

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Section newsletter

DECEMBER 2025

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL

General Secretaries Message

by Desmond Chapman

Unbelievably we have come to the end of another year. It would be no exaggeration to say that the past six years have been a very hard time for humanity as a whole. Many expected that this was going to be the case at this time, and there have been predictions of it in many cultures and religions, the Mayans, Incas, Hindus, Red Indians, Christians etc. At the Johannesburg Lodge a special all-night meeting and meditation in December 2012 was held to mark this date foretold in the Mayan calendar. It was also an important focus at the biannual Convention of this Society at that time.

However, it is not about doom and gloom even though the transition would be difficult. Christianity speaks about a new heaven and a new earth and it is essentially about a new spiritual phase of advancement and a transformation of the physical body in humans but also it entails a transformation of human society and planetary embodiment.

Of course, any period of transition is a time of competing ideas, values and structures. Consciousness rooted in light will seek the upliftment of humanity and their spiritual nature, while dark beings will seek to perpetuate control, greed, oppression and even to more deeply entrench the enslavement of humanity. These are times of great challenges to the human spirit but also great opportunities for personal learning, evolutionary progress and a greater victory over our lower natures.

At this time, as we begin reinvigorating our lodges to meet the needs of the new era, we need to concentrate on earnestly showing the way forward as contained in the teachings HPB left us. The books and articles that she left us up and until the time of her death, contain a vast body of knowledge going back thousands of years of human evolution, study and practice. HPB and her Masters drew on a long history rooted in pre-Hindu cultures and Hinduism; she also had access to Tibetan books and studied these in Tibet for many years. Her co-founder Col. Alcott was a deep student of Buddhism. Many of the early founding group were also students of Christianity particularly Christian Gnosticism, the desert fathers, etc. The Founders and the Masters also drew heavily on Greek philosophy and science, the Alexandrian and Eclectic Theosophical system of Ammonius Saccus of the third century of our era.

Our Lodges in the Southern African section concentrate on different aspects central to Theosophy at different times of the year, in their programmes. A lot has been done in the past year as to what

Theosophy is, studying the Secret Doctrine, the human constitution, self-transformation, spiritual practices and mysticism. However, we have not focused enough on science and psychology which HPB pointed out was most important. She maintained that the roll of the Theosophical Society was to bridge the divide between science and spirituality during this phase of human evolution. She also held that Psychology, the study of the psyche was going to become the most important branch of science in the future. This was also expressed by the Greek concept “know thyself” set in stone above the entrance of Apollo’s temple at Delphi. Alexander Pope wrote “know thyself, presume not God to scan, the proper study of mankind is Man.” Pope argues that science alone cannot provide self-Knowledge and emphasizes the importance of understanding humans within a divinely created order. He held man is placed in a middle state between animal and God, making him both wise and great, yet also weak. As a result, man is constantly in doubt about himself and his place in the world.

Since 2019, people of a spiritual nature, and quite frankly people with just plain common sense, have become sceptical of “Science” and “Psychology”. Psychology has departed from the proper study of “the psyche” and embraced virtually only Person-ology. Science fell into an even darker pit. What was propagate during the lockdown by institutions, the media and governments was about manipulation, misinformation and control. The height of this deception can be seen in Anthony Fauci’s claim that he is science. This had been anything but science, a free and open search for verifiable knowledge and truths. Many in the early days of Theosophy were attracted to HPB’s teachings and Lodge fellowship by her writings on science. What we need to awaken in our Lodges again, is the study of science, the laws of Nature, the Powers Latent in Man, and a deep knowledge of the total constitution of humans and how to awaken these vehicles of consciousness/ life.

Relationships with Other Spiritual Groups

We do promote dialogue with other Theosophical Groups that withdrew from Adyar over what was often differences of personality but mostly on the emphasis of teachings and what some felt was the neglect of HPB’s writings. Our contact is because of, firstly a common commitment of the study of the teachings of HPB. Secondly cooperation with other Theosophical Groups will promote the spread of Theosophy and our own deeper understandings. These are Pasadena, Point Loma and the united Lodges.

