



Contact

The members' newsletter of the Brisbane Theosophical Society

2012 Issue 2 May-June-July-Aug



The Black Madonna of Rocamadour, France.

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Brisbane Theosophical Society

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Monday to Thursday 10:30 am to 2:30 pm
Friday 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm & 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm

The programme of Lodge meetings is enclosed and is also placed on the Lodge website which will always be the most up-to-date source of information. Whenever there are changes to the programme an email circular is sent to all people who have given us their email address.

The Theosophical Society has no official statements of belief. It encourages members to seek the truth by various avenues, but always subject to respect for others. All views expressed in these pages are entirely those of the authors – not of the Society.

PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS

Dear Fellow Theosophists,

Warm greetings to you all! The year goes quickly by, and so far without major incident. Our study groups and Friday night talks all continue as usual. Our membership numbers a slowly falling off a little, and our library membership has taken quite a dive. A propos of which, you are all invited to take a wad of our lovely postcards expounding the glories of our library, to place in appropriate places about the town. If each person were to take responsibility for just one pile in just one place, and replace the postcards when necessary, that would be a wonderful thing! Local libraries do seem very happy to have them I have found.

We look forward to a visit from our National President in this coming program. She will be speaking on the night of the opening of the TOS Art Show, so two very good reasons for attending. Also I draw your attention to a visit from Victor Gostin, a geologist and long time member of the TS who is visiting in August.

I have stopped the regular monthly Members Study Group and am opting to have a Members Only Seminar on a Saturday morning several times each year, the first being at the end of August. I do encourage members to attend, and would specially like to invite our new members along. I am hoping that this format will suit more people in these our busy lives.

The subject of the first Members Seminar is a big one - a brief overview of the cosmology as expounded in the first Volume of the Secret Doctrine, and which can also be found in the writings of many of the great religions and schools of philosophy. We will look at the relevance of having an understanding of such awesome ideas in our lives today.

If we are to live the life of true theosophists, we cannot escape the necessity of going beyond the workings of the mind and on into the realm of direct perception, clear seeing, true seeing, with eyes unveiled by our conditioned thought, but first we have to have a good working mind to go beyond! I think that the study of the ideas which theosophical works present, exercise the mind and moreover, lead on to that realm beyond thought. May we all tread the path of the true theosophist.

Phillipa Rooke

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IS THEOSOPHY A RELIGION?

Noel Bertelle

A talk given at Brisbane Lodge in 2011 (Abridged by the author)

I recall someone once said “man is an incurably religious animal” and despite occasional outbursts that would appear to be the case. Furthermore, according to well-known theosophical author Charles J. Ryan, as expressed in his little book, ‘What is Theosophy’ -

The feeling of reverence for something greater than personal self is founded in the real presence of a divine Central Self, of which the personality is only a weak and distorted reflection. Theosophy is the universal (understanding) that expresses this; it is the parent of the various religions known to the world – aspects of truth that have had their rise, decline and fall. It is known to students of Theosophy as the Wisdom Religion, the Secret Doctrine, the Esoteric Philosophy, Atma Vidya, etc. It does not admit or worship an anthropomorphic God with limitations of personality – an autocratic ruler of the universe from which it is independent or separate. Its conception of the Eternal is far more sublime than can be contained in even the loftiest idea of personality... Certain fundamental teachings common to Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Taoism, the Egyptian, Greek and Roman religions, etc, reveal the presence of the Ancient Wisdom Religion, and of course it was explicitly taught in the Schools of the Mysteries of Antiquity. (p.4/5),

The teachings of Theosophy would find little response if they were not imbedded in the inner spiritual man. And so we as students of Theosophy must eventually ask ourselves in the moments we ponder such things, whether Theosophy is a Religion or whether it is not or whether it is in fact Religion? In addressing these questions I know much interesting discussion will open up as I'm confident there will be a other points of view to be aired other than mine. I must admit though that I do have the advantage of quoting freely from lectures addressing the same subject given by one of our founders, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, some 125 years ago.

As a starter, H.P.B. firmly believed that Theosophy was terribly misunderstood, stating *...It is no exaggeration to say that there never was a movement, social or religious, so terribly, so absurdly misunderstood or more blundered about than Theosophy – whether regarded theoretically as a code of ethics, or practically, in its objective expression.* She went on then to talk about a desire expressed to her by members of the Society to interrupt those speaking formally from the platform or informally in conversation, who referred to Theosophy as a Religion and the Society as a sort of Church or religious body - or more dangerously as a Sect. (I'm sure some of you have heard similar statements made and had to smother your own impulses on the day).

And clearly in this age public comments like those mentioned can have much greater and far reaching effect through our modern forms of communication and can therefore be more insidious, which is precisely why leaders in the Society have always needed to be alert and able to respond with well-reasoned argument as appropriate. But back to the point; do you think those who make such references are prejudiced, ill-informed or narrow minded? Or do they make those comments as an excuse to further their attack on something that is simply beyond their understanding? Or is it just plain ignorance on their part?

Whatever one's individual opinion there is a need for all to be aware there are those who genuinely believe Theosophy is a religion and others who believe it is a sect and yet neither group necessarily has malicious thoughts or bad intentions towards it. And whilst I don't want to be insulting towards those groups or individuals, I would nevertheless respectfully request they give a

lot more thought to the subject and investigate further before jumping to ill-considered conclusions. H.P.B illustrates the point when she says

...Surely the world has been hitherto sufficiently cursed with the intellectual extinguishers known as dogmatic creeds, without having inflicted upon it a new form of faith ...Moreover the very raison d'être of the TS was, from the beginning, to utter loud protest and lead an open warfare against dogma or any belief system based upon blind faith.

Strong words yet how apt; she then went on to explain that if one believes one's own religion on faith *alone*, then there is every likelihood they will regard the belief of another as a lie, or at least incorrect. Consequently in many there will be born and bred a sense of hate and intolerance. If that occurs then it is clear their perception has been distorted and it will be impossible for them to believe anything outside their own particular faith - and what a sad state of affairs for them! Yet it is much worse than just their being subject to this petty discomfort because, in truth, it affects the entire world as we can clearly observe today! Indeed years ago Coleridge said

...faith will be without principles (and) but a flattering phase for wilful positiveness or fanatical bodily sensations.

With those words as a backdrop let us now refer back to the three questions posed earlier, 'Is theosophy a religion?' Is it not a religion? And, 'Is it in fact Religion?' and ask ourselves how we might best describe Theosophy.

