

2014 Kellerman Lecture for New Zealand [2]

A SHORT HISTORY OF ESOTERIC SOCIETIES IN NEW ZEALAND

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There runs through the length and breadth of Masonic Research two distinct schools of thought as regards the methodology of Masonic Research: the authentic school, dependent upon factual exaltedness of the information being offered on the one hand, and the symbolic school resplendent with its fine symbolism and deep esoteric meanings on the other. Unfortunately it has been such that 'never the twain shall meet'. It is my intention to change that with this paper, which sets out to document, as far as possible, the history of the many and varied esoteric organisations, particularly those of a peculiarly western orientation, within New Zealand.

Freemasonry in New Zealand

As we are a Masonic order, what better place to start than with the opening of the first Masonic lodge in New Zealand under the Irish Constitution, Lodge Ara, in 1842, followed by the Grand Orient of France establishing a lodge in Akaroa the following year, which closed three years later. In 1889 the Grand Orient of France established another lodge, *Loge l'Amour de la Verité*, in Wellington, but it soon folded. On the other hand, the Grand Lodge of New Zealand was established in 1890 from Irish, English and Scottish lodges, and has endured.



You may be wondering why I choose to start with the founding of Freemasons' lodges when this paper purports to be regarding esoteric orders. I would maintain that Freemasonry *is* an esoteric order. If we look at the definition of esotericism, we find that:

Esotericism or **Esoterism** signifies the holding of esoteric opinions or beliefs, that is, ideas preserved or understood by a small group of those specially initiated, or of rare or unusual interest. The term derives from the Greek *ἐσωτερικός* (*esôterikos*), a compound of *ἔσω* (*esô*): "within", thus pertaining to interiority or mysticism. Its antonym is "exoteric".

The term can also refer to the academic study of esoteric religious movements and philosophies, or to the study of those religious movements and philosophies whose proponents distinguish their beliefs, practices, and experiences from mainstream exoteric and more dogmatic institutionalized traditions.

Examples of esoteric religious movements and philosophies include Alchemy, Astrology, Anthroposophy, early Christian Mysticism, Freemasonry, Gnosticism, Kabbalah, Neoplatonism, Magic, Merkabah mysticism, Mesmerism, Rosicrucianism, Taoism, Numerology, Swedenborgianism, Scientology, Spiritualism, the Alawites, the Theosophy of Jacob Böhme and his followers, and the Theosophical revivalist movement associated with Helena Blavatsky.

Although esotericism refers to an exploration of the hidden meanings and symbolism in various philosophical, historical, and religious texts, the texts themselves are often central to mainstream religions. For example, the Bible and the Torah are considered esoteric material.

Wikipedia (accessed 25/02/14)

Contemplate that definition for a moment and, whether you like it or not, I believe that as a marginalised philosophical movement Freemasonry fits that definition nicely. Regardless, let us move on.

The Egyptian Rite

Count Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite, one of the more quirky orders, was founded in New Zealand in 1876, with three chapters: *Sphinx* in Dunedin, *Memphis* in Christchurch, and *Cleopatra* in Wellington, followed by *Zola* in Auckland in 1877. By 1882 they had all folded, with *Zola*, *Memphis* and *Sphinx* changing allegiance to the Ancient and Accepted Rite or Rose Croix.



Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite



Helena Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott and the Theosophical Society



The Theosophical Society

The Theosophical Society was organised in New York City in 1875. Its principal founders were Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the first Russian woman to be naturalized as an American citizen, author of *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, and Col Henry Steel Olcott. Early in its current incarnation it borrowed heavily from Eastern thought.

The Theosophical Society is non-sectarian, non-political, and non-dogmatic. Its three declared objects are:

1. To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.
2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity.

The Theosophical Society chartered a lodge in Wellington in 1888, but it lasted only a year before becoming dormant. Among its 15 members was the former Premier of New Zealand, Sir Harry Atkinson. The society got a better start with an Auckland lodge, chartered in 1892; Dunedin, in spite of strong church opposition, in 1894; and the revival of Wellington in 1894.

The New Zealand Section received its Charter on 7 April 1896. It had 1300 members in 1922 and 1670 in 1987, and celebrated the 125th anniversary of the Society in New Zealand in 2013.

Ancient and Primitive Rite

The year 1892 saw the establishment of another obscure branch of Freemasonry, the Ancient and Primitive Rite 33°–96° of Memphis and Mizraïm, with lodges at Wellington (Wellington #14) and Lumsden (Waimea #19), both working up to the 18th degree.

They folded less than 20 years later, in 1909.



