

THE THEOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY
IN CANBERRA

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The Theosophical Society in Canberra is not responsible for any statement in this newsletter. Views expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Society or the Editor.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

UNIVERSE

This term describes something big - what is it and what does it mean? In *The Secret Doctrine* we find the quotation: “*Universal mind was not, for there were no celestial beings to contain it*”. The descriptive Universal - by referring to the universe means everywhere? Another expression of cosmogenesis is: “*These two are the germ, and the germ is one. The universe was still concealed in the divine thought and the divine bosom*”.

The concepts of ‘thought’ and ‘bosom’ both belong to human life. Can this be part of the Universe? A germ refers to the start of life on earth. Here we are tricked by the wider meaning of language which now becomes part of philosophical thinking and interpretation. Is it part of astronomy? Astronomy toys with the idea that many universes could exist, beyond our visual horizon, and are in fact a multiverse, not a universe. This idea originated in fiction in the 1990s and is now found in scientific journals of today. Unfortunately, no possible astronomical observation can see other universes and the argument is at best indirect.

Recently the Nobel Prize was given to a Canberra-based astronomer for establishing that the universe is expanding at a rapid rate. It begs the question of what is outside the universe, and to where it can expand. He made a reassuring statement that our daily lives would not be affected by this.

One day at Questacon I saw beautiful pictures of galaxies existing billions of light years away, and looking into the distant past of the Universe to clusters of stars, like our Milky Way - the place where the sun and earth exist. A light year is the speed which light covers in an earth year - an enormous distance, which is beyond our comprehension.

We may dwell on the question of speed in the universe - with consensus being that there is no faster speed than the speed of light. Observation has found particles which reached 99.99% of the speed of light. But light is faster and it is in the universe.

Some explain the Universe’s existence by the Big Bang theory with the results seen in the formation of the far-away galaxies containing trillions of stars. At present most of the Universe cannot be seen and is accounted as

(see page 3)

Notes for members and friends

CONVENTION—2012

**ST JOHN'S
COLLEGE, BRISBANE
JANUARY 2012**

CONVENTION 2012

St John's College Brisbane

SATURDAY JANUARY 21 TO WEDNESDAY 25 JANUARY, 2012

The Post-convention outing will be on Thursday 26 January

Theme: Current thinking in evidence of the Third Object

\$72 per night including all meals and Convention sessions

The convention programme is in the November 2011 issue of
Theosophy in Australia

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

**ADYAR INDIA
26 TO 31 DEC 2011**

THE 136TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
of the Theosophical Society will be held at the
International Headquarters, Adyar, India from
26 to 31 December 2011.

Theme: A Regenerating Practical Brotherhood

For further details see the website

<http://www.ts-adyar.org/node/28>

SPRINGBROOK

**SCHOOL OF
THEOSOPHY, 2012**

**2012 AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY
20—26 APRIL 2012**

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook

Theme: Seeking Wisdom (based on the book by N Sri Ram)

Presenters: Linda Oliveira and Pedro Oliveira

Cost \$210 Register by 1 February 2012

CANYONLEIGH CENTRE

**THE MEDITATIVE MIND AND APPROACHES TO MEDITATION
FRIDAY 2 TO SUNDAY 4 MARCH 2012**

Presenters: Linda Oliveira and a number of
Supporting Lecturers

Cost \$120 Register by 7 February 2012

dark matter; with us remaining totally ignorant of the properties of this substance. It exerts influence on the workings of the Universe with one example being its effect on the warping of the Milky Way, our galaxy. The warping in the Milky Way represents a wave motion at one moment of time. The wave has three components corresponding to the natural frequencies of a 'disk'. The disk, or Milky Way galaxy, behaves like a gong and the gravity of the relatively nearby Magellanic clouds (a smaller galaxy) aided by dark matter, acts as the hammer.

At the beginning of the movies in my boyhood we saw the hammer being hit against a huge gong [*The Rank Organisation - ed*]. That is what is happening in the Universe on a large scale over a long time. As a small boy I saw the Universe as being everything outside the home and school. *The Secret Doctrine* in the lines quoted above shows that what is written or said is sometimes the only way to make sense of the world - or should that be the universe.

Welcome to our 2011 end of year Canberra Newsletter .