Well, this seems an opportune moment to recall that our Founders were quite emphatic in their time that Theosophy is **not** a Religion. Notwithstanding there were certain beliefs of philosophic, religious or scientific nature which had come to represent Theosophy in the public mind and some were defended by them. That might seem to be a contradiction yet by their asserting that Theosophy, though not a religion, is in fact Religion itself in its truest and most correct sense, and further that religion is in fact a bond uniting people together, and not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs. Do you see the distinction? When H.P.B. speaks of Religion she speaks of it in its widest meaning as *...that which binds not only all people but also all Beings and Things in the entire Universe into one grand Whole.* And that was our Founders' definition of Religion; though she did anticipate her definition would *...change again with every creed and country and no two Christians would ever regard it alike.* On that point she has been proved correct as the truth she saw has clearly not been accepted by the individual let alone the community; just a cursory glance at world events demonstrates quite obviously that personal ego and gain overtake brotherhood as a prospect at almost every turn. As an example of that, Carlyle, in his day, defined the Protestant Religion, in particular, with a prophetic eye when he said...

For the most part a wise, prudential feeling, grounded on mere calculation; a matter, as all others now are, of expediency and utility whereby some smaller quantum of earthly enjoyment may be exchanged for a larger quantum of celestial enjoyment. Thus religion, too, is profit, a working for wages; not reverence, but vulgar hope or fear.

And a Mrs Stowe, another literary figure of her time, seemed to have Roman Catholicism on her mind when saying about her heroine that *...Religion she looked upon in the light of a ticket (with the correct number of indulgences bought and paid for) which, being once purchased and snugly laid away in a pocket-book, is to be produced at the celestial gate, and thus secure admission to heaven...*

Now I don't want to give the impression I'm being unduly cynical about established religion when it is simply my intention to make the point that Theosophists find it difficult, even impossible, to accept a belief on terms similar to those just outlined, because they realise that it is only by their *individual* efforts that they can achieve salvation. It can't be done by proxy or 'working for wages'. A theosophist understands the concept of Universal Brotherhood and will work towards that aim so that all their actions will ultimately reflect in the public good. So it becomes quite clear that Theosophy cannot really be considered as a religion.

I spent some time investigating modern definitions of religion and was quite astonished at some of the findings. I must say it upset my long-held and apparently narrow understanding of the subject as taught to me from an early age. Indeed I found the definition of religion had considerably broadened from that time and today in this more permissive age includes rather unusual classifications. I quote some 'Google-d' examples, starting with this rather revealing statement;

The definition of religion is not easy to find. There are many interpretations of what defines a religion but not one that can be said to be the most accurate. Here are a few examples.

Religion is:

- *A strong belief in a supernatural power or powers that control human destiny.*
- *An institution to express belief in a divine power.*
- *A belief concerning the supernatural, sacred or divine and the practices and institutions associated.*
- *The sum total of answers given to explain humankind's relationship with the universe.*

On further investigation I found that other dictionaries provide us with these definitions;

- *Any specific system of belief, worship or conduct that prescribes certain responses to the existence (or non-existence) and character of God.*
- *A set of attitudes, beliefs and practices pertaining to supernatural power.*
- *A system of beliefs and practices relating to the worship of supernatural beings, deities, spirits or God.*

And then I was informed in Nevill Drury's Dictionary of the Esoteric that

- *Religions can be of two sorts: monotheism, which entails belief in one god; or polytheism, in which more than one deity is worshipped.*

Yet clearly a problem seems to exist when the definition of religion includes a deity or superhuman power. For example, atheism is often called a religion but the belief denies any power other than man! Other religious definitions are so broad as to include cosmology and ecology which most people regard as scientific studies and non-religious in nature.

And then we find that the liberal interpretation of the terms 'spiritual' and 'sacred' add to the complexity of defining religion. But on reflection unless there are Supreme Beings or Deities most beliefs would not fall into the category of religion - would they? Adding to one's confusion we note that the beliefs of atheists and agnostics are that there is or is not, a god, and that in some cases ethics do not necessarily matter. So do they, too, really fit the category of a religion?

And many Christians do not define Christianity as a religion but as an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. It is the only religion wherein you do not have to work to be saved as it is by the freely given Grace of God. (Although that understanding could well be debated, just as most of what I have unearthed in my mini-investigation into the meaning of religion also could be debated.)

So you see finding a meaningful and accurate definition of religion is rather difficult. But for myself I prefer that given by G. De Purucker in his Occult Glossary.

Religion is...an operation of the human spiritual mind in its endeavour to understand not only the How and the Why of things, but comprising in addition a yearning and striving towards self-conscious union with the Divine ALL and an endlessly growing self-conscious identification with the cosmic divine-spiritual Realities...Human religion is the expression of that aspect of man's consciousness which is intuitional, aspirational and mystical and which is often deformed and distorted in its lower forms by the emotional in man.

I am particularly drawn to those last words as I feel they encapsulate the essence of the true religious spirit as much as they point out where we have erred in our quest to understand. Let us now to go a little further with our investigation about what religion is. For myself I find it quite intriguing and hope you do as well, so on that assumption we'll now go on to look to the theological differences between East and West. Particularly about whether or not there is a Creator, as despite what we hear from different sources there seem general agreement that there is a divine aspect. John Blofeld, a distinguished Buddhist scholar, has this to say

...the difference between God-based religions and those such as Buddhism and Taoism, which are, to coin a term, god-free, is to some extent a verbal one. In the former Supreme divinity is conceived as a being, in the latter as a state. Now, where space and form are transcended and we are considering an invisible, omnipresent source of blessedness, the difference between a being and a state of being, is obviously hard to define. The link between the two concepts is provided by the Christian mystics' recognition that even God (as a being) is subordinate to the God-head (a state). In the sadhana (spiritual discipline) the empowerment and purification come from the union of the individual (temporarily drawn out of his puny ego-hood) with the divine Source which is the Shining Void. The Spirit of divine union dissolves all types of distinction. Once we have entered the pure realm of Oneness, that is No-Thingness, differentiation ceases...

All very interesting isn't it? And possibly like me you have found from all this that your understanding about a definition of religion has broadened a little, even though the confusion created by what I would term fairly permissive inclusions into the category makes it a little too broad and maybe even a little demeaning. Don't you think?

So now it would seem after due consideration we are left with just the one dynamic assertion; Theosophy **is** Religion. And in further support of that I draw your attention again to H.P.B who stated quite emphatically

Theosophy is Religion and the Society its one Universal Church. It is not a Religion but Religion itself, the one bond of unity which is so universal and all embracing that no one, from gods and mortals down to animals, the blade of grass or atom – can be outside of its light. Any organisation or body of that same name must necessarily be a Universal Brotherhood.

Once more H.P.B begs our full attention as we consider the true meaning behind the phrase *Universal Brotherhood* at our various meetings. We should take care not to just repeat it without due thought as for instance, we read the First Object, but take it to heart and make it work in our lives. If we don't do that then the word Theosophy will be just another word that sounds great but in reality becomes filled with pretention and emptiness, just as the word religion, upon which we have spent so much time tonight, might have become over time - just a word that sounds great but in reality may have little real meaning.

