young women in Pakistan. Donations were made to the SEE project in Chennai that provides free vision testing, spectacles and cataract operations to needy people. And funds were provided to a child-health project in Tanzania. The TOS in Australia also responded to an appeal to support an emergency famine relief project organised by the TOS in Kenya by making a donation that will provide food for five families for six months.

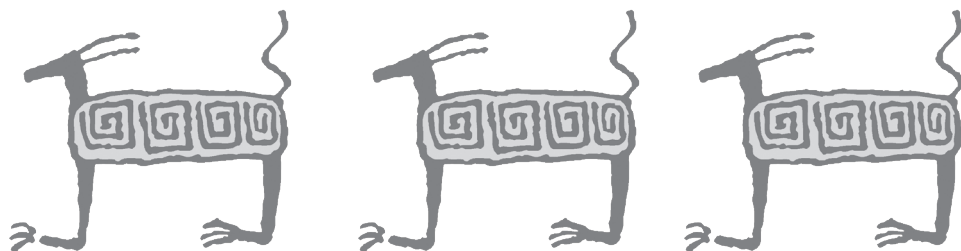
In addition, individual TOS Groups sponsored students in Pakistan, donated funds to the Golden Link College in the Philippines and gave donations for mobility aids and to educational and animal welfare projects in India. They also raised funds for other organisations' projects of particular interest to the individual TOS Group, such as the Hamlin Fistula Relief project in Ethiopia and SAWA-Australia's work with women in Afghanistan.

Once again Maple-Brown Abbott Limited generously supported the work of the TOS. This company is the investment manager for the Theosophical Society in Australia. Their donation was distributed among four projects managed by International TOS groups: Pakistan's Educational Sponsorship Program, the SEE Project in Chennai, the Golden Link College in the Philippines and the Heart Baby project in Tanzania.

2011 sees the completion of Carolyn Harrod's seven-year term as Coordinator of the TOS in Australia. The International President of the TOS, Radha Burnier, has appointed Mrs Jean Carroll as the new Coordinator, from the Annual General Meeting of the TOS in January, 2012. Jean is currently President of the Sunshine Coast Lodge of the Theosophical Society, as well as being active in the local work of the TOS. Carolyn has done a tremendous job. We wish her all the best.

CONCLUSION

I would once again like to thank everyone at the national headquarters for their support during my term as National President, and, on behalf of the Society, to thank all those involved in providing lectures, running meetings, volunteering in our libraries, taking care of the hospitality side of things, and the countless kindnesses involved in keeping the Theosophical Society up and running. I wish the National President-elect all the best in her term of office, and look forward to working with her once again.



Annual Membership Analysis Lodge/Branch Membership as at 31/08/2011

Lodge/Branch	Members	Transfer in	New	Rejoined	Total in	Resigned	Lapsed	Deceased	Transfer out	Total Out	Members	Differences
	31-Aug-10										31-Aug-11	
Adelaide	103	-	10	3	13	4	15	2	-	21	95	-8
Atherton	19	-	2	-	2	-	-	1	-	1	20	1
Blavatsky	269	1	13	3	17	9	24	4	6	43	243	-26
Brisbane	88	-	4	9	13	1	14	1	-	16	85	-3
Canberra	14	1	-	1	2	-	-	1	1	2	14	0
Hobart	36	-	2	2	4	3	4	-	-	7	33	-3
Launceston	29	-	3	-	3	4	-	1	-	5	27	-2
Melbourne	224	-	7	4	11	2	30	3	1	36	199	-25
Newcastle	20	-	1	-	1	1	3	0	-	4	17	-3
Perth	160	2	12	2	16	1	13	3	-	17	159	-1
Sunshine Coast	94	-	13	1	14	8	3	2	1	14	94	-
Sub Total	1056	4	67	25	96	33	106	18	9	166	986	-70
National	144	4	13	7	24	3	16	2	-	21	147	3
Total	1200	8	80	32	120	36	122	20	9	187	1133	-67

We don't usually have many typographical errors in the magazine, but the September issue was an unfortunate exception. It was not too bad for Bernie Michel, who, due to my proofreading neglect, wrote an 'artical' instead of an article; or even for Olga Gostin whose first degree is now in anthropology. But it is highly regrettable that Peter Bruza's convention talk was renamed incomprehensibly as: 'Subject-Object Duality in Quantum Theosophy in Buddhism'. To all those who noticed the errors, and to all those who did not, I can only say:

I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulaclyt uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid Aoccdrnig to rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit plcae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh?