Peter Fokker
President

REFERENCES:

Michael Gomes: *The Secret Doctrine*. H.P.Blavatsky. Abridged & Annotated. Pangroup USA Inc. 2009 pp. 10, 20

Secret Doctrine – Vol 1 Stanza I

Secret Doctrine – Vol 1 Stanza II

George F.R. Ellis: Does the Multiverse Really Exist? *Scientific American* August 2011 p18

B. Gaensler: Extreme Speed, Fastest Objects in the Universe. *Cosmos* Oct/Nov 2011 p68

L.Blitz: The Dark Side of the Milky Way. *Scientific American* October 2011 p22.

CANBERRA THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY—ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM was held on Monday, 21 November and 10 members attended. All reports were received. Committee members for 2011-2012 are:

Peter Fokker	President
Colleen Grafton-Green	Vice-President
Tony Fearnside	Secretary/Treasurer
Grahame Crookham	Committee member
Henny Fokker	Committee member/library
Barbara Harrod	Committee member
Stephen Hasslauer	Committee member
Janice Scarabottolo	Committee member/newsletter

Programming committee:

Tony Fearnside, Grahame Crookham, Michael Grafton-Green

Thanks to all who attended the AGM.

The Canberra Theosophical Society wishes all members and friends a peaceful and happy end of year and an invigorating and fulfilling 2012.

Often we hear discussion about how secular education can sometimes lead to lacunae in the overall educational end product.

Umberto Eco is a well known semiotician, essayist, philosopher, literary critic, novelist, and President of the Scuola Superiore di Studi Umanistici, at the University of Bologna. A very seasonal description of his opinion on the matter comes from his website <http://www.umbertoeco.com/en/news/the-lost-wisdom-of-the-three-wise-men-umberto-eco-101.html>

THE LOST WISDOM OF THE THREE WISE MEN — UMBERTO ECO—December 2009

Almost by chance I recently happened to witness two similar scenes: a 15-year-old girl who was engrossed in a book of art reproductions, and two 15-year-old boys who were enthralled to be visiting the Louvre.



¹ *The Raft of the Medusa* - Théodore Géricault
Louvre, Paris

The parents of all three were nonbelievers and the teens were raised in secular countries; that lack of religious background clearly affected their ability to appreciate the art they were viewing.

The teenagers could understand that the hapless individuals in Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa*,¹ had just escaped a shipwreck. And they could recognise that the characters portrayed by Francesco Hayez in *The Kiss* were lovers.

But it was difficult for them to fathom why Fra Angelico portrayed a girl talking to a man with wings in *The Annunciation*² or why in Rembrandt's *Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law*,³ a gentleman who looks rather down-at-heel but has beams of light shining from horns on his head, is bounding down a mountainside carrying two heavy stone tablets.

Some parts of Nativity scenes were familiar to these young people because they had seen similar icons in the past, but when three men wearing cloaks and crowns were included in a crèche, the teens had no idea who these men were or why they were there.

It is impossible to understand roughly three-quarters of Western art if you don't know the events of the Old and the New Testaments and the stories of the saints. Who's that girl with her eyes on a plate? [*Saint Lucia*] Is she something out of "Night of the Living Dead"?



² *The Annunciation*—Fra Angelico — 1387 – 1455
Museum of S. Marco, Florence

In many countries, schoolchildren are taught everything about the death of Hector but nothing about St. Sebastian, and perhaps everything about the marriage of Cadmus and Harmony but nothing about the wedding at Cana. In others, they cram students' heads with the Stations of the Cross while keeping them in the dark about "the woman clothed with the sun" who appears in the Book of Revelations.



³ *Moses Breaking the Tablets* (1659)
Rembrandt -
Gemaldegalerie Berlin

The worst cases of befuddlement often occur when Westerners (and not just 15-year-olds) come across religious icons from other cultures — which happens increasingly often today as they travel to distant countries and people from those countries settle in the West.

Many shake their heads in disbelief when they learn that Hindus worship a deity with the head of an elephant, yet find nothing odd about portraying Christianity's divine personage as a dove.

Much of the confusion could be avoided if schools would provide students with basic information about the teachings and traditions of the various religions. To say that this isn't necessary is tantamount to saying that we shouldn't teach children about Zeus and Athena because they're just characters from fables meant for little old ladies in "ancient" Greece.