A special case is that of Rudolph Steiner who developed his own brand particularly after breaking away from Adyar. This split was caused mainly in reaction to the Second World War. Hitler had written to the International President at the time, that he liked many of the ideas of the teachings but would never accept the concept of the brotherhood of humanity and that if it remained, he would persecute the Society. Mr Arundale wrote to the German General Secretary Rudolph Steiner and informed him of the threat and that the Society would not step back from the concept of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. It was decided to separate the German section from the Adyar Headquarters. We must remember that the name the Master’s gave at the new attempt to form a Theosophical movement was “The Theosophical and Universal Brotherhood Society” and this is the name printed on every Theosophical Society Charter.

Another group that sometimes draws the attention of people, claiming to be Theosophical, is that of Alice Bailey. However, there is no relationship with this Group. Should members want to know more about this group and the differences between theosophical teachings and her teachings, they can consult the Theosophical English Section’s Website. Of note, should be the statements in her later

writings, that there would be no peace on earth until humanity gives up its individuality (the word synonymous with Soul in spiritual teachings) and surrenders to the United Nations. There is also her support, of a one world religion, politics and centralist global governance, the role advocated for the family, raising children, child sexuality etc. all of which has been taken up within the United Nation's structures and policies.

No Lodge may enter a working relationship with other Societies or Groups, and no General Secretary shall condone such relationships. Our members are free to become members of other Groups and participate in their activities but there can be no active relationship at Lodge or Section level. All General Secretaries need to be clear that they fall under Adyar, report to Adyar, and represent their lodges on the International Council. They also represent lodges and members to Adyar. Relations between the Theosophical Society and any other Group is the prerogative of Adyar.

Theosophical Lodges are there to teach theosophy and explore its practical application in daily life. Very importantly Lodges are a living cell in the functioning of this Universal Brotherhood, just as the Theosophical Society is said to be "a nucleus" in the practical reality and existence of this Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. We did not form the Brotherhood, we as individual Lodges and the Theosophical Society are part of the already existing Brotherhood of Humanity. It is always wholes within greater wholes, ad-infinitum. Therefore, members are expected to act in a way that fosters an atmosphere of brotherhood in a lodge and Presidents and Lodge Committees must never hesitate to sanction members and even expel members who persistently disturb a sense of brotherhood within a lodge.

A meeting of the Presidents of the Lodges in the Southern African section recently took place to discuss the future and further development of the Section and Lodges. I will be drawing up a Policy and Procedures manual based on our discussion and decisions for use in the Southern African Section and Lodges. We set dates for the year's Section Committee meetings and for the publication of four newsletters per year, among many others administrative and legal aspects.

In December Adyar will hold a Convention and the annual International Council Meeting. It is for more than a year now, that Adyar has been reviewing it functioning, processes and policies and I will give feedback from this Council meeting in our next newsletter.

As we go into the new year, let it be, to explore the possibilities this new phase in our planetary and our own individual lives holds for us. Let us all make a commitment to our own spiritual growth, the growth of our Lodges and the greater expression of the universal brotherhood of all humanity.

Movie "One Fire"

By Desmond Chapman

On 20 October 1888, H. P. Blavatsky published the first volume of "The Secret Doctrine" with the subtitle "The synthesis of Science Religion and Philosophy. She maintained it was not her own writing and had a much older origin, passed from one seeker to another, a flame worthy to be rekindled by those who dared to listen. It revealed the origin of the cosmos, the hidden laws of nature and the eternal journey of the soul. Theosophy is translated as "the wisdom of the Gods", or divine

knowledge. The type of knowledge Jesus would refer to as the knowledge that sets humans free. HPB always maintained that her teachings and writings would not be understood for at least 100 years. The movie starts off with a quote by H P B that “the path that leadeth on, is lighted by “One Fire” - the light of daring, burning in the heart, the more one dares the more one shall obtain.

“One Flame” is a movie written and directed by Terhi Ahava. Currently sub-titles are available in 15 languages, with more being added daily. It can be viewed on YouTube for those who wish to do so and is certainly worthwhile doing so. It runs for 1 hour 44 minutes.

It was not meant to chronicle the Society’s history for the past 150 years. Rather it can be considered a journey through the teaching and contributions of HPB and the society, to the arts, music, science, philosophy, religious and spiritual ideas, education and politics. The movie also aims to emphasize the truth that we are all sparks of the same eternal flame. In a world plagued by divisions, uncertainties, deceptions, delusions, greed and the oppression both of humans and animals, it is a reminder of the brotherhood of all humanity and all life as well as the eternal search for unity, truth, wisdom, spiritual evolution and liberation.