In H.P.B's lectures on this subject she observed that Theosophy had been described as

...the alembic of the Mediaeval alchemist. It transmutes the apparently base metal of every ritualistic and dogmatic creed...into the gold of fact and truth and thus truly produces a universal panacea for the ills of mankind...Theosophy can be practiced by anyone of any faith provided they are not bigoted and refuse to accept those from outside their own narrow creed or belief. What we as Theosophists happily understand is that there are Universal ethics which were preached by all the great religious leaders in their time and once we start to live up to them we do our bit to heal the many wounds that have been inflicted by those who, in their narrow and bigoted understanding of those teachings, have caused so much worldly grief and confusion.

She then reminds us that Theosophy is our opportunity to not only 'do our bit' but gain a greater and more profound understanding of the original teachings without prejudice, so that we can continue to stimulate our powers of reasoning and become truly aware of the great truths *inherent* in Religion, yet remain free of association with such dogma that can imprison us within a life-long, man-made prison. We should therefore remain continually alert.

HPB helps further by suggesting we

...tear off with no uncertain hand the thick veil of dead-letter with what all religious scriptures are cloaked (so that) the old wisdom which is the origin of the world's faiths and sciences can be revealed, opening up ...new vistas beyond the old horizons ...turning blind belief into a reasoned knowledge of the exact science which is Theosophy ...Practical Theosophy may, in short, be regarded as a universal tutor of world-wide knowledge and experience...which not only assists and guides (us) towards a successful examination for every scientific or moral service in earthly life but fits (us) for lives to come, if (we) will only study the universe and its mysteries within ourselves instead of studying them through the spectacles of orthodox science and religion.

It is clear that H.P.B., contrary to the claims of many during her life and for that matter even today, is a great supporter of religion but only the **original** teachings and not what has been handed down to us which unfortunately incorporates man-made dogma, most of which may well have been created for dubious reasons. Nevertheless we must always remain on the alert because Theosophy is not unlike organised religion in the sense that it can also be severely criticised if it is confused with the actions of its members through its various Lodges and Branches. And why is that? Well, simply because its members are not perfect and they act as a vessel only.

HPB suggests members keep in mind at all times that

...Theosophy is an ideal, it is divine wisdom, perfection itself and its vessels will always be imperfect, just as no individual is perfect and cannot be expected to be ...There are those who criticise Theosophy, what they do is criticise its members, rather than get to know Theosophy itself. Nevertheless this provides us with a warning that each theosophist should do their best to uphold the wisdom ethics that have been brought down through the ages and made available to those who seek them out (in that way) they will be able to offset criticism of Theosophy itself.

But now back to the statement; THEOSOPHY IS RELIGION. We have, I believe, successfully argued that Theosophy is not a religion, but this does not alter the fact that there are still many members of the uninformed public who will insist that it is either a religion or a sect, but I do believe we have answers for them as it is very clear that Theosophy is not a branch, denomination or sect associated with any particular religion, nor is it a specific religion in its own right. It **is** Religion and as H.P.B. puts it

...those beings, who led by Karma, have incarnated in our humanity, and thus struck the keynote of that secret Science which countless generations of subsequent adepts have

expanded since then in every age while they checked its doctrines by personal observation and experience; the bulk of this knowledge – which no man is able to possess in its fullness – constitutes what we now call Theosophy or 'divine knowledge'. Beings from other and higher worlds may have it entire; we may have it only approximately.

H.P.B.'s words point to a wonderful Unity of all things in the universe and to a knowledge, as incomplete as it may be, which we call Theosophy or the Wisdom Religion. It is from that knowledge that each individual religion has formed and from each of them has developed many off-shoots and a bewildering variety of branches and sometimes then sects.

Theosophy or Divine Wisdom is **not** one of those because it is the **Mother Source**. The fact that each subsequent variation became polluted (to use H.P.B.'s description) with purely human speculations and inventions based on lower motives, does not prevent any of them from being pure in their early beginnings. It is of course most unfortunate that so many of them have been overshadowed with human and unfortunately often selfish inventions and are now virtually unrecognisable and others are in the process of decay; unfortunately there are now few of these that can be directly related to their source.

Let us all make a mental note at this point that there is a difference between being critical for the sake of it and healthy observation based on theosophical knowledge; and that we should always recognize and sympathetically acknowledge that all belief systems are divine of origin. It is only the dogma and human element which have led to their incredible decline. Even though it was genuine truth that was given out originally, the recipient, human-kind was clearly not in tune with the content, unable in fact to accept without distortion such *...faultless reception of divine revelation.*

And that clearly explains why it is we have so many variations of teachings even within the *one* religion. I am sure you have all had experience of that in one way or another. Consider just how many incredible theological interpretations there have been (and still are and will continue to be) of the one truth. Also consider that our own Society is not immune because as H.P.B. says, the information she worked so hard to bring to us and distribute through her great work *The Secret Doctrine ...is not complete but lays bare only a part of the common foundation and inheritance of all philosophical schemes.* The point made here is that we should never be naive enough to state publicly, let alone even think we know all there is to know because we are theosophists and have read the relevant books, as such a statement would prove the contrary, wouldn't it? We can but know but part of the truth

As you are aware from your studies, there have been many attempts by sincere and knowledgeable theosophical writers to pull down the many misconceptions that hide so much of the truth from the world religions, and it has been hugely resented. The Theosophical Society itself has suffered a great deal of hefty criticism and even to this day is ostracised and treated with suspicion by some and as we have previously observed, often classed as a fairly weird religious sect by many. It is not so difficult to see the cause of this confusion about whether or not Theosophy is a religion or a sect, because Theosophy was seen and is *still* seen by some as a method of spreading malicious untruths and although untrue such a practice should be quite familiar to those *doing* the criticising because intentionally spreading untruths is precisely what so many religions and sects have chosen to do in their attempts to disprove claims of a rival group. You see, spreading untruths is quite different from attempting to lay bare the truth by tearing away misconceptions; that was clearly the difficult task our Founders undertook in their day.

So I now leave you with the statement that **THEOSOPHY IS RELIGION**; if able to agree then let's clear all else from our minds so we are left with no possible misconceptions

THE GODDESS SOPHIA

Judith Jeffrey

A talk given at Redcliffe Theosophical group, April 29th 2009.

Judith Jeffrey is a student of Theosophy, Jungian depth-psychology, Taoism and the I Ching.

The following is one of many invocations, about archetypal Tarot images and the flow of creation, written by Stephan Hoeller, in his book *The Royal Road*.

"Through the central gate of being, we enter into the palace of the heart. We call upon the faithful helpers of sympathy and sincerity to aid our passage to the inner worlds.

Humbly we bow towards the Mother of all creation (as symbolized by the Tarot Card the Empress) ... that reigns at the centre of our being. We contemplate the glorious beauty of the Oneness that resides at the heart of all creatures - in the trees, plants and animals. May our minds be ever aware of this magnificence and ours heart irradiated with her Love. "

As you know, the word Sophia means wisdom - as for example in the Greek word Theo-Sophia - Divine Wisdom. So seeing that the Theosophical Society is named after Sophia, it is most apt to give talks about Her. Scholars have made the distinction between the twin concepts of Logos (the masculine or divine Yang expansive power of the universe) and Sophia (the divine feminine, or Yin receptive power). These terms are attributed to Gnosticism, at the time of the early Christians. It is interesting to note that in most of our esoteric books, God is called the Logos (or the Word) and the other half of the archetype is simply ignored and not even mentioned. So when you see or hear the word *Logos*, think of *Sophia* who is left out. And remember that the One gave birth to the two. Hence Sophia is one half of an indivisible whole.