Limiting religious instruction to the point of view of a single creedis dangerous. Pupils who are nonbelievers (or the children of nonbelievers) will opt out of such lessons and thus miss out on learning even a minimum of fundamental cultural elements. And usually any useful mention of other religious traditions is excluded from the lessons.

In Italian public schools, the weekly hour of optional religious instruction is led by Roman Catholic teachers paid by the state. It could be used to hold ethical debates on respectable subjects such as our duties toward our fellow man or the nature of faith.

My generation in Italy learned much about Homer and nothing about the Pentateuch (the first books of the Hebrew Bible). In high school the lessons on the history of art were awful and in literature classes they taught us all about the Florentine poet Burchiello and nothing about Shakespeare. But despite this we got by, because the people and culture enabled some of this information to reach us.



⁴ *The Three Wise Men* (Balthasar, Melchior, and Caspar) Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna). Mosaic—536 AD.

That said, the plight of those 15-year-olds I was talking about, the ones who didn't recognise the Three Wise Men,⁴ suggests to me that our vast information network conveys fewer and fewer facts that are truly helpful and more and more that are totally useless.

(Umberto Eco describes the situation he knows in Italy, but it could be easily equated to other countries.)

THE STORY OF JESUS— BY G. DE PURUCKER

With thanks and acknowledgement to the Theosophical University Press
<http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/world/christ/xt-jesus.htm#two>

THE BIRTH OF JESUS, AND THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

The exact birth-date of Jesus the man is totally unknown, not only as regards the year in which the event occurred, but equally so as regards the day of the month on which it happened but the 25th of December finally in time became accepted as the day of his physical birth.

December 25 was very evidently intended to be the date of the Winter Solstice, occurring in our times on or about December 21-22, and was from early times in Imperial Rome observed as the day of the new birth of the *Sol Invictus* or Unconquered Sun, signifying the lowest course of the solar orb in the winter time and the beginning of his return on his northern journey.



Bas-relief depicting the tauroctony. Mithras is depicted looking to Sol Invictus as he slays the bull —Wikipedia

Mithras, the Persian divinity, was also given this title of "Unconquered"; and as one of the very earliest Christian writers, Justin Martyr, tells us— Mithras was mystically said to have been born in a cave or grotto, as was also Jesus, according to very early and wide-spread orthodox Christian legends.

Justin adds: "*He was born on the day on which the Sun was born anew, in the stable of Augeas*":



Depiction of the Venerable Bede from the Nuremberg Chronicle, 1493—Wikipedia

The Venerable Bede, an English chronicler of the island of Britain, his native country, writing in the seventh century of the Christian era, in his book *De temporum ratione* tells us that the ancient Anglo-Saxons, whom he calls the Angli, "began the year on December the 25th when we now celebrate the birthday of the Lord."

"And the very night which is now so holy to us (December 24-5) they called in their own tongue *modra necht* (or *modra niht*) meaning 'Night of the Mothers' by reason of the ceremonies, we believe, that they performed in that night-long vigil."

It is obvious that Bede's reference to this mid-winter festival was taken from some ancient ritual or ceremony, based on the fact of a divine motherhood, which had its human correspondence in a mystical human birth.

Even as the Christ-child, in the beautiful Christian legend, is said to have been born on December 25th, so likewise was the Mithraic divinity said to have been born into human form on that same day of the year, which was the winter solstice. This day, or one a few days thereafter, has been commemorated as the birthday of other religious type-figures. The Christmas Festival is in one sense only, a Christian festival. It is based upon something belonging to the Greek and Roman paganism which the Christians took over. It is therefore older than Christianity.

There were at least three dates when commemorative festivals were held in the early Christian era: 25 December, 6 January called the Epiphany, and 25 March—practically the time of the spring equinox. All these dates were based upon astronomical data and facts; and the Christians of about the fifth or sixth century of the Christian era finally chose the date which had been in use for the celebration of the birthday of the Persian god, Mithras - December 25th.

The Mysteries of Antiquity were celebrated at various times of the year - in spring, summer, autumn, and at the winter solstice. But the greatest of these mystical celebrations was that which was held in winter-time, when the sun had reached his southern-most point, and turning, began his return journey northwards.