GREECE THEOSOPHICAL CONFERENCES

By Dewald Bester

October 2025 saw the hosting of two Theosophical conferences in Greece, one Academic in nature, the other with a more general Theosophical agenda. The International Theosophical History Conference is organised under the auspices of the European School of Theosophy with the support of The Blavatsky Trust. The conference theme and details can be reviewed here:

Altered States of Consciousness in Theosophy and Related Esoteric Currents
11–12 October 2025 ATHENS- GREECE
<https://theosophicalhistoryconference.eu/>

The European School of Theosophy, under the Directorship of Erica Georgiades, also hosted, on the island of Samos, a conference with the theme of ‘Theosophy and Ancient Hellenic Wisdom: From Pythagoras to Christianity’
15 - 20 October 2025 - SAMOS
<https://europeanschooloftheosophy.eu/>

From the Adyar website we can gain some insight into the knowledge and experience of Erica. "Erica Georgiades" is the General Secretary of the Greek Section, director of The School of the Wisdom, and The European School of Theosophy. She is secretary of the International Theosophical History Conferences. She has been a member of the Theosophical Society Adyar since 1991. From 1994 to 1996, she worked on a volunteer basis at the Adyar Archives, Chennai, India.

She is MRes Religious Experience Candidate at the UWTSD; she holds a PhD (Merit) in Ancient Mediterranean Religions UWTSD and a BA (Honours) in Philosophy and Psychological Studies (Open).

She lives with her husband and daughter in Greece. She is also a deep ecologist and animal-rights activist."



Of note is that the Theosophical Society in Southern Africa had speakers on the program of both Conferences. In the Academic Theosophical History Conference Dirk Schreuder presented a paper entitled, HPB's Enigmatic Disciple – Harriette Augusta Curtiss – The Saint from Philadelphia. The Conference on SAMOS saw three members of the Cape Town Lodge presenting papers - Dirk Schreuder on The Inner Path, Joseph Koetsier on Ubuntu as an African spiritual philosophy and practice, and Dewald Bester with a talk entitled, 'Learning from the Past, Drawing on the Present: Theosophy and Tradition.

Reflecting on the conferences, two things stand out. Firstly, Athens is a wonderfully interesting city. Full of sights and charm. Secondly, the main importance of attending the European School of Theosophy Conference was the opportunity to meet members from around the world. While the Theosophical Society faces challenges it is clear it also has deep human resources to draw on as it navigates the future.---

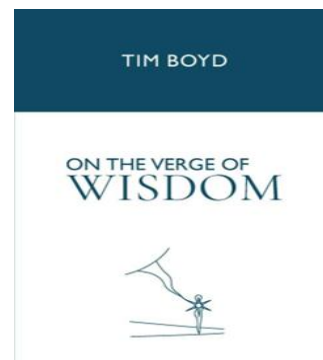
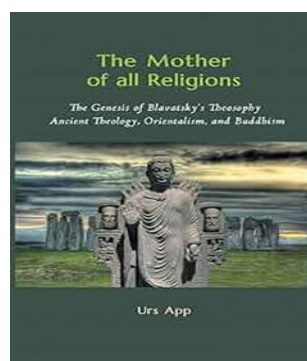
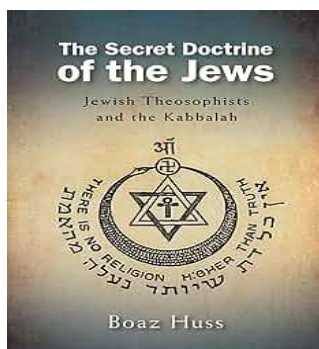
RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF THEOSOPHICAL INTEREST

Three books have recently been published which, though they have differing aims, deserve some attention: -

Tim Boyd's (current President of the Theosophical Society Adyar) work is a conversational and inspirational collection of short papers.

Huss's academic study is a historical recovery of Theosophy in the Jewish community.

Urs App's controversial book is an academic historical recovery of the possible sources of Blavatsky's Ancient Wisdom narrative.



