

Membership: Some Questions Answered

(Note: There are other leaflets and pamphlets which are intended to tell you about the ideas of Theosophy and the ideals of the Theosophical Society and you are urged to read those before making up your mind about membership. We assume you now want to know more about the Society and what membership entails.)

OBJECTS: As you probably know, the first and most important object of the Theosophical Society concerns the promotion of universal brotherhood, without any social distinction whatever. The second concerns the study of religion, philosophy and science and the relationship between them. The third concerns our spiritual development through recognition of our own inner resources and the inner workings of nature.

THEOSOPHY is regarded as Universal Wisdom, which underlies all religions and is the exclusive preserve of none. Certainly it is not regarded as the exclusive preserve of the Theosophical Society or of its members. The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion or to none. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They believe that Truth should be sought by study and by devotion to high ideals and not imposed as a dogma by any authority. Joining the Theosophical Society can be an important step in your life, but it does not automatically make you a true theosophist.

With regard to membership it needs to be said that, the Theosophical Society does **not** actively **promote** membership, but it **does welcome** as members all who are in sympathy with its objects and wish to further them and it rests with the member to become a true Theosophist.

Many people who are in sympathy with our ideals, prefer not to join **any** organisation and we respect their views. Others prefer to work together in fellowship with people of like mind. If you are such a person you will be welcomed as a member, if you decide to join the Society.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY was founded in New York in 1875. It is an International Society composed of national units called "Sections". Its International Headquarters is in India. Each country (Section) has a National Headquarters and local Lodges (or Branches). The Headquarters for New Zealand is in Auckland and there are Lodges in all main centres of population.

Members may join a local branch (Lodge or Branch) which automatically gives membership of the National Society as well as the International Society. (Once you join, your membership is valid anywhere, except that voting rights are specific to the branch of which you are a member, but you can transfer membership from one branch to another, if you move). Members in country areas where there is no local Lodge may join as "Headquarters members". All branches are autonomous although their Constitutions must agree with the section Constitution which in turn has to be compatible with the International one.

BRANCHES set their own membership fees (subscriptions) which range from \$20 to \$60 depending on the Branch you wish to join. Headquarters subscription is \$30 for waged and \$20 for unwaged.

The Society is a non-profit organisation and relies on the fees (and donations) of its members, supplemented by income from investments which are built up from legacies and other sources. Bookshops sometimes provide some income but frequently they are subsidized, the principal purpose being to make theosophical books widely available rather than to make a profit.

Your subscriptions are divided between supporting your local Lodge, the National Headquarters, the International Headquarters and the cost of the magazine *Theosophy in New*

Zealand. The International Headquarters in India provides a focus and stimulus for the work throughout the world. The International President resides there and travels as often as possible to other countries.

People often ask "what do I get for my membership?" It is a fair question and an answer is offered, although a preferable one is to ask "what can I contribute through my membership to the work of the Society?"

Some of the activities in which all members may share are:

a) Members' meetings of the local branch, where talks are given and discussions, seminars and workshops are held. There may also be study groups and specialized activities depending on the particular branch. Do you have any special talent or interest? Your local branch will be happy to know about it!

b) Annual Convention is a highlight of the year. It is generally held during January and is hosted by a different Lodge/Branch each year. It is usually held in a college or some readily accessible beauty spot, so that good fellowship in a holiday atmosphere may be combined with serious study and exchange of ideas with members from all parts of the country and frequently also from overseas.

c) Members receive the quarterly journal *Theosophy in New Zealand* (the subscription is included in your membership fee). Most Lodges also have regular newsletters. For the first twenty-four months, you receive from Headquarters a monthly letter explaining various facets of Theosophy and giving further information about the Society.

d) International contacts are important. Each year there is usually at least one visiting lecturer from overseas, to bring fresh ideas and stimulus to the Lodges. If you visit overseas, yourself, you will be made welcome by like-minded people in every country in which the Society exists.

e) You may subscribe to the international magazine *The Theosophist* and/or to the more specialized journals such as *The Quest* and *The Theosophical Digest*. Information on these may be obtained from Section Headquarters

The Theosophical Society, like any organisation is what its members make it. Above all, do not expect us to be perfect. Though we have high ideals, we are human beings with human failings as well as virtues. The Society is now past its first centenary. The ideals which prompted the founding of the Theosophical Society have not changed, but ways of promoting them must constantly change in the light of new knowledge and altered circumstances. A regular influx of new members with new ideas can help to keep the Society vital. If you seriously approve of the aims of the Theosophical Society you can make a significant contribution to its work. And we will welcome you warmly should you decide to join with us in this work.

You can obtain further information from:

a) the Secretary of the branch in your area or

b) The National Secretary of The Theosophical Society in New Zealand,
18 Belvedere Street, Auckland 1003.