Beginning with the winter solstice, on December 21, these most sacred of the ancient Mysteries began. Therein were initiated certain men who had been chosen on account of having perfected a certain preliminary period of training: chosen to go through initiatory trials for the purpose of bringing into manifestation in the man the divine faculties and powers of the inner god.

Two weeks were passed in this cycle of training or initiation; and on the 6th of January, later called Epiphany (a Greek word which means "the appearance of a

god"), celebrated even today in the Christian Church, came the supreme moment in the ancient crypts of initiation, when the aspirant, having successfully passed through the preliminary trials, was brought face to face with his own inner god.



Mosaic of Christ as Sol or Apollo-Helios in Mausoleum M in the pre-fourth-century necropolis beneath St. Peter's in the Vatican - interpreted by many as representing Christ

If he withstood successfully the supreme test, he was suddenly suffused with splendour, with light which shone from him, so that he stood there radiating lightlike the sun. This splendour is the Christ-light, called in the Orient the 'buddhic splendour', and is simply the concentrated spiritual vitality of the human being pouring forth in irradiation. The Christ-sun was born.

Theosophists commemorate the Christmas Festival on account of the facts that I have briefly outlined; and furthermore, remember that these initiations take place today. The Theosophist looks upon this season with reverence and awe, for he knows that in the proper quarter some human being is undergoing the supreme test, and that if successful, if he is "raised," if he can raise his own personal being into communion with his inner god and hold it there, so that he becomes suffused with the divine splendour, a new Christ is born to the world, a teacher of forgiveness, of compassion, of almighty love to all that is.

LOOKING FOR OPAC

This is quite amazing news! Through the Australian Section's website you now have access to the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). This powerful search tool will inform you if a particular publication is available and in which of the theosophical libraries it can be found. As an example, I searched 'Gomes' and found that Michael Gomes' 1987 book *The dawning of the theosophical movement* is available in Brisbane and Melbourne TS Libraries and that there is a copy in the Campbell Library, but that one is not for loan.

The log-on steps are:

- <http://www.austheos.org.au/>
- **Resources** tab
- **Library catalogue** (first on the pulldown menu)
- Click on **Search and Browse** the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)
- Enter your general search term in the box on the left and run the green search button.

Once you are on the webpage of your choice of publication, you will see that there is a button to reserve or request the book or article.

Try it out. You will be captivated by the results. A great deal of work must have been put into this project and all involved are to be congratulated.

As an example, on searching 'Canberra', the following publication came up—

Beyond architecture: Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin : America, Australia, India - edited by Anne Watson. (1998)

The article abstract informs us:

"Walter Burley Griffin is best known in Australia for his connection with the design of the national capital, Canberra. *Beyond architecture* reveals the place of Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahony, both as a couple and as individuals, in architectural and design history. Eminent authors from Australia and North America discuss the remarkable careers and lives of these two fascinating architects. They take us on a professional and spiritual journey from the Griffins' years in the office of Frank Lloyd Wright in turn-of-the-century Chicago and successful independent practice in North America, to Australia in their pursuit of an ideal civic democracy, and finally to a revitalised practice in India, dramatically cut short by Walter's untimely death in 1937." - Book jacket.

Information on the article tells us some of the subjects and information we will find from the following text:

Griffin Chronology—Chicago 1900: The Griffins Come of Age / Paul Kruty—
 Marion Mahony as Originator of Griffin's Mature Style: Fact or Myth? / Paul Sprague -
 Marion Mahony: A Larger than Life Presence / Anna Rubbo— Spirituality and Symbolism in
 the Work of the Griffins / James Weirick—The Landscape Art of Walter Burley Griffin /
 Christopher Vernon—Dreams of Equity, 1911-1924 / Jeffrey Turnbull—The Inside Story:
 Furniture and Lighting / Anne Watson— Creating a Modern Architecture for India /
 Paul Kruty—Pymont Incinerator and its Precedents / Peter Y. Navaretti— Looking Back on
 the Griffins / David Dolan.

The publication being searched (*Beyond architecture*) was made available in conjunction with the exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum, from 7 July 1998 for approximately nine months.