I shall explore how this archetypal or primordial energy (sometimes called the Goddess) has been perceived in the world. (This energy is of course beyond gender as we know it.) The Goddess is within us all and both men and women could think of Her as being the Divine Feminine aspect of the Universal Self. First the Goddess or Sophia was actively worshipped, then hidden or disguised - now re-emerging in new forms. These three themes will be intertwined and the subject viewed from a Western and Middle Eastern perspective. Also, it is important to state that I will be exploring universal symbolism and not individual religious doctrines, old or new.



I have delved into several books, especially ***Sophia, Goddess of Wisdom - The Divine Feminine from Black Goddess to World Soul***, by **Caitlin Matthews**. (Cover painting shown below, by Nicholas Roerich, "The World Mother") I have discovered a few surprising facts that I would like to share. I will also paraphrase quotes from the book ***The Chalice and the Blade*** by **Riane Eisler**, on the topics of: our relationship to the earth as Mother or Goddess, land ownership, etc.

I would like to start with a quote by Dr. Rupert Sheldrake - the author of ***The Rebirth of Nature***. In this book he examines the breakdown of reverence for Nature and the earth and I shall paraphrase some of his comments.

"In archaic mythologies, the Great Mother was the original source of the universe and its laws. She was the ruler of fate, time, wisdom, justice, love, - birth, death



The goddess Sophia was -

- + Revered in the Neolithic Era,
- + Veiled in the past 5,000 years,
- + and now gradually being unveiled in the New Age of recognition of the Sacred Feminine.

and rebirth. She was Mother Earth, Gaia or Queen of the Heavens. Our very word for matter is derived from the same root as the Latin word for mother. The earth was sacred both as a source of life and as a receiver of the dead. Even today, people still want to be buried or have their ashes scattered, in their native land. We still have a yearning for this tie with the earth. On weekends, people leave the cities en masse, to experience a natural form of relatedness in the country, once again."

Contrast this with the scientific world view after Newtonian physics, when the world became a vast machine and God, like an all-powerful Engineer.

Even most religions and philosophies of today do not fully support the idea of sanctity of the earth. God, when given credence by sceptics, is often portrayed something like a computer programmer, a distant indifferent, objective, rational force of impersonal law. Sacred places have become myth or romance ---- given respect if an indigenous person says that this or that place is sacred - but certainly not a rational, advanced science-based person!

How did we lose contact with the World Soul, with earth wisdom or Sophia? Archaeologists tell us that in 7,000 Before the Common Era. societies lived in settlements that were not fortified, where art and agriculture (not weapons) were their chief pre-occupation. (You can read about this in the book *The Chalice and Blade*.) People in those times mostly shared their resources and revered the earth. However, between 4,000 and 5,000 B. C. this way of life was shattered by waves of Aryan invaders. (This was part of the wave of new thinking that Madame Blavatsky called the 5th Root Race, or 5th Wave of Consciousness as I call it, as it inclusive of all races. Misunderstanding of the word *Race* has caused enough mischief on web-sites.)

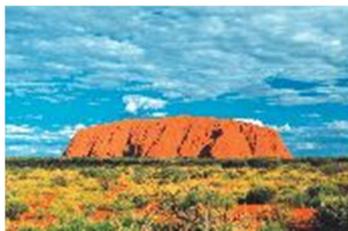
This new way of life spread out from central Asia and their new thought eventually spread everywhere. Their warrior gods dethroned the goddesses, first of all demoting them to being consorts of male Gods. Violent sky-gods (like Jehovah, Zeus and Thor) came to rule. Fortified cities, warring empires, slavery, hierarchical structures with a patriarchal head, became almost global. Compassion and caring for the earth was denigrated, e.g. the goddess Ishtar, Queen of Heaven and Earth, is mentioned in the Bible as the Whore of Babylon. Archeologists have discovered goddess sites near or underneath thousands of religious sites the world over.

Here is an example of the previous 4th Wave consciousness in a quote from a Nez Perce Indian Elder, a hunter-gatherer of North America, when he was first presented with the idea of agriculture. Think of aboriginal ideas during this quote. The elder said: "My young men will never work [at agriculture]. Men who work [in this way] cannot dream and wisdom comes in dreams. You ask me to plough the ground. Shall I take a knife and tear my mother's breast? Then when I die I cannot enter her body and be born again. It is bad law and my people cannot obey it. We must wait here in the place of our ancestors and be ready to meet in the body of our mother. (End of quote from *The Rebirth of Nature*.)

This is an excellent illustration of just how far removed this aboriginal way of being is from our Western economic rationalist thought (which was at the height of its power up to 2008). The middle way between these two views is often hard to find, but worth the struggle. Regarding modern agriculture, it has taken three decades for ideas like Permaculture (rather than monoculture) to even begin to be widely accepted. My husband Michael and I were driving through Dalby to the sacred site of the Bunya Mountains in Queensland during a terrible drought, where we saw almost nothing but barren brown ground. (It has since improved.) Due to the mono-culture of endless wheat fields and no trees, a lack of forest has probably contributed to the marked change in climate for that area.

The rich oral tradition, including the songs and art of most aboriginal people is steeped in awareness of the cyclic processes of Nature. This is a Yin or more-feminine view of life that was once all pervasive.

(I say a more-feminine view, as nothing in the universe is wholly masculine or feminine as shown in the Yin/Yang symbol.) In our time, the polar opposite of this ancient way of being is predominant. It involves a



more-masculine outlook based on linear thinking, i.e. where everything is viewed in straight lines and one thing progresses to another, ever onwards and upwards. A very clear example is the Olympic Games motif - *Faster, Higher, Stronger*. But this is a delusion. (Just think of the Stock market.) With linear thinking, there is no thought of what happens in the ebb-tides or down-times, for instance when athletes start dropping from chronic fatigue and steroid abuse. (Speak to doctors who treat them and they will tell you what happens.) For any overly-Yang state automatically leads to an ultra-Yin state of inertia. This is a balancing law of Nature, which counts for little in our type of society. People who do reckless extreme-Yang sports and adventures are glorified in our world, no matter how many lives they put at risk and how much they cost Medicare! This is a linear view of life.

The quote from the Nez Perce Indian reminded me of when Uluru was leased to the local Aboriginal people of central Australia. A ceremony was held, at which they said they would prove that the area did belong to them. They did this by singing songs handed down to them, over hundreds of generations. To them it was (and is) ultimate proof. In our legalistic world, this valuable link was barely proof at all.