Calendar of Events National TS Centres ...



Springbrook School of Theosophy Fri 20-Thrs 26 April 2012 **Theme: Seeking Wisdom**

Presenters: Linda Oliveira, *National President* and Pedro Oliveira, *Supporting Lecturer*.

The morning sessions of the School will be based on the book *Seeking Wisdom* by N. Sri Ram.

Students will be asked to give a five-minute talk at the end of the School, on a topic of their choice from a range of subjects related to the morning sessions.

More information will be available in March.

Registration forms in this issue and online at www.austheos.org.au.

Canyonleigh Event Fri 2- Sun 4 March 2012 **Theme: The Meditative Mind and Approaches to Meditation**

Presenters: Linda Oliveira and Supporting Lecturers (to be announced).
More information will be available in March.

Registration forms in this issue and online at www.austheos.org.au.

2012 CONVENTION PROGRAMME

15-22 January

St John's College, Brisbane

Theme: *Current Thinking in Evidence of the Third Object*

PUBLIC LECTURE: Dr Dara Tatray

Saturday 21 January Arrivals

7.30pm Official Opening of Convention
ANNUAL CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING OF
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA
Agenda
Roll Call of Voting Delegates and Proxies
Confirmation of Minutes of 2011 Convention Business Meeting
National President's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2011
National Treasurer's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2011
Financial Statements and Balance Sheet for the Year Ended 31 August 2011,
and Auditor's Report thereon
Budget for the Year Ending 31 August 2012
Appointment of Auditor
Announcement of Newly Appointed Officers
Announcement of Ballot Results: State Representatives
Vote on Notices of Motion
Place and Time of Next Convention
Resolutions of Goodwill
Any Other Business
Greetings to the Convention
Introduction – Guest Speaker/s
Introduction – Workshops
Light Reception Tea

Sunday 22 January

6.30am Yoga
7.30am Morning Attunement
9.15am Barry Bowden: *Lessons from Nature and from the Teachings of
Anthroposophy in Support of Our Objects*
11.00am Short talks: *The Ancient Mystery of Healing Energy*
• Tina Fiedler
• Kelvin Fiedler
4.00pm Public Talk: Dara Tatray, *Evidence in Support
of Theosophy and the Theosophical Society*
7.30pm Illustrated Talk: *Animals and Their Spiritual Qualities*
Pedro Oliveira

Monday 23 January

- 6.30am Yoga
 7.30am Morning Attunement
 9.15am Linda Oliveira, National President, *Probing Our Spiritual Powers*
 11.00am Short Talks:
 • Dianne Kynaston
 • Noel Bertelle
 4.00pm *The View from the Couch—Insights from Psychology*:
 • Victor Gostin *It's in the Mind: The Power of the Placebo*
 • Judith Jeffrey *Synchronicity and the Collective Subconscious*
 • Rosanne De Bats *The Mind-Body Connection*
 7.30pm Sarah Hopkins *Sacred Sound Journey*

Tuesday 24 January

- 6.30am Yoga
 7.30am Morning Attunement
 9.15am Peter Bruza: *Subject-Object Duality in Buddhism and in Quantum Theory*
 11.00am Short Talks:
 • George Wester
 • Denise Frost
 • Simon O'Rourke
 2.00pm Theosophical Order of Service AGM and Information Meeting
 All Welcome
 4.00pm Workshops:
 • Mary Masselos *Seven-Tone Healing Workshop*
 • Phillipa Rooke *Felting*
 7.30pm Illustrated Talk: *Beethoven and His Call to Mankind*
 Isolde Sueltemeyer

Wednesday 25 January

- 6.30am Yoga
 7.30am Morning Attunement
 9.15am TBA
 11.00am Short Talks:
 • Olga Gostin *Exploring the Influence of Ritual on the Psyche*
 • Carolyn Harrod *Is Altruism a Latent Capacity We Can Develop?*
 4.00pm Structured Workshop (Full Session):
Will the Phoenix Rise from the Ashes If We Don't Burn up the Old Dress?
 7.30pm Entertainment, followed by a light supper

Thursday 26 January

OUTING AND PICNIC LUNCH

Friday 27 January

Departures

Results-Election of State Representatives

As announced in the June 2011 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, nominations were called for one *State Representative* for each of the Electoral States of South Australia/Northern Territory, Queensland and Tasmania. As two valid nominations were received for South Australia/Northern Territory, a ballot was held.