OPAC is a powerful search engine and programme—we should be making good use of it.

THE ODYSSEY

On 7 November, Simon O'Rourke in brilliant story-teller mode, narrated the analogy of the spiritual path of the Odyssey which tells the journey, as all great stories do, not of one individual, but of every human being on the spiritual path. *The Odyssey* narrates the period of evolution moving towards spirituality. Taking us along Odysseus' long ten-year homewards journey after the war in Troy, Simon gave his view of how each misadventure encountered by the hero related to the human spiritual search. After departing Troy, one of his first stopping places is in the Land of the Lotus Eaters where his crew, by eating a magic narcotic plant, falls into a stupor and oblivion. This could be said to represent each person coming into a new incarnation, and going through the experience of forgetfulness.

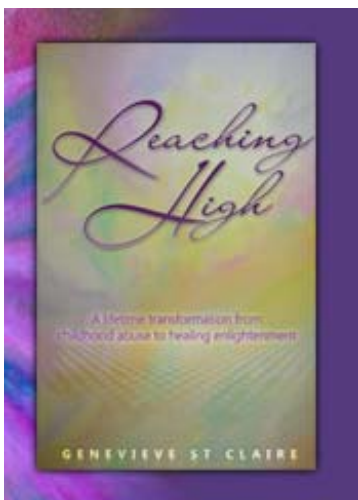
Odysseus (whose name seems to signify 'trouble') is evolving through nature. His thoughts become the monsters that prevent him from returning to Ithaca, and the crew represents the past incarnations of Odysseus.

Another example in the allegory is the period spent on the island of the sorceress Circe, surrounded by an assortment of pigs, wolves and lions, symbolically representing the traits of graspingness or gluttony and misuse of the mind. When Odysseus is depicted threatening Circe with his sword, he then has control of the mind (with 'sword' equating to the two edges of mind).

The lengthy journey home to Penelope signifies the quest to reach Nirvana, and the many suitors vying for Odysseus' kingdom symbolize the greedy aspects of humanity. And at last, the scene of his being the only person strong enough to string the bow (his own) and kill the suitors represents the destruction of the last of the karma.

(The recorded tape of Simon's talk may be borrowed.)

Reaching High



At our public meeting on 5 December Margot Herbert talked about the book she has written - about her life, her experiences and methods of healing, and her personal struggle towards a more enlightened way of living.

Margot came from a background which had no spiritual or religious base and initially one of her major sources of reading material was Adyar Bookshop in Sydney. This is a very honest story and truly uplifting for those wondering if it is at all possible to go further upwards in this lifetime.

Her book, *Reaching High* written under the name of Genevieve St Claire, describes her healing methods and beliefs and she hopes it will inspire others.

To purchase —<http://www.reachinghigh.com.au/> *Reaching High* by Genevieve St Claire can be purchased online in hard copy or Kindle version, or order from bookshops.

RCC \$29.95 Published by BookPal, 2011 ISBN: 9781742841236

BOOK NEWS—LIBRARY

The Australian TS Section has given our library a copy of *Literature & Aesthetics*, Volume 21, number 1 - The Journal of the *Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics*. This impressive publication is a collection of papers inspired by a two-day conference at the University of Sydney in October 2010 which considered the heritage of theosophy in art and culture.

Readers may recall that Michael Gomes, from USA, came to meet and talk to us in Canberra en route to this conference.

Each of the thirteen articles contained in the journal has a connection to the Theosophical Society.



Dara Tatray's article *Theosophy and the Dissenting Western Imagination* introduces the impact of theosophy on the West, and traces the relationship between theosophical concepts and modern science, with observations on the work of Newton, Max Planck and Wolfgang Pauli.

Harry Oldmeadow in *Ex Oriente Lux* explores the impact of the East upon the modern European philosophical and literary imagination.

Fiona Fraser presents the work of Phyllis Campbell, theosophical composer, and the article draws on parallels between music and colour and focuses also on thought forms as described by CW Leadbeater and Annie Besant.

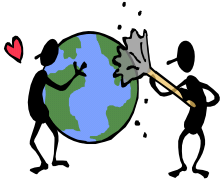
In *Colour, Shape and Music* Zoe Alderton continues on the theme of thought forms and discusses the work of artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Roy de Maistre and Grace Cossington Smith. The research work of Jenny McFarlane features in both Fraser's and Alderton's articles.