I also saw on television recently an Aboriginal painting of a district showing all the features of the land, the water holes, etc. and it was similar to a valid Title Deed. But can you imagine what the Land Valuation bureaucrats thought of that!

Again we are discussing two completely opposite modes of thinking, one which was almost obliterated, as outlined in *The Chalice and the Blade*. Yet this is exactly how all the Neolithic cultures operated. And it is how they were wiped out, as you can read in the same book. It is so simple. All you have to do is take a map of the land, draw lines on it, allocate parts to specific people, (with the unproductive land being allocated to the indigenous people), and then declare that tax and rates

have to be paid on land. This happened in Australia, Canada, the U. S. Hey presto, instantly you have introduced the



necessity for money, formal employment and also class divisions, based on ownership of land formerly collectively organized. What is more, women were mostly excluded from this process. This fact is now causing massive problems in Africa, as they were the ones who co-ordinated the family farms.

In our era, Communist Stalinism reimposed collective ownership. However, it was done through domination and without reverence for Nature - and so was doomed to failure. (Anything overly-Yang is bound to collapse, just as anything overly-Yin leads to inertia.) In England this process was completed when Roman Law gradually took over the agrarian Saxon/British societies. So when Australia was colonized, how could the Aborigines not appreciate this way of organizing society? Many of them have still not recovered from the effects of the radical change. Humanity could return one day to communal ownership, via shares in co-operatives? Most people have not yet evolved to stage when sharing can be done consciously and freely. But this may become commonplace in the 6th Sub-cycle of this 5th Wave, said to be in full swing in 2800. For the key-notes already emerging, are *Sharing and Community*. We have made progress towards this in Australia, one country where the 6th Sub-cycle is coming to birth.

If you want to know what Goddess-centred peoples were like, you could also read about the South African bush people. Laurens Van der Post appreciated that they still retain an innocent, gentle, guileless approach to the earth, to animals and to each other. Some of them now work as shearers and the loving way they handle the sheep is a sight to see. You don't have to go to archaeological digs to discover how the world once was. As the Bush People said: "*you only have to come and talk to us.*" (The above photo shows a similar connection to an eagle nursed back to health.) A new attitude to animal welfare is now emerging, alongside the cruelty of factory farming with its sow, veal and chicken cages. Vegetarian meals and free range options are my own personal response.



As we know from theosophical ideas about the evolution of consciousness, mankind was destined to travel from such a state of unconscious wholeness, into our currently fractured, analytical state of mind - and then onto another higher spiral of conscious wholeness - i.e. back to Sophia or the Goddess, but in an informed way.

In ancient times, the marriage of the Queen or King to the land (or the earth) was considered as the Sacred Marriage. Every seven years or so, this marriage had to be renewed. (Our newly elected Prime Ministers are still credited with breaking droughts and this is the same principle.) The Eleusinian Mysteries of old contained rituals in which the gods were represented by the priests and priestesses. They dramatized the sacred wedding of the gods Zeus and Demeter. (Demeter is shown welcoming Persephone, in the above painting by Frederick Leighton.)



In our churches, we have the ceremony of taking bread and wine. Ken Wilbur, in his book *Up From Eden* states that this rite of *sharing bread and wine* was originally a ceremony for the Goddess, taken over by Christianity - and then they had the

cheek to say that only men could perform it! Consider that Demeter stood for agriculture, hence wheat or bread. While blood, symbolized by wine, was always pertinent to the Goddess, blood being required to create the embryo.

In *Isis Unveiled* by Madame Blavatsky, on p. 44, it states that the ritual of bread and wine is one of the oldest rites in antiquity. Ceres (the goddess especially related to Grain, hence the word cereal) represents the generation of life from the seed. While Bacchus (wine) was the fruit of the vine, remember Jesus also said "I am the True vine" - same universal archetype. So this ceremony came from a completely different source to the patriarchal church. Perhaps all the bread and wine rituals were once conducted by priestesses, or at least with all the participants sharing equally. This was once a common ritual and I have had strong inner guidance that it will be so again in the future.



Another symbol of the Goddess that travelled throughout history, changing from a female to male emphasis is that of the dove. Even today doves are released as symbols of peace and freedom. The dove was once sacred to the Aphrodite and Ishtar - manifestations of the Goddess Sophia and they decorated the temples of Babylon. Hence it is most revealing that the dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit that came down

to Christ on his baptism, was then declared to be a male energy - but not in all branches of the Church. For example, not in the holistic, inclusive Church of the East, which spread from Egypt to Japan -and which most people don't even know existed, due to our social conditioning.

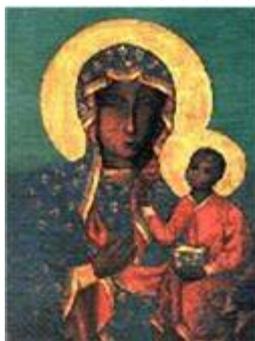
Archetypes, such as the Holy Spirit are of course **neither male nor female**, being part of the Causal Level of Oneness which unifies both opposites.

By the time of Mary in Bethlehem, she was required, after the birth of Jesus, to sacrifice doves on an altar, as a purification rite after the sin (in quotes) of birth. Just like the Snakes in Ireland (symbol for the Druids), the former symbols of the Goddess had become that which had to be killed or sacrificed. Hence St. Patrick killing the *snakes*.

To quote again from *Sophia* by Caitlin Matthews: "In our era, Sophia has been silent and veiled, unlike her partner, Logos, who goes forth speaking opening." In the Middle Ages, the Virgin Mary was sometimes portrayed as being black-skinned, e.g. in grottoes containing the Black Madonna.

This used to puzzle me greatly, until I realized recently that a Black Mary is the Goddess darkened or eclipsed. To illustrate this point, the cathedral of Chartres in central France, once contained an image of the Black Madonna. It was kept in a cave underneath its medieval structure. The cave had its own altar and holy well of healing waters. The whole cathedral is dedicated to Mary and its windows portray her story. It was said to have housed the relic of Mary's veil.

The Black statue at Chartres was a figure with a child in its arms (probably similar to the above painting from Poland). It was called Our Lady Beneath the Earth (i.e. the hidden Goddess). The original statue was said to be carved at the order of a Gaelic prince and was of Druid origin - Chartres being a centre of sacred assembly for the Druids. This portrayal of the Black Goddess or Mary was revered for a long time. Then in the 17th Century, the well and her altar were walled up by priests who objected to her popularity. Amazingly, this statue came to a sorry end, when it was burned in the Cathedral Square during the French Revolution.