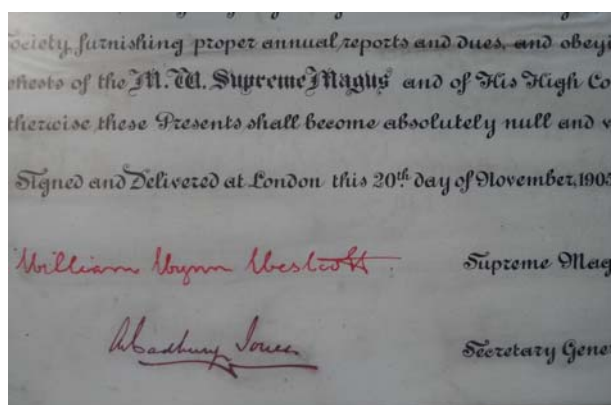
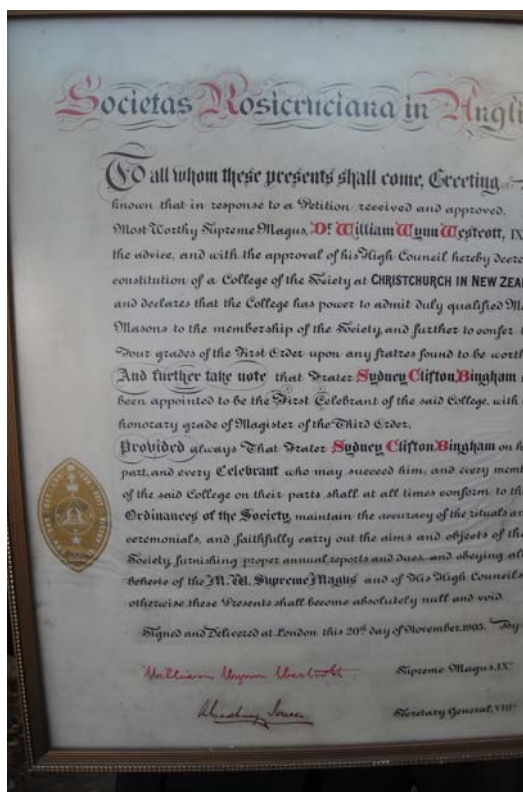
SRIA

The Christchurch College of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, a Rosicrucian order open only to Freemasons of the rank of Master Mason, was established in 1906. Other colleges were subsequently established in Auckland, Wellington and Napier, and all four are still at work.

The SRIA was founded in London in 1866, with nine grades based on the kabbalistic 'Tree of Life'. Each grade has a particular emphasis on such esoteric subjects as colours, numbers, alchemy, kabbalah, etc. Candidates are expected to make their own research into areas of their choice and to present papers to the *Fratres* in order to further develop the collective understanding of the human journey.

It is from the SRIA that the Golden Dawn got its structure and early members. One of the early Chiefs of the Golden Dawn was the Supreme Magus of SRIA, who signed the warrant of Christchurch College in 1905. This was only the fifth college to be formed by the SRIA, indicative of the interest in things esoteric that were taking place half a world away from

London. In 1918 Dr Robert William Felkin, of whom we shall hear more shortly, became the SRIA's Chief Adept for New Zealand.

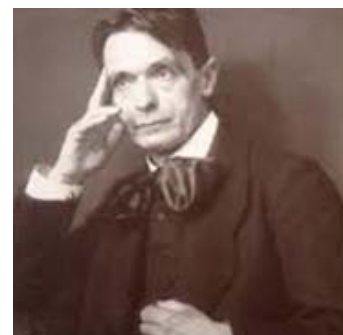


The Warrant of Christchurch College, signed by Dr W Wynn Westcott

Anthroposophy

In the early 1900s, the area of Havelock North was fast becoming an esoteric and spiritual centre, with the advent there of the roots of what was to become Anthroposophy.

Anthroposophy was formally founded in 1913 by Rudolf Steiner, known for the many Steiner schools throughout New Zealand, among other things. Steiner had broken away from Theosophy in 1912, because he was dissatisfied with the growing deification of Krishnamurti, whom C W Leadbeater had declared to be Lord Maitreya, or future Buddha. (Krishnamurti later refuted this claim, and became a spiritual master after another form and path.)



Rudolph Steiner

Anthroposophy holds that there are four levels of human nature: the physical, etheric, astral and ego, arguing that the physical body evolves from its spiritual nature and not vice versa. These ideas were brought to Havelock North by Mrs E J Richmond, and its many early enthusiasts shared membership with *Whare Ra*, of which we learn more shortly. Dr Felkin employed a number of Steiner's techniques in his medical practice, such as what we would know as colour therapy.