Johanna Petsche writes in *Gurdjieff and Blavatsky* of the largely unexamined inter-relationships between the biographies, public personae, and teachings of HP Blavatsky and George Gurdjieff who, although their lifetimes overlap, never met. She claims that both Blavatsky and Gurdjieff attributed their teachings to the esoteric knowledge they accumulated in their extensive travels in what were then regarded as remote and sacred locations.

Garry Trompf's paper *Imagining Macrohistory?* explores the differences in macrohistorical orientation between *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*.

In her article *An Enlightened Life in Text and Image* Carole Cusack examines the work of film director Peter Brook as it relates to George Gurdjieff in *Meetings with Remarkable Men*.

Each of these papers has much to intrigue and hold the reader's interest, with a common thread of the development of religious and cultural ideas around the 20th century running through them. Our library copy used for this short review is already well thumbed.



**The Theosophical Order of Service
Representing theosophy in action on a daily basis.**

The TOS was founded by Annie Besant in February 1908

Report on Theosophical Order of Service Activities

Presented at the Annual General Meeting of Canberra TS Branch, 22 November 2011

Our small TOS group started with six members this year, but during the year one left to go interstate, one was overseas much of the time, one was absent on overseas holiday and one was absent on vacation, which meant that there was quite a gap in the meeting schedule during July, August and September. The TOS group follows on from the study group meeting which has been studying Geoffrey Hodson's *Basic Theosophy* and begins with a short meditation.

- On 14 March 2011 we sent a cheque for \$60 to the National Treasurer of TOS to be donated to the SEE Project (Seeing Eyes for Everyone) in India. This project is a collaboration between TOS in Chennai, India and the Udhi Eye Hospitals which does the screening examination. When necessary, spectacles are supplied or cataract surgery is undertaken.
- On 20 May 2011 we gave our sponsorship money of \$150 to the National Treasurer TOS for the Pakistan Student Sponsorship program – for Canberra TOS to continue sponsoring one student
- Throughout 2011 we have continued our collections for the sponsorship program through the small box at meetings.
- To date our funds for the sponsorship program are \$109.25 - a good start to the \$150 we need for the sponsorship. Any funds above the required amount will be given either to another TOS project, or retained for the following year's sponsorship. (Australia sponsors approximately 33 students through this project.)



Some of the younger children attending school in Pakistan

Thanks to all who have contributed to our TOS projects throughout the year and, and have donated through the small wicker basket at our meetings.

Janice

Below: A project has been initiated by the TOS in Kenya to provide emergency aid to families suffering current acute food shortage in a village to the east of Nairobi.



The TOS provides emergency aid for starving families in East Africa.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN CANBERRA
PROGRAMME 2012

**NOTE—THE PROGRAMME FOR 2012 WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTER THE
PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE HAS MET**

Keep these dates in mind for the beginning of the 2012

Monday, 6 February—Public Meeting, 8.00pm

Saturday, 18 February—Discussion Group, 2.00pm

Monday, 5 March—Public Meeting, 8.00pm

We have returned to the Friends' Meeting House and our public meetings will be on the first **MONDAY** of each month and will start at 8.00 pm at:

Friends Meeting House
Corner of Bent and Condamine Streets
Turner ACT 2612

Venues and topics for discussion groups for the rest of the year will be advised. The meetings on the first Mondays are open to the public; any who are interested in the subject are welcome at the discussion group meetings.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME, PLEASE BRING FRIENDS.

Gold coin donations are requested at our meetings

We rely on these donations to cover the cost of renting the room
for the evening and they are sincerely appreciated

**The cost of room hire has been increased at the renewed Friends' Meeting House and
we rely on the generosity of the public, members and friends to cover our costs.**

Annual fees for the Theosophical Society in Canberra:

Single: \$50, **Couple:** \$90, **student/pensioner*:** \$40

Joining fee: \$5, **Associate member:** \$10, **Friends donation:** (suggested) \$20

Library: no charge for members; \$10 for non members (reimbursed on return of book).

* Number of concession card required: as per National Executive Committee minutes of July 2004

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www.austheos.org.au/Canberra/