The following member was elected to office:

South Australia/Northern Territory: **Travis James**

The term of office for the *State Representatives* is for a period of two years from the date of declaration of these election results. The *State Representatives* will represent the Lodges (Branches), Groups and Members in the State in all meetings and affairs of the *National Council*. They shall also liaise with all Lodges (Branches), Groups and National Members in their Electoral State and shall represent their views to the *National Council* and to the National Society Officers, as appropriate. As well, they shall receive and deal with representations from individual Members within their Electoral State, and shall refer the representations where requested or deemed necessary.

As there was only one candidate for each of the Electoral States of Queensland and Tasmania, the following were re-elected unopposed:

Queensland:
Tasmania:

Geoffrey Harrod
Denise Frost

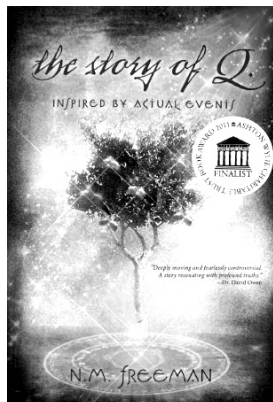
Results – Election of National President

As announced in the March 2011 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, and in accordance with Rule 20(2) of the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia, the National Secretary called for nominations for the office of National President. Two valid nominations were received by 21 July 2011 and so a ballot was held. The votes were recorded as follows:

Linda Oliveira 264 votes
George Wester 134 votes

Linda Oliveira was therefore duly elected National President. The term of office for National President according to Rule 21(2) is three years, commencing at the Convention Business Meeting to be held in Brisbane January 2012.





***The Story of Q:
Inspired by Actual
Events***

**N.M. Freeman,
Paperback ISBN:
9781450276986**

**Available through online
bookstores and select
booksellers**

The Story of Q narrates the journey of three people searching, as many of us do, for an acceptable set of beliefs. N.M. Freeman has put her research on this subject into a well-presented story of the different ways people learn about the meaning of truth; each story describing three days in the life of each character.

At the age of twelve, Mateo, from the distant past, is taught by the Master Lael in a way that leaves him free to live his life without having to struggle to “unbelieve,” or to discard his biases and prejudices. The stories he learns contain truths from an even more ancient tradition, ‘older than the memory of man’. But he still has to face the challenge of growth and the lifelong changes this will entail. Farrah, with Sophia, her older and wiser mentor, starts from a different place. She is introduced to us as bedevilled by Mephistopheles who, as the alter ego of her own mind, torments her with her lack of faith and certainty in the religious dogmas that have been presented to her.

Farrah’s is the classic fall from grace. We learn that as an innocent child she had been at one with the forces of the cosmos, aware of her connection to the divine. But there are cultural and religious imperatives in any society that shape us so that we conform to what seems to be the norm, in order to be accepted. This acceptable framework is anything but comfortable for Farrah. In fact the inner turmoil from battling against her inner inclinations and the messages she receives from those she perceives as having authority have

brought her to the edge of destroying herself. With Sophia’s support she works at balancing her inner convictions with what seems to her to be a successful belief system.

Rose, the adult, brought up in the traditional beliefs of her society, finds herself challenged by her pastor to save the soul of her son Roger. Roger has been looking for answers; and in the ancient document of Q he feels he has found them. As a lecturer in Theology he is in a position to share his discoveries with those who attend his seminars. Rose is scandalised by what she perceives to be Roger’s backsliding into sin. While caring for Roger’s cat, Rose reads his notes on Q. At first she is resistant but gradually comes to see that, maybe, her religion and her society have not told her the whole truth. She finds herself engaged in an inner conviction that ‘the upholders of the word and will of God must be right’, whilst at the same time feeling a ‘cool, subtle discomfort along her spine.’ In Rose’s case the jury is still out.

The three main characters are archetypes that are easy to relate to. Should we read Matteo’s story and make sure our children receive the truth in the way he did? Are we Farrah, torn by indecision and perceived lack of faith finally coming to a place of inner authority? Are we Rose, torn between conformity to a flawed hierarchy, yet ill-prepared to question the status quo? They are individually and/or collectively each one of us. *The Story of Q* is a good book to read if you have questions and an even better one to read if you have none.