The regular study circles were formalised in 1930 when the Anthroposophical Society was formed, and they have been busy since then:

- operating a teachers' college;
- Rudolf Steiner schools, up to and including a school of Spiritual Science;
- the Hohepa Home School in Clive (Hohepa's aim is to support people with intellectual disabilities to develop to their fullest potential, following the principles and teachings of Rudolf Steiner, whose approach to human psychology and education began from his understanding that in every human being, whatever their apparent impairment, there is a

spiritual individuality at work, creating its own destiny), for special needs children;

- the Prometheus Foundation in Napier, a community-based ethical bank, making lending decisions; they look not only at financial risks and returns, but also at the social and environmental implications of a project or proposal; and
- Weleda, a worldwide supplier of Steiner remedies. Weleda's heritage dates back to the 1920s when Rudolf Steiner and Dr Ita Wegman developed anthroposophic medicine, the simple yet powerful way to utilise nature's medicines to stimulate the body to 'heal itself'. Weleda maintains this past wisdom and endeavours to source the finest ingredients from specially selected biodynamic and organic farms to produce health-enhancing herbal and homoeopathic formulas and exquisite body care products. Weleda products are free of synthetic preservatives (including parabens), fragrances, colours, mineral oils and emulsifying agents. Additionally Weleda never tests its personal care products on animals and they purchase only fair-trade ingredients.

The Golden Dawn



Westcott



Mathers



Woodman



The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded in the UK in 1887 by Dr W Wynn Westcott, S L Mathers and Dr W Woodman, three high-ranking members of the SRIA, and hence Freemasons. The order's rituals were based on certain 'rediscovered' coded manuscripts allegedly from the Germanic Rosicrucians of an earlier time. The order contains elements of Egyptian mythology, astrological influences, kabbalistic structure, astral projections, and a great deal of applied magic.

The order suffered much infighting and finally split into three sections in 1903: Mathers' increasingly autocratic branch; A E Waite's Independent & Rectified Rite; and Dr R W Felkin's Stella Matutina branch. The order accepts both sexes for membership. Dr Felkin came to New Zealand, with his wife Harriet and daughter Ethelwyn, in 1912 and founded the Smaragdum Thallesses (Emerald of the Seas) Temple #49 of the Order of the Stella Matutina.



Waite



Felkin

Dr and Mrs Felkin soon returned to England, leaving Ethelwyn in charge for about a year before she, too, returned to England. Dr Felkin and family then went to Germany, where he was seeking the lost masters of the Rosicrucians—a real fool's errand, given that at this time the First World War was about to erupt. In fact, Dr Felkin's family were the last British citizens to escape from Germany after the declaration of war, with the aid of German Freemasons.

The Felkins returned to New Zealand in 1916, settling in Havelock North, in a house designed for them by architect James Chapman-Taylor, and named 'Whare Ra' (House of the Sun). The town of Havelock North had already become noted as a centre of esoteric interests, with its 'Havelock Work', an arts and spirituality movement begun in 1907 by Reginald and Ruth Gardiner and Harold Large, and embraced by the whole town, and with the founding of 'The

Society of the Southern Cross', whose members included Quakers, Anglicans & Theosophists meeting together to pray and meditate.

At Whare Ra, Felkin ran a respected and compassionate medical practice by day, incorporating many of Rudolf Steiner's theories regarding colour therapy, etc, and a Golden Dawn temple by night. The house was spacious and the temple comprised a very large pair of rooms underneath the living areas, with a secret, seven-sided, brightly coloured vault for Inner Order use only, hidden behind curtains and two large, heavy doors. The interior decor of the crypt has been described as 'to the uninitiated, looks like the workings of a secondary school art student on a bad day!' (*Village Press*). You decide for yourself!



Whare Ra

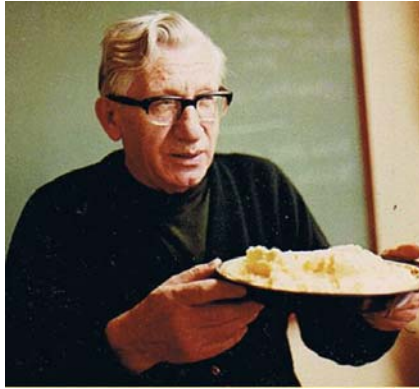


At the time of Felkin's death in 1926, the temple had over 100 members. During its lifetime, the membership included doctors, two bishops, a mayor, a newspaper owner, a head teacher and many business people. They took their membership seriously, and would not acknowledge one another in the street if they had no relationship outside of the temple.

In the 1960s, Whare Ra members had the opportunity to meet Dr Albert Riedell, otherwise known as Frater Albertus Spagyricus, during his visit to Australia and New Zealand. He is credited with reviving practical alchemy in the tradition of Paracelsus, and was founder of the Paracelsus Research Society in Salt Lake City, Utah, which later evolved into Paracelsus College, established in America and in Bendigo, Victoria. The American college became defunct after Riedell's death in 1984, but the Australian college is still active. Riedell's work was based on the Paracelsian concept of three essentials, Body, Soul and Spirit. Riedell developed a system of teaching alchemical concepts using the spagyric technique of separation and cohobation. He was also active in AMORC (see below).