There is a unique Pauline Fathers Monastery in Australia on the main highway to Goulburn, past the Berrima turn-off, with a sign to Penrose Park. The site was obviously an aboriginal sacred site originally. It has a Black Madonna called *Our Lady of Jasna Gora* at the altar, embraced by a huge angel. This painting was protected (when Hitler was determined to destroy it, but could not) and was also slashed at one stage, which to me, represents the wounding of the Sacred Feminine. The stained-glass windows of the church are glorious. There are also a large number of grottoes dedicated to our Lady of Mercy in the grounds, from every country in the world. (This is the same archetype as Kwan Yin - the result of a union of Buddhism and Christianity along the Silk Road.) In the grottoes, you can literally see all the universal symbols discussed in this talk, from Egypt to Russia. Well worth a long visit - take your own food. It is open every day, for everyone. (See their website <http://www.paulinefathers.org.au>)

The Great Goddess or Sophia did not disappear, as archetypes can never be destroyed. She simply withdrew, like a stream in a desert that goes underground, only to reappear at yet another spring. The Goddess whose worship was at the core of a more peaceful and equal society, was no longer the supreme principle governing the world, but she was still a force to be reckoned with. Hence Jesus too became the child of the Divine Mother and like earlier divine children became a symbol of the regeneration of Nature, every Spring at Easter. (As you know, even the word Easter is taken from *Eostre* the name of a Goddess).

Just as with the ancient goddesses, Jesus also became the consort, i.e. the bridegroom of Mother Church. The baptismal font and the chalice were both part of ancient rites celebrating the vessel, the container of life, the womb of Nature. Holy Water is likewise, a remnant of the old Holy Wells, as places of healing, as e.g. at Lourdes in France. The day for the birth of Jesus is of course at the time of the Winter Solstice, and this was the day when the Goddess gave birth to the physical Sun. By the way, it was also the birth day of Mithras, another Roman Sun God. This same process of taking over the old ways (yet not giving them any recognition) occurred all over the world.

For example, medieval priests simply acquired the Goddess and called her the Mother of God,

after failing to stamp her out for hundreds of years. Hence the worship of Mary sprang up everywhere, taking over the last remaining sacred groves, caves, wells, holy days, festivals, etc. The reformation of the Protestants, necessary in many ways, unfortunately devalued the Goddess in the form of Mary, even more. Her image often does not appear in Protestant churches, except in some of the windows, which has been described as an austere over-reaction to former excesses. As far as Sophia or the Sacred Feminine is concerned, it is a tragic loss, especially to women! The ancient Goddess stood for abundance, fruitfulness and the celebration of life on earth. However the new Virgin Goddess, Mary, was portrayed as not having conceived Jesus in the normal way, let alone celebrating life and relationships. The emphasis was so vastly different.

The fifth wave of consciousness, which devalues Sophia, is of course based on notions of political power. For the new way of the world aimed for control - especially over:

- men of lesser rank in the new hierarchical systems
- the lives of most women, except those at the top,
- all matters of fertility, in order to boost their populations, and



- marriage laws that ensured patriarchal property inheritance.

In all the patriarchal religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism and even the Baha'i faith, all the gods or prophets are God-like men like Abraham, etc., whereas before, the Saviours were often women Goddesses. (Yet the Self is of course gender-less.)

In the book *Isis Unveiled* by Madame Blavatsky (on p. 209) she lists the qualities of Isis and similar goddesses that were later transferred to Mary, by Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria. Under the new Christian Roman Empire, the local Egyptian Governors insisted that their own gods and goddesses be integrated into the new system. Hence the Goddess was still present, even if in a form diminished of power. The obvious difference is that Mary was relegated to a place outside the masculine Trinity of God.



Here we see how the image of Isis and Horus worshipped in Rome as a symbol of the sacred feminine changed into Mary and Jesus about the same time in history - similar story of sacrifice - same archetypal meaning. Thus the midnight blue image of Isis standing on a crescent moon, became Mary, who like Isis was the Queen of Heaven, among other things. The portrayal of Isis with Horus in her arms became Mary with the baby Jesus. In the tomb of

Ramses can be found the figure of a woman bedecked with stars, giving birth to the Sun. The Sun God was later portrayed as Jesus the son of God, rather than Osiris.

Stating this is not meant to detract in any way from the person of Mary. For in esoteric terms, Mary was a great soul (who being blessed with the presence of the Master Jesus and undergoing with him, a life of profound sacrifice) went through one of the major Initiations. Rather, what I am discussing is how Mary was viewed in psychological terms, i.e. what images of the God-Self were projected onto her - for it was vitally important that these archetypes were transferred to the new religion of the day and that humanity was not bereft of them.



We assimilate the meaning of such symbols, in our own lives, by first of all recognizing them in an admired and loved person. I am also not denying the historical impact of the life of Jesus. It is simply an illustration of how mythological truths (just as important as historical truths) become intertwined, as civilizations rise and fall.

The ancient goddesses were also sometimes Virgins, not in a sexual sense, but rather by being whole or inviolate unto themselves. In mythology, they followed their sun god/king, son or daughter, after his/her death or sacrifice, into the underworld to redeem, save or resurrect them once again to the light. You can see the correlations to the story of Mary and Jesus. In a cosmic sense, this is a symbol of our journey from the Mother (the Tao or Oneness) into manifestation, often involving death to knowledge of the Divine Self - resulting in many trials - sacrifices and eventual resurrection, or reabsorption into the Great Light.

I would now like to include the account of the Sufi mystic and Great Master, Ibin Al-Arabi, who lived in the 12th century. He wrote of a mystical state, in which he contacted on the inner planes, a devotee of the Goddess Sophia.

Al-Arabi was known to be an illumined person who could converse with the spirit of the Prophets in many miraculous ways. He was originally the pupil of two female Sufi mystics, Jasmine of Machina and Fatima of Cordova. (This was when Christians, Muslims and Jews all still lived together in a high-point of peace and cultural exchange in Spain during the reign

of the Moors.) He thus attained simultaneous awareness of many levels of existence.

At the age of 36 he went on Haj to Mecca - and while there he fell in love with the daughter of his



host. She (like Beatrice with Dante) became a catalyst for deepening his spiritual awareness - for as we know, deep personal love can be an *initiatory* experience to transcendent Love. The young girl's name was Nizam and she died when quite young, so they never married. Just as with Dante, she had filled his mind with love and poetic inspiration.

He wrote that while he was on pilgrimage, he fell into a profound interior state, thinking about the nature of love, human and divine. He felt the hand of a girl on his shoulder. He turned around and at first, thought he was seeing a vision of his beloved Nizam, but then (in his mind) she turned into a priestess. He described her as a daughter of the Greeks, without ornament, but exuding a radiant source of light. He knew that she was linked to Sophia, called Saint Sophia by later Greek Orthodoxy. (His knowledge of Western and Eastern culture was very wide.) Ibin El Arabi engaged in a mystic dialogue with this radiant being about his spiritual journey - the possibility of ultimate knowledge - and the vulnerability of a faithful believer in Wisdom.

The modern psychologist Carl Jung, was later to call such an experience, an Inner Dialogue - i.e. a valid way of tapping the subconscious higher mind. It is significant that Sufis

consciously used such psychological techniques hundreds of years before. It is also interesting to note from a psychological perspective, that it was love for the young girl Nizam that triggered this experience. Carl Jung might have said that Nizam became a true anima figure, i.e. *a bridge to his own soul* and his own divine feminine or Sophia aspect.

Quite naturally being such a highly developed soul, Ibin Al-Arabi was able to use 'falling in love' to indeed fall into Love itself, Love with a capital L.

Ultimately this is what every experience of human love is all about - a call to a deeper knowing that in essence we are Love.

In the last section of the talk I shall explore the subject of Sophia in the context of the medieval legend of the Grail. Here is a short version of one Grail legend. It is in a slightly different form to the usual and was based on a French Gaelic Celtic source and perhaps because of this, it is very clear in its symbolism. Think of the Grail, or the sacred Chalice as the overflowing cup of abundance, fertility and joy of the Goddess - and you will know what this story means.

I shall abbreviate the story here. A long time ago, before the time of King Arthur, there lived damsels of the wells.



(Remember the well is a Goddess site) These damsels would

emerge from the wells and offer food and drink from golden cups (like a Chalice) and minister to travellers (along the path). However, a King who ruled a clan called the Amangons and his soldiers attacked the damsels. So they no longer came forth



from the wells. (clear reference to the suppression of the Goddess religions.) Because of this, the land was laid waste and desolate and the people were very hungry. They could no longer find the palace of the Rich Fisherman (like the Fisher King), nor the earthly paradise. (This suggests loss of the Golden Age of Innocence.) The voices of the wells were lost.

Then, after King Arthur instituted the Order of the Round Table, the account of this outrage against the damsels reached his Knights. They swore they would not rest until they had restored the damsels of the wells and had avenged them by killing the Amangons. But despite their good intentions, they could neither hear the voices from the wells nor see any of the damsels. (In other words the connection with the land was gone with the new wave of thinking.)

They set off in search of the evil knights, who had attacked the damsels, and eventually came upon a mysterious company of knights and maidens wandering aimlessly in the forest. The knights of the Round Table captured one of them and listened to their story. The mysterious company were the descendants of the damsels of the wells and the clan of the Amangons. They were condemned to wander the earth together until they found others who would be inspired to find the Court of Joy, where the grail was housed.



The knights then realized the fruitlessness of their purpose, for to kill the Amangons' kin was to kill the kin the damsels. So they decided to join the quest for the Rich Fisherman and find the Court of Joy. One knight managed to find the Court, where the kingly Fisherman silently languished and all his kingdom was desolate. The knight asked the right question, which was "Why has this happened? why are you dumb and what ails you?" Then in due course, magically the King was healed and the kingdom was restored to its fruitfulness. (End of the legend.)

The voices of the damsels are of course the voices of the earth and those who honoured it. Our inability to hear them (the voices of Sophia) has resulted in our environmental degradation. The mysterious company of the descendants of the damsels and the knights who destroyed them is the present state of our evolution - a mixture of the remnants of the former Neolithic consciousness and the present one.



(This sculpture of a Nature being is by Bruno Torf of Marysville, Victoria, whose art partially survived the catastrophic bush-fires, but will rise again.)

Like us, the knights and damsels are condemned to wander through the desolation of war, famine and chaos endlessly, seeming to be powerless to stop it. Also their king or their leaders did not speak out against this. They had to wait until the knights of King Arthur

(symbols of men and women of compassion with the will to find the Grail or the True Way) asked the right questions. Questions such as: "Why is mankind always at war? Why are so many people starving and without clean water? Why is the world in continual chaos? What is wrong with our King or governments who are so powerless to stop it? Why are they not speaking out?" (Remember the King was dumb.)



The loss of paradise, the absence of wisdom and our inability to grieve for what we have lost, are the themes of our Grail search. We have lost the vision of the Ladies of the Lake and those who have found it again are not

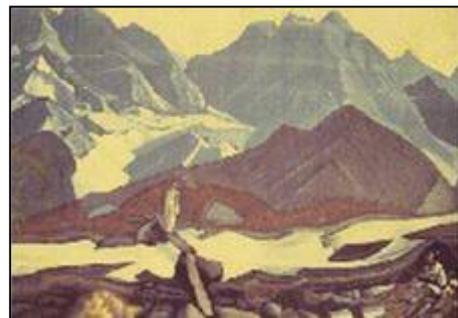
sufficient in number or power (as yet) to heal the land.

Hence we have the image of the Tarot card the High Priestess, which stands for hidden wisdom, or covert power. The finding of the sick or wounded Grail King (or the wounded masculine bereft of the High Priestess energy) and realizing his plight, is where humanity is now. The next step is feeling compassion for his/our plight and then asking the right questions.

We trivialize the grail-quest if we think of it only in terms of personal spiritual attainment – for it represents the merging of spiritual ideals with physical needs, such as real hunger in our planet and hence it stands for the need for collective healing.

Here is Kwan Yin - the image of the most powerful Buddhist Bodhisattva of Compassion, which merged with the image of Mary our Lady of Mercy along the Silk Road – to become Kwan Yin, Goddess of Mercy and compassion. Prayers and invocations to Kwan Yin are said to invoke the power of the Self.

This painting by the Russian artist Nicholas Roerich portrays the Self in a feminine form like Kwan Yin - meeting us more than half way on the bridge of consciousness - from the personality (in the right corner) to the Divine Self (of the higher Path).



The lovely image below portrays an Undivided Wholeness containing both the masculine and feminine, and the fruit thereof, which can represent anything brought to birth, as the result of the Sacred Marriage of the more-spiritual masculine and feminine energies with in us all.



We are all indebted to Blavatsky and other pioneers of the Aquarian Age, for being the first of many brave souls in the modern era to lift a corner of the veil of Sophia or the ancient wisdom. Without their fierce courage to restate ancient truths, we might have had just the technology, without holistic, multi-cultural awareness also unfolding. The purpose of the Great Sages promoting the TS (and similar organizations) was to counter the overly-materialistic effect of a Darwinian approach to evolution – for evolution has two sides, co-operation and competition, consciousness and form, or spirit and matter – which are two aspects of the One Energy or a Unified Field. When this is understood, the world will truly flower and peace may finally be possible.

To complete this talk - a short meditation on the Goddess:

Lead us oh gracious Goddess to Thy limitless love and to truth and to union with Thee - to the heart of eternal bliss. In Thy love we remain forever more.

Bibliography:

Information from the following books was paraphrased, to suit the presentation of the material. I am sure the authors would approve of their work being linked to such wonderful graphic images, as those shown above.

Sophia , Goddess of Wisdom - The Divine Feminine from Black Goddess to World Soul, by Caitlin Matthews, Thorsons. (Cover Nicholas Roerich "The World Mother".)

I highly recommend that you purchase this marvellous book, which covers a vast area of Goddess wisdom from many cultures, of which I have only scratched the surface.

The Chalice and the Blade by Riane Eisler. See www.rianeeisler.com This book changed my life as it put so much incomprehensible history in context. A must read. It ties in with theosophical teachings about tides of consciousness, moving from the Fourth cycle of evolution (Neolithic Age) to the Fifth tide or Aryan wave (the present Age) which swept all before it. But what was lost in the process? And what happened to the Sacred Feminine?

The Royal Road, by Professor Stephan Hoeller, Quest Book. Invocations were adapted slightly to suit the purpose of this talk and to emphasize themes. (Stephan Hoeller set me on a path to writing two books; *The Holistic I Ching* and its Handbook, *A Guide to the I Ching, Jung, Taoism and the Tarot*, when he said at a lecture that the Jungian archetypes of the I Ching were the same as those in the Tarot. One sentence can sometimes open up new worlds.)

Tarot Images from the Universal Waite Pack, which contains the traditional archetypal symbols, in beautiful colours. U. S. Games Systems Inc.

The Rebirth of Nature. by Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, who aims to unite scientific insight with ancient wisdom. He is a biologist who proposes the reality of morphic fields and morphic resonance - unifying patterns and processes in Nature.

Up From Eden by Ken Wilbur - a classic about the unfolding of consciousness.

Isis Unveiled, by Madame Blavatsky. Vol. II - page 44 - Bread and Wine rituals; and Vol. II page 209 for Chart on correlations of Mary to Isis.

IMPORTANT DIARY NOTE

Meditation Retreat

DUE TO THE SUCCESS OF THE RECENT MEDITATION RETREAT IT SEEMS PRUDENT TO PROVIDE A REMINDER ABOUT THE DATE OF THE NEXT RETREAT AS UNFORTUNATELY SOME WERE TURNED AWAY DUE TO FULL BOOKINGS – DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU

Flyers and Registration forms will be available around mid-July containing full details

**THE NEXT MEDITATION RETREAT WILL BE HELD AT SPRINGBROOK
31 AUGUST – 2 SEPTEMBER 2012**

Lodge Programme May – August 2012

The list of Lodge programmes is included as a separate sheet. Inevitably during its period of currency, changes will need to be made. Updated programme sheets will be available at the Library desk and the most up-to-date version will be viewable on the Lodge website.

Notable visiting speakers –

Dr Victor Gostin Friday 10 August at 7:30 pm

Victor is a retired geophysics scientist from Adelaide who has long been active in the Theosophical Science Groups in Australia. His talk in Brisbane is titled "**Our Universe is Alive and Intelligent**". He will also be a special guest at a meeting of the Brisbane TS Science Group the following day, Saturday 11 August at 10:00 am.

Linda Oliveira, National President - Friday 7 September at 7:30 pm

Linda is visiting in September to speak on "**Water for Life**" and also to open the Art Show conducted by the Brisbane Theosophical Order of Service starting on that day and continuing over the weekend – 8 and 9 September. The proceeds of sales of artwork will provide funds for TOS projects around the world. See the TOS page for more information.



T.O.S. news

Brisbane Theosophical Order of Service, 355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane 4000
Phone: (07) 3839 1453 FAX: (07) 3831 3692 Email: tinafiedler@bigpond.com
President: Tina Fiedler Vice-President: Geoff Harrod

Thank you

We'd like to give a big THANK YOU to those who attended our *Healing from the Forest* seminar in March. It proved to be a most enjoyable day with excellent speakers, opportunities for chats with friends, abundant food and culminating in a workshop where participants created exquisite baskets from natural and recycled materials.

Thanks to your support, we not only enjoyed ourselves, but also raised almost \$400 for the Pakistan literacy home-schools organised by the TOS in Pakistan. Your generosity will truly make a difference to the children and young women whose only chance of learning basic literacy and numeracy skills is through these schools.



Join our planning meetings

Planning meetings are held quarterly from 10.00 to 11:30 am in the T.S. rooms. All interested people are invited to attend. Future meetings are on Saturdays 14 July, 25 August and 1 December 2012.

Springbrook Working Bee in July

The 2012 working bee at the Springbrook Theosophical Retreat Centre will be held on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 July, starting at 10:00 am.

What's on: Gardening, painting & building maintenance PLUS fun and fellowship, time for bushwalks, meditation, etc. Accommodation with electric blankets and food catered by the TOS are free.

What to bring: Work clothes, something comfortable for an evening by the fireplace, gardening implements, single sheets and pillow case, towel, personal toiletries.

We would welcome your help. A poster and registration form will be in the TS library in June. Please add your name to the form or phone Tina Fiedler on 3217 0040.

International TOS projects being supported by the Brisbane TOS in 2012

This year, as well as our local volunteer work, our Brisbane TOS group is raising funds to support a number of projects organised by TOS groups in other countries. The administrative work is carried out by TOS members in these countries so that all donations received will go directly to the project and the people benefiting from it. The purchasing power of our Australian dollar is also greatly increased in these countries.

The Assam, India, mobility aids project

We have supported this project for several years. Our donations enable the Assam TOS to purchase hand-operated tricycles and wheel chairs for people who cannot afford them. A modest donation of AU\$750, for instance, can purchase three tricycles and three

wheel chairs. We have had some wonderful success stories of how this small act of generosity provides many recipients with independence and the opportunity to earn a living.

The Pakistan literacy home-schools

The TOS in Pakistan organises and supports several home-schools in Karachi. Students include children, young girls and women who have no opportunity to pursue even a basic education. Reading, writing and arithmetic are taught by a teacher who holds classes at her own house in the students' neighbourhood.

The TOS provides teaching materials, a fan, water cooler, sitting rugs and a small salary, training and continuing support to the teacher. It costs around AU\$1,000 to fund a home-school for a year. We have also supported this project for several years.

The Kenyan water bore project

Last year, TOS groups from around the world contributed donations to enable the TOS in Kenya to provide food for six months to families in the village of Kitui. The area was in the grip of a long-term drought and the community was starving as well as having to walk long distances to find water for drinking.

As she got to know the villagers, the coordinator of the project, Usha Shah, began discussing with them the possibility of the TOS funding a water bore in the village. They were very interested and willing to be mentored to establish a cooperative to buy land for the bore and to manage the water distribution.

The quotation for the water bore is US\$9650 and TOS groups, including the Brisbane group, are fundraising to contribute towards making this project a reality.

The income from our September Art Show, *Water for Life*, will be donated to the Kenyan water bore project.

The members of this village being supported by the TOS have been overwhelmed to find that not only Kenyans, but people from other countries, are concerned about them. The bore project is building sustainability and the village community is growing in confidence as they look forward to managing their own water bore and planting fruit trees and grain. Hopefully, their future will be one in which they can cope more independently in times of severe drought.



Dates for later in your 2012 diary

Fri 7, Sat 8 & Sun 9 September: Art Show – Water for Life in the heritage TS building. Please bring your friends, browse through the displays of affordable artwork, and enjoy a chat over a plate of warm scones and a cup of tea or coffee.

Fri 30 Nov: Christmas sale table.

There'll be details closer to these events