Reviewed by Suzanne May

ANNUAL INDEX TO THEOSOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA

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NEWS & NOTES

From the Theosophical Society in America

On 10 September 2011, a statue of Henry Steel Olcott was unveiled at a Sri Lankan Buddhist temple near Princeton, New Jersey. The statue is modelled on one in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where Olcott is regarded as a national hero. In the late 1800s Olcott established several Buddhist schools in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), designed a Buddhist flag, and wrote the Buddhist catechism that is still used worldwide. He forced British officials to declare Wesak, the day of the birth, enlightenment and passing of the Buddha, a national holiday. A commemorative postage stamp bears Olcott's image, and the date of his death is a public holiday. The unveiling in Princeton was sponsored by Ananda College Old Boys Association, an alumni group from Ananda College, of which Fritz Kunz was a principal from 1915 to 1917.

Alarming, or not?

In view of the above, it is especially interesting that a Sri Lankan-born Christian penned a new version of *Advance Australia Fair* twenty-three years ago, inserting Christ as Australia's head of state: 'with Christ our head and cornerstone'. Apparently fifty or so Christian schools have adopted the revised, and unauthorised, national anthem. As it so happens, Christ is not our head of state. Should these schools ever wield serious influence in Australia, this forced takeover would perhaps be alarming indeed. I wonder what the media reaction would be if a group of Muslim schools appropriated the national anthem in the name of a Muslim Khaliphah.

Just to balance things out perhaps, Edgewater Primary School in Western Australia has banned children from reciting the Lord's Prayer at its school assemblies (except at Christmas and Easter).

Supporting Lecturers

At the National Council meeting in June the following were appointed as Supporting Lecturers: Noel Bertelle, Barry Bowden and Simon O'Rourke (each reappointed); Dianne Kynaston, Richard Larkin and Pedro Oliveira. Please make all arrangements regarding any visits by these lecturers through the office of the National President, who alone is responsible for organising tours for lecturers on behalf of the Australian Section.

Breaking News

M.G. Hocking, Professor of Materials Chemistry, University of London has just published a new book, *World Religion and History Back to 70,000 BC Discovered by Remote Viewing* (available at www.4-D.org.uk/Books, introductory price £6 plus postage). I haven't seen it yet, remotely or otherwise, so cannot judge its contents; but among other things, it purports to suggest evidence for God, missing information about Jesus Christ, and the existence of ancient flying machines operating in Atlantis, before it sank some twelve thousand years ago (much of this based on *The Lives of Alcyone*). The website will also introduce a new generation to Besant and Leadbeater's *Occult Chemistry*, of which Professor Hocking is something of a defender. It will be interesting to compare his treatment of Atlantis with those of another recent publication yet to be reviewed in these pages: Jocelyn Godwin's *Atlantis and the Cycles of Time* (Inner Traditions 2011) which provides a comprehensive multi-faceted examination of writings on Atlantis by Madame Blavatsky, G. I. Gurdjieff, Edgar Cayce, Dion Fortune and others.

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Education Coordinator:
edcoord@austtheos.org.au
Campbell Theosophical Research Library:
campbell@austtheos.org.au

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Branch, Chartered 17/7/1971:

Postal Address: PO Box 7418, Fisher ACT 2611

Meet: Senior Citizens Club 10 Watson Street, Turner ACT 2612

8.00pm 1st Tuesday of month (Please confirm by email or telephone)

President: Peter Fokker
Tel: 02 6236 3170

Email: fokkerbakker@gmail.com

Secretary: Tony Fearnside

Telephone: 02 62887656

Email: janton@netspeed.com.au

New South Wales

Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:

2nd & 3rd Floors, 484 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Telephone: 02 9267 6955 Fax: 02 9283 3772

Email: contact@tssydney.org.au

www.tssydney.org.au

Meet: 2.00pm & 7.00pm Wednesdays

Members Meeting: 2.00 pm 2nd Saturday each month

President: Ruth Keenan

Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:

Meet: Carrington Community Centre,

Carrington NSW 2294

8.00pm 2nd Friday each month (excluding January)

Study group (members) confirm dates with Lodge

President: Danny Boyd

Tel: 02 4937 4225

Blue Mountains Group:

Meet: Springwood NSW

11.00am 1st Tuesday each month

Coordinator: Kirk Holst

Tel: 02 4759 3160

Gosford Group:

Meet: The Neighbour Centre,

Pandala Road, Narara NSW 2250

8.00pm 2nd Tuesday each month

Coordinator: Marianne Fraser

Tel: (02) 4364 0088

E-mail: marifraser256@gmail.com

Secretary: Roni Ostergaard

Telephone: 02 4358 1413

Northern Beaches Group:

Postal address: c/ Mina Singh Batra,
22 Woodland Street,

Balgowlah Heights, NSW 2093

Meet: c/- above address

8.00 pm 3rd Friday each month

Coordinator: Patricia Witts

Tel: 02 9450 1362

Queensland

Atherton Lodge, Chartered 27/4/1950:

Postal Address: 14 Herberton Rd, Atherton QLD 4883

Meet: Meeting Room, Atherton Neighbourhood Centre, Mabel St, Atherton, 2nd

Saturday of month

President: Max Brandenberger

Secretary: Chris Pang Way

Tel: 07 4091 5156

Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:

355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000

Tel: 07 3839 1453

Email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au

http://www.theosophyqld.org.au

Meet: 10.00am & 12.00 noon Wednesday

and 7.30pm Friday

President: Phillipa Rooke

Secretary: Angela Read

Caboolture Group

7.00 pm 2nd & 4th Monday of month

Email: elah@live.com.au

Coordinator: Annette Young

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004

Meet: Buderim Croquet Club, Syd Lingard

Drive, Buderim QLD 4556 7.00pm Thursday

President: Jean Carroll

Tel: 07 5443 4733

Email: oneness@tpg.com.au

Secretary: Penny Houghton

Toowoomba Group:

Meet: 49 Lindsay Street, Toowoomba

1st Wed at 7pm and 3rd Sunday at 2:30pm of

each month (Meditation 1pm & Study Group at 1:30pm)

Annual Springbrook Retreat each winter

Coordinator: Barry Bowden

Secretary: Julie Murphy

Tel: 0427 751 464

Email: murphyj@usq.edu.au

South Australia

Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000

Tel: 08 8223 1129

Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au

http://www.austtheos.org.au/adelaide

Meet: Members Meeting 1.00pm 4th Friday

of every month. Please contact Lodge for

additional meeting dates.

President: Sheryl Malone

Secretary: Audrey Brimson

Tasmania

Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000

www.theosophicaltas.websyte.com.au

Meet: 8.00pm Monday

President/Secretary: Helen Steven

Tel: (03) 6228 3048

Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:

54 Elizabeth Street, Launceston, TAS 7250

Postal address: 66 Flinders Street, Beauty

Point, TAS. 7270

email: rmholt@gmail.com

www.austtheos.org.au/launceston

Meetings: Wednesdays commencing 7.00

pm for meditation, followed by meeting at

7.30 pm

Library open Wednesdays from 2 pm

President: Jenny Haslem

Secretary: Ruth Holt

Tel: 0448 397 246

Victoria

Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:

126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624

email: meltheos@netspace.net.au

Meet: 2.30pm Saturday & 6.30pm Tuesday

President: Dorothy Darby

Secretary: Ken Edwards

Mornington Peninsula Group:

Coordinator: Daphne Standish

Tel: 03 9589 5439

Meet: Mt. Eliza Neighbourhood Centre,

Canadian Bay Road first Sunday of the month

11am-3.30pm (meditation - lunch -

Theosophy)

www.austtheos.org.au/centres/mpg

Wodonga-Albury Group:

Meet: Shop 6, Tower Place, High Street,
Wodonga VIC 3690

1st Tuesday each month

Library hours Mon-Fri 10.00am-2.00pm

Coordinator/Secretary: Denis Kovacs

Tel: 02 6024 2905

Western Australia

Perth Branch, Chartered 10/6/1897:

21 Glendower Street, Perth WA 6000

Tel/Fax: 08 9328 8104

Email: tsp Perth@iinet.net.au

http://tsp Perth.iinet.net.au

Meet: 7.30pm Tuesday

President: Harry Bayens

Secretary: Deborah Weymouth

Mount Helena Retreat Centre:

1540 Bunning Road, Mt Helena WA 6082

Tel: 08 9572 1513

Caretaker/Manager: Elizabeth Collins

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook

2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook QLD 4213

Tel: Office/Hall 07 5533 5211

email: bhora@bigpond.net.au

Caretaker: Barry Hora

Administrator: Zehra Bharucha

Tel: 02 9264 6404