The Whare Ra Temple closed in 1978 from lack of interest and 'lack of power in the temple', and most of the order's regalia, documents and materials were burned. It had been a link to the original Order of the Golden Dawn for over 60 years.

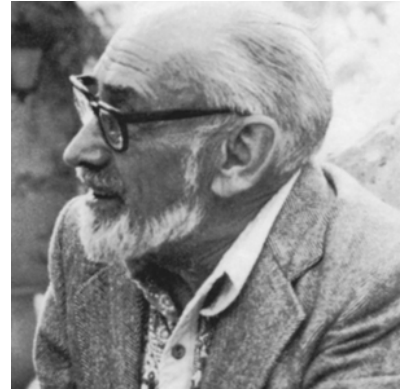
Around 1979, after the closure of Whare Ra in Havelock North, another Golden Dawn temple was founded in Wellington by Pat and Chris Zalewski, the Thoth Hermes Temple. In 1983 they were visited by Israel Regardie, Golden Dawn scholar and noted esotericist, who was at one time secretary to Alastair Crowley. The Temple closed in 1995. There have been subsequent opening and closing of temples, such as the Horus Temple in Hawkes Bay and the Osiris Temple.



Frater Albertus



Pat Zalewski



Israel Regardie

The Order of the Table Round

In 1916 Dr Felkin also establish the Order of the Table Round (*Ordo Tabulae Rotundae*, OTR) in Havelock North. This is a neo-Arthurian mystical and chivalric order, which still operates today. The OTR is a 'school of Christian Chivalry', as opposed to the Golden Dawn's 'school of Spiritual Wisdom'. Dr Felkin received the Grandmastership of the OTR from Neville Meakin in 1912, prior to departing for New Zealand. Meakin, a Freemason and member of Felkin's Stella Matutina in England, claimed to be the 37th Grandmaster of OTR by virtue of serial descent from the House of Tudor, the order having existed since the days of King Arthur. The order was, in fact, one of many turn-of-the-century cults of chivalry and 'gentlemanship'.

Initially, only Inner Order members of Whare Ra were asked to join the OTR. Among them were architect James Chapman-Taylor and Reginald Gardiner, a founder of the 'Havelock Work'. It was Gardiner who succeeded Felkin as Grandmaster of OTR.



Emblems inspired by the Order of the Table Round, from the home of one of its members

The OTR was accommodated in an oblong building in Havelock North. It featured a round table of which twelve knights of King Arthur equated with the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The original black and white columns that lined the entrance to the vault at Whare Ra now find a place within the OTR room.

The Tauhara Trust

Dr Felkin's widow, Harriet, purchased 60 acres of land near Taupo in 1938, and along with fellow trustees established the Tauhara Trust to form a centre to develop methods of organic horticulture, influenced by Steiner's Anthroposophical ideas—some 50 years before the advent of organic farming in mainstream New Zealand. In 1971 the trustees sold the land to the local council and purchased an estate overlooking the aptly-named Acacia Bay, where they continue to provide a venue for meetings and conferences for all sorts of spiritual groups, such as Meditation, Eastern, New-Age and Deep-Ecological groups. It was founded to create a spiritual

and educational centre which would draw together people of differing viewpoints and methods of working, but united in their search for truth and the establishment of goodwill and understanding in the world. Tauhara is a free association of people from throughout New Zealand and beyond, who come from all walks of life, all faiths, and who hold many diverse views.

Radiant Living

The School of Radiant Living was a movement active in New Zealand from the late 1930s until the late 1980s. Founder Dr Herbert Sutcliffe taught a holistic philosophy of physical, psychological and spiritual health. The School of Radiant Living had its international headquarters at *Peloha* (from the first two letters of *Peace, Love and Harmony*) in Havelock North from the early 1940s.

According to Sutcliffe, good mental health was the key to better physical health. He taught that Nature cures, and can be assisted to cure, not only with fresh, naturally grown food but also with mental analysis. He advocated personal counselling and held individual sessions wherever he went. Disease could be the result of fear, feelings of inferiority or hate, products of the human mind which cause problems all over the world. But anyone could be assisted back to normal life and health, according to Sutcliffe, by understanding the psychosomatic (the power of the mind) and psycho-cosmology (the power of the spirit). Tools such as *affirmations* would eliminate fears and retrain the mind. Music, singing and public-speaking were also important.

Sutcliffe, an English-born psychologist, was involved with the internationally popular Radiant Health Club movement in Australia before founding the first School of Radiant Living in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, in 1931. During the Second World War he migrated to New Zealand. A total of 36 schools (24 overseas and 12 in New Zealand) were eventually established.