H. P. Blavatsky and Her Writings

By Pam Passmore

H. P. Blavatsky's Life and Work



Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), one of the founders of the Theosophical Society, was a remarkable woman who has made a great impact on the thought of the Western world. In her own day, she was controversial because of her remarkable abilities of extrasensory perception, her forthright and outspoken nature, and her fearless attacks on hypocrisy and bigotry. Even today, she continues to be the centre of curiosity and attention as the precursor of “new” ideas. Her great metaphysical knowledge is embodied in her literary work, which has directly or indirectly influenced inquiring minds all over the world.

Helena Blavatsky was born of a noble family in Russia. From early childhood she attracted attention with her ability to produce psychic phenomena at will. Yet she was not interested in such powers for their own sake, but for the principles and laws of nature that govern them. She became a student of metaphysical lore and travelled to many lands, including Tibet, in search of hidden knowledge. These were extraordinary travels for a lone woman in the nineteenth century. In the 1870s H. P. Blavatsky came to New York and, with Colonel H. S. Olcott, William Quan Judge, and others, formed the Theosophical Society in 1875. In 1878 H. P. Blavatsky became an American citizen, the first Russian woman ever to do so. In 1879 she and Col. Olcott moved to India, and in 1882 they established the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, near Madras. This remains the international headquarters for the Society, which is now established in seventy countries of the world. In 1885 H. P. Blavatsky went to Europe and settled in London, where she completed her magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*. Much of the knowledge in this book and her other writings was derived from Eastern teachers with whom she came in touch early in life.

Early Writings and *Isis Unveiled*

Through her many writings, H. P. Blavatsky—“Madame Blavatsky” or “HPB” as she came to be known—has shared some of her extensive knowledge of the philosophies and religions of the world, the wisdom of the East and the West, symbolism, metaphysics, esoteric philosophy, and the practical application of all these to life. She was a prolific writer, and newspaper and magazine articles on a variety of subjects flowed steadily from her pen. These works fill fifteen volumes of her fully indexed *Collected Writings*.

The first major book by H. P. Blavatsky was *Isis Unveiled*, in two volumes. It created a sensation when published in New York City in 1877; the first edition of 1,000 copies sold out in two days. Within seven months, three printings had been issued. The book has as its subtitle *A Master Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*. Volume 1 deals with claims of “infallibility” for science,

while volume 2 deals with similar claims for religion. Both show that the Ancients had a body wisdom that has been partly forgotten in our time.

Isis Unveiled covers much more than its subtitle indicates, however. For instance, the author moves from ancient Greek views on matter and force advanced by Pythagoras and Plato to the Kabbalistic religious philosophy developed by Jewish scholars from a mystical interpretation of the Scriptures. Blavatsky discusses mythological stories in many religious texts, aspects of magic, ancient Egyptian writings, classical philosophies, world religions, and a multitude of other subjects. In her preface, she states that the book is “a plea for the recognition of the Hermetic philosophy, the anciently universal Wisdom-Religion.”

The Secret Doctrine

Blavatsky's greatest work is *The Secret Doctrine*. This book appeared in 1888 in two large volumes, the first concerned with cosmogenesis, the study of the origin and development of the universe, and the second with anthropogenesis, the study of the origins and development of humanity. This book continues in greater detail the themes set forth in *Isis Unveiled*, its subtitle, *The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, expressing the aim of the work.

HPB made it clear that *The Secret Doctrine* was not written as a revelation but is rather a collection of fragments scattered throughout thousands of volumes embodying the scriptures of the great Asian and pre-Christian European religions and philosophies. Furthermore, she strongly rejected the dogmatic interpretation of any of her work. The reader is asked to study ideas from this or any other source only in the light of common human experience and reason.

The Secret Doctrine outlines a vast scheme of evolution relating to the universe and to humanity, and to the unseen as well as the seen worlds of manifestation in which life is said to exist in thousands of forms. It is based on three fundamental propositions:

1. An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable Principle on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought.
2. The Eternity of the Universe in toto as a boundless plane; periodically “the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing.”
3. The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul—a spark of the former—through the Cycle of Incarnation in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law.