Best known among its followers was Sutcliffe's one-time assistant, Sir Edmund Hillary!

Builders of the Adytum

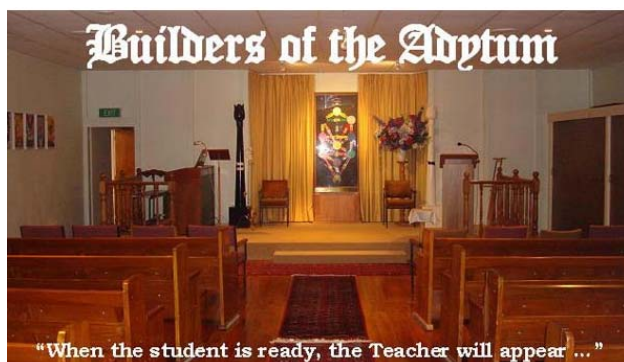
Builders of the Adytum (BOTA) was developed by Paul Foster Case in America between 1922 and 1929. He had been initiated in S L Mathers' Alpha et Omega branch of the Order of the Golden Dawn, but left it after a dispute with Mathers' successor, Moina Mathers. He developed BOTA first as a correspondence course of 'Ageless Wisdom', and then as lectures given to members in study groups, to which he later added ceremonial and ritual, excluding the Enochian magic of Mathers' Alpha et Omega as 'too dangerous'. He was a Freemason (raised in Fairport Lodge 476, New York, in 1926, and affiliated with Californian lodges in 1944 and 1953), was ordained a priest in the Liberal Catholic Church (Ojai, California, 1937) and served several parishes in southern California.

When Case died in 1954, he was succeeded as Prolocutor General of BOTA by Ann Davies, who visited New Zealand and in 1963 established temples in Auckland and Wellington. Besides ruffling the feathers of the local Theosophists and Anthroposophists, the advent of BOTA was a likely factor in the demise of the Whare Ra temple in the next decade, the leader of the BOTA branch being Alistair Wallace, a long term member of Whare Ra.



Left:
BOTA Emblem

Right:
Wellington Centre



There is now also a temple in Dunedin, and the Provincial administrative headquarters for New Zealand and Australia is located at Naenae, Lower Hutt.

The Builders of the Adytum (Latin, from Greek: innermost part of a temple, private chamber, sanctum), have a philosophy based primarily upon the Kabbalah and Tarot Cards, with secondary neo-Platonic, gnostic and Angelic influences. Its teaching follows the pursuit of wisdom in all its forms, using the Tarot cards and the Kabbalistic Tree of Life as teaching devices. It maintains that the proper use of the Sacred Tarot, Tree of Life, and Holy Qabalah provides the impetus for genuine spiritual growth within a safe, fraternal environment, encouraged by members who seek unity through the practice of true fellowship. A variety of meetings and practical work is offered.

Knights of the Southern Cross

The Knights of the Southern Cross was founded in 1919 in Australia. At this time Catholics were regarded with suspicion and were low in the social and economic scale, with advertisements carrying the line 'Catholics need not apply' or 'cnna'. The Order served as a shelter wherein members could gather for mutual support and encouragement.

During the 1920s, branches were formed in New Zealand, and the first annual conference of the Supreme Council of the Knights of the Southern Cross (New Zealand) (KSCNZ) was held in Wellington in 1931. It is a fraternal order of Catholic men committed to promoting the Christian way of life, and is organised in 18 branches throughout the six dioceses of New Zealand.

Membership is open to all Roman Catholic males in good standing of 18 years of age or older. Among its objectives are: to be an organised body of Catholic Men giving entire loyalty to the Apostolic See, to the Hierarchy and the Clergy in all things appertaining to the Catholic faith; and to work for the spiritual, intellectual and material welfare of members and their families.

In 1979 the Knights of the Southern Cross (New Zealand) joined the International Alliance of Catholic Knights.



Lectorium Rosicrucianum

In 1974 the first Australasian Centre of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, or International School of the Golden RosyCross, was established in Adelaide. The Adelaide group was active for about five years, during which time it also worked together with a small group of pupils in Auckland, and a Centre was established in Auckland in 1979.

The Lectorium Rosicrucianum began in Haarlem, Netherlands, where its headquarters are now situated. Its origins can be traced to 1924, when two brothers, Z W Leene and J Leene, joined the Dutch division of the Rosicrucian Fellowship, a society founded in 1909 by Max Heindel in Oceanside, California, from which they later split.

Pupils are expected to adopt certain basic life reforms, such as vegetarianism and the abstention from tobacco, alcohol and drugs (which probably explains why their website says there only 15 members in New Zealand). A high standard of morality is also expected. In external activities as well as in their inner development, men and women play an equal part. They believe that there is a golden thread which is a Path that can actually be walked, a Path shown by all religions in their original form. No Master or Initiate can give the Truth to another. It can only be approached by one's own efforts, and by persevering throughout all the obstructions and difficulties encountered on the way, and it can only be reached through an inner process of transformation called 'soul-rebirth', or 'transfiguration'.



The Circle symbolises eternity, infinity, or the microcosm; the Triangle symbolises the three great powers which emanate from the Logos: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the Square symbolises the foundation for the construction of the new human being.

Guardians of Grace, Blessing & Sustenance

In 1978 the Guardians of Grace, Blessing & Sustenance arrived in Auckland from Australia. An order of independent Magicians and mystics never numbering more than 22 members, it came to New Zealand under the auspices of Michael Freedman. Their stated aim was:

It is our Intention that we link ourselves with those Forces and Forms that are building the Universe, so that we might become a part of evolving life, in Communion with All Life, with Compassion for All Life, in Cooperation with All Life

and they offered a course covering: Mysticism, Magic, Religion & Science; Esoteric Philosophy of the Guardians; the Hebrew Alphabet & Qabalah; Astrological Symbolism; the Worlds of the Qabalah; the Tree of Life; the Seventy-Eight Keys to Union (the Tarot); Meditation and Contemplation; Basic Rites & Ritual—for which a nominal fee would be charged, to be donated to charity.

Freedman led the order as Senior Guardian until his death in 1996, which was followed by a leadership issue, resolved in 1999 when Leonard Stevens, known as Jean de Cabalis, was elected Senior Guardian and changed the name of the order to 'et Custosi Tutelae'.



Guardians of Grace, Blessing
& Sustenance



The Gnostic Society



Samael Aun Weor

The Gnostic Society

The Gnostic Society of New Zealand (Inc) is based in Auckland and was established in 1985. Members work together to follow the teachings of Shaikh Abdullah Isa Neil Dougan (1918–1987), a New Zealander, who taught a system of working on oneself to achieve one's psychological and spiritual potential, emphasising selfless service and remembrance of God as key aspects of his teaching. He was a Naqshibandi Sufi but also incorporated ideas from the Gurdjieff system, Taoism, Buddhism, Gnosticism and many other sources in his teaching.

The first three objects of the Gnostic Society are:

1. To foster the truth that God and this universe are One and that man is an expression of this Unity.
2. To foster in humanity the constant desire for self-perfection so that people may learn to serve their fellow man and God in modest stillness and humility.
3. To foster the teaching of love and understanding between all people with the aim of uniting all men in the service of God.

The similarly named **Gnosis Society of New Zealand** in Christchurch is based at the Gnostic Centre and offers regular courses. They maintain that the four pillars of gnosis are the foundations of gnostic knowledge, namely: Art, Science, Philosophy and Mysticism. A key part of their teaching revolves around meditation and the nature of reality and consciousness.

In addition there are other Gnostic societies such as **The Association for Gnostic Studies**, being a non-profit organisation based in New Zealand which provide lectures, retreats and resources exploring the contemporary Gnostic tradition freely to the public. It is a part of the Gnostic Society (Samael Aun Weor) worldwide.

Fellowship of the Rosy Cross

The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross (FRC) was Arthur Edward Waite's mystical version of the Golden Dawn, established in 1915. It went into abeyance with Waite's death in 1942 but was revived in London in the 1970s. The Southern Cross Temple in Christchurch was commenced in 1985 and consecrated in 1992. There are also temples in Hastings (2001) and Kapiti (2007).

FRC uses the structure of the Kabbalistic Tree of life to work its mystical grades on – each grade referring to a separate Sephirah on the tree, aiming to perfect the postulant's personality before higher workings, based on the myth of Christian Rosenkreutz and the Christ Consciousness.

The ceremonial is group-based, with the intention of raising the postulant's level of consciousness in order for that part of the postulant's psyche to be equilibrated—a bringing of various parts of the postulants personality into equilibrium—an outward working with a hoped-for inward development.



Waite House, HQ of the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross in New Zealand

Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis

The Ancient Mystical Order of Rosae Crucis (AMORC) was founded by H Spencer Lewis in America, and is perhaps best known for its mail-order degrees. It has a traditional history based on the mystery schools and archetype of Christian Rosenkreutz.

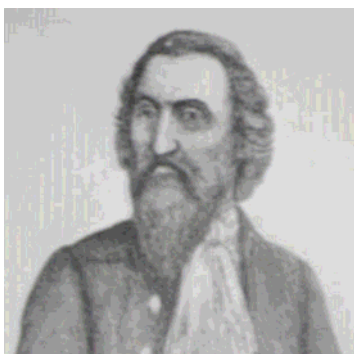
The Grand Lodge for Australia, Asia and New Zealand was created in 1996, with headquarters in Leichhardt, New South Wales. New Zealand has one lodge, in Auckland, with other groups (*atria*) in Bay of Plenty, Christchurch, Hamilton, Napier, Nelson, New Plymouth and Wellington.



Martinist Order

The Martinist Order of New Zealand (MONZ) was established in Hawkes Bay in 2004.

Martinism derives its name from both Martinez De Pasqually and his student, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803), who developed a mystical tradition based on inner meditation on mystic matters, via the 'Way of the Heart', as opposed to ritual magic. This tradition was then formalized in 1888 by Gerard Encausse (1865–1916), also known as Papus.



Martinez De Pasqually



Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin



Papus

Martinism is a form of mystical or esoteric Christianity, which envisions the figure of Christ as 'The Repairer', who enables individuals to attain an idealised state such as that of Man in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. The order has a personal initiation from one initiator to the next, thus each Martinist can trace his or her lineage back to Papus, and theoretically back to Saint-Martin.

In 2013, members of MONZ formed a New Zealand branch of the Russian Spiritual Knights order for its members.

Ordo Templi Orientis

Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) became entwined with the Golden Dawn through its 'bastard son', Alistair Crowley, who re-organised it under the 'Law of Thelema': *Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law* and *Love is the law, love under will*. It uses such tools as ceremonial Magic, Qabalah, Tarot and Astrology, incorporating much of what Crowley learnt during his time with the Golden Dawn. It has an increasing presence in New Zealand, with lodges currently operating very successfully in Auckland (Kantharos Lodge) and Wellington (Eschaton Camp).

Lodges in their current form began in the early 21st century, from foundations in the 1980s, and are growing rapidly. OTO has a complicated initiatory system, with thirteen numbered degrees, and twelve un-numbered degrees which are divided into three grades or 'triads'. The ultimate goal of initiation is 'to instruct the individual by allegory and symbol in the profound mysteries of Nature, and thereby to assist each to discover his or her own true Identity'. The degrees are as follows:

The Man of Earth Triad

0°—Minerval

I°—Man & Brother

II°—Magician

III°—Master Magician

IV°—Perfect Magician & Companion of the Holy Royal Arch of Enoch

P.I.—Perfect Initiate, or Prince of Jerusalem

Outside all Triads

Knight of the East & West

The Lover Triad

V°—

Sovereign Prince Rose-Croix, and Knight of the Pelican & Eagle

Knight of the Red Eagle, and Member of the Senate of Knight Hermetic Philosophers

VI°—

Illustrious Knight (Templar) of the Order of Kadosch, and Companion of the Holy Graal

Grand Inquisitor Commander, and Member of the Grand Tribunal

Prince of the Royal Secret

VII°—

Theoreticus, and Very Illustrious Sovereign Grand Inspector General

Magus of Light, and Bishop of Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica

Grandmaster of Light, and Inspector of Rites & Degrees

The Hermit Triad

VIII°—

Perfect Pontiff of the Illuminati

Epopot of the Illuminati

IX°—Initiate of the Sanctuary of the Gnosis

X°—Rex Summus Sanctissimus

XI°—Initiate of the Eleventh Degree (This degree is technical, and has no relation to the general plan of the Order)

XII°—Frater Superior, and Outer Head of the Order



Lamen of Ordo Templi Orientis

Back to Freemasonry—the First Degree Tracing Board and the Tree of Life

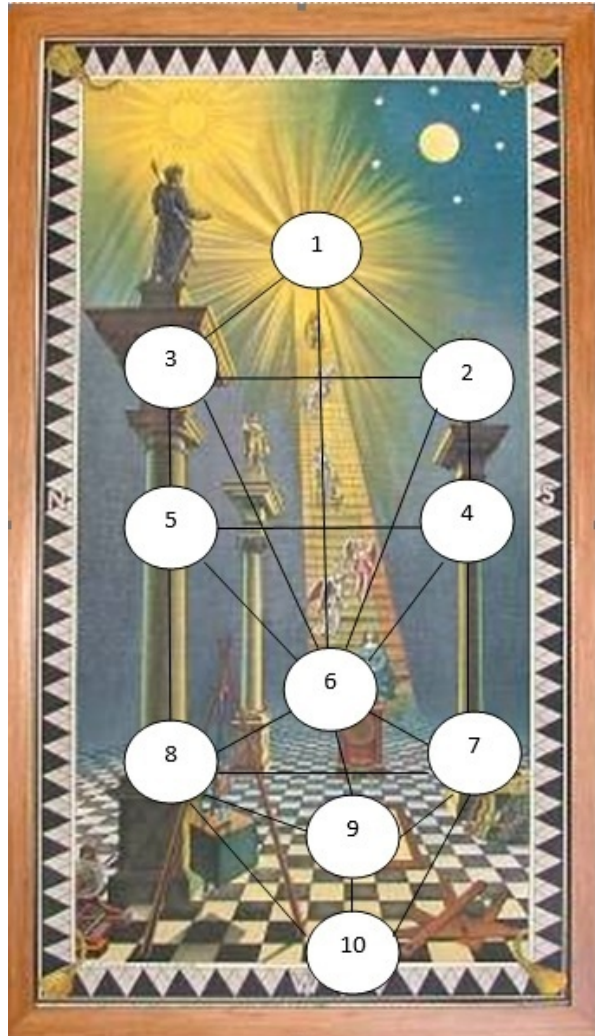
This investigation into the esoteric orders in New Zealand began with Freemasonry and the first Masonic lodge, no doubt causing a few eyebrows to be raised, as the thought of Freemasonry being esoteric is anathema to some members. In order to show the ‘hidden mysteries of nature and science’ that lie under the surface of Freemasonry, for ‘those with eyes to see’, and as an experiment, I have tried placing the Kabbalistic tree of life upon the tracing board of the first degree, as shown below.

Where the sephierah numerical values are named as follows:

1. Kether, the Divine Crown
2. Chokhmah, Wisdom
3. Binah, Understanding
4. Chesed, Mercy
5. Geburah, Justice
6. Tiphareth, Beauty
7. Netzach, Eternity
8. Hod, Glory
9. Yesod, Foundation
10. Malkuth, Material World

I found that this representation carries some validity, illustrating as it does that:

- #1 the crown Kether is the highest point and is the visible light to which we hope to attain the Glory of TGAOTU itself;
- #6 Tiphareth is often held to be the Christ-consciousness, aptly illustrated by the altar and VSL;
- #9 Yesod the foundation being the plans and tools upon which we found our journey; and
- #10 Malkuth the material world being our starting point on the journey.



The three pillars of the tree, being the pillars of Judgement (# 3, 5 & 8), Mercy (#2, 4 & 7) and the middle pillar of Equilibrium (# 1, 6, 9 & 10) are reflected adequately in the two pillars and Jacob's ladder; alternatively they would be the pillars of Strength (judgement), Wisdom (equilibrium) and Beauty (mercy) respectively. It is entirely in order to consider the names of the sephierah 4, 5 & 6 as Wisdom (Chesed, mercy), Strength (Geburah, justice) and Beauty (Tiphareth), thereby further enhancing the accurate symbolism between the kabbalistic tree, the tracing board of the first degree, the pillars and the officers of the lodge. This is an excellent example of the multi-layered symbolism to be found within Freemasonry and, more particularly, the tracing boards.

The centre of the tree of life is the sephierah known as Tiphareth, or beauty, and in a Christian Kabbalistic sense it is the Christ-consciousness; it is entirely in keeping then, in our placing of the tree upon the tracing board, that the 6th sphere be the VSL upon the altar.

It is interesting to note that the rough, untamed ashlar is at the foot of the pillar of mercy, which is also the masculine column, while the smooth ashlar is at the foot of the pillar of judgement, also the column of the feminine principle. Are we being encouraged in our masculine

lodge to become adherent and open to the feminine principles of intuition and consensus in order to knock off the rough edges? The smooth ashlar, hanging as it does with the help of the Lewis above the chequered pavement, is in some respects further away from the ladder, being closer to the viewer, but in other respects it is one step removed from the mundane world, being suspended above the floor. Food for thought!

Another kabbalistic concept applied to the tree of life is that of the four worlds; in some interpretations the sephierah that constitute the tree can be allocated to the four worlds, as follows:

- Atziluth or the world of Emanation, consisting of
 - 1 The Crown
- Briah, or the world of Creation, consisting of
 - 2 Wisdom, and
 - 3 Understanding
- Yetzeriah, or the world of Formation, consisting of the Sephiroth representing
 - 4 Mercy
 - 5 Justice
 - 6 Beauty
 - 7 Eternity
 - 8 Glory, or the artistic flair
 - 9 Foundation, or book knowledge
- Assiah, or the world of Action, being
 - 10 The material world

This interpretation fits well within the tracing board, with the Glory of the GAOTU atop the ladder from which all *emanates*. This emanation gains a *creative* impulse atop the two pillars of mercy and justice. These creative impulses *formulate* themselves into ever denser and more material mental images, until through man these impulses gain manifestation in the everyday world of *action*.

We can, perhaps, take this interpretation of the tracing board a step further and postulate that the man of *action*, in the first degree, at the step of the ladder, *formulates* the ideas, concepts, art, literature and ideals that constitutes the hidden mysteries of nature and science of the second degree; in order to ascend to the world of *creation* in the third degree, the creation being that of the creator from whom all goodness *emanates beyond* the ladder, and therefore beyond