Although drawn from many sources, *The Secret Doctrine* is based largely on an archaic manuscript titled *The Book of Dzyan*, of which it is an interpretation. The stanzas of *The Book of Dzyan* are not easy to understand, but they reveal, to the person willing to study them, a sublime description of cosmic evolution: the reawakening of the universe after a period of quiescence, the differentiation of forms, the process of world formation, the appearance of humanity on earth, and the early evolution of our species. The work is not simple, but as the reader delves into it, the magnitude of Blavatsky's undertaking becomes apparent. Anyone who approaches the book seriously will gain a new respect for the author and for her scholarship and great knowledge.

More than a hundred years after its first publication, *The Secret Doctrine* continues to attract thousands of students who mine its rich depth of knowledge and wisdom.

This work is available in various editions, including a paperback set with an authoritative introduction and notes and a third volume containing a detailed index and bibliography. *The Secret Doctrine* continues to be the principal source book for students of Theosophy, not as the final word on the

subject, but as a stimulus to encourage the student to ponder its thoughts with a free and questing mind.

Other Works

In addition to *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky wrote a number of shorter books. One of these, *The Key to Theosophy*, is a valuable introduction to Theosophical thought and philosophy, dealing especially with the implications of Theosophy for living. This book is written in the form of questions and answers, focusing upon who we are and how we relate to the world around us.

Blavatsky is remembered not only for her standard of scholarship and her industry but also for a short book of deep spiritual insight and instruction called *The Voice of the Silence*. *It is her translation of an old Eastern manuscript and includes her explanations and comments on a series of precepts offered to those seeking the path to enlightenment. Wisdom and an understanding heart are evident in the skill with The Theosophical Society in America which HPB has safeguarded the original poetic imagery as she rendered the ancient verses into English prose. First printed in the late nineteenth century, The Voice of the Silence has been published in many editions and languages. It is read and treasured around the world for its poetic imagery and spiritual power. Here are a few passages:*

'Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself. Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.

Let not the fierce Sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye. But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain, nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed.

Help Nature and work on with her, and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.

Mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects. It needs the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom to brush away the dust of our illusions.

The wheel of the good Law moves swiftly on. It grinds by night and day. The worthless husks it drives from out the golden grain, the refuse from the flour. The hand of Karma guides the wheel; the revolutions mark the beating of the Karmic heart.

Sow kindly acts and thou shalt reap their fruition. Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin.

Shalt, thou abstain from action? Not so shall gain thy soul her freedom. To reach Nirvana one must reach Self-Knowledge, and Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child.

Step out from sunlight into shade, to make more room for others.

To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practice the six glorious virtues is the second.

Of teachers there are many; the MASTER-SOUL is one . . . the Universal Soul. Live in that MASTER as Its ray in thee. Live in thy fellows as they live in It.

Behold, the mellow light that floods the Eastern sky. In signs of praise both heaven and earth unite. And from the four-fold manifested Powers a chant of love ariseth, both from the flaming Fire and flowing Water, and from sweet-smelling Earth and rushing Wind . . . All Nature's wordless voice in thousand tones ariseth to proclaim: . . . A Pilgrim hath returned back from the other shore . . . Peace to all beings.'

H. P. Blavatsky devoted her life to the service of humanity, to bringing the Wisdom of the ancients back into the awareness of her contemporaries. That Divine Wisdom, which she called Theosophy, inspires a compassion for the sufferings of our fellow human beings and a practical altruism that seeks not merely to alleviate the symptoms of misery, but to remove its cause: ignorance of our

fundamental unity with all other beings. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's life and works are directed entirely to this goal.

Major Titles by H. P. Blavatsky

The Secret Doctrine, 2 volumes plus index

Isis Unveiled, 2 volumes

The Voice of the Silence

The Key to Theosophy (abridged by Joy Mills)

H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings, 15 volumes

Letters of H. P. Blavatsky, 3 volumes

The above books may be purchased at www.questbooks.net

Let us go into the new year in gratitude for all the opportunities we have had this year to learn and for self-transformation. Let us keep the flame of knowledge and the search for truth and understanding alive in ourselves and our lodges. Let us make our lodges centers of fellowship and the expression of the Universal Brotherhood.

Wishing everybody a blessed festive season and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Fraternal regards

Desmond Chapman

General Secretary, Theosophical Society in Southern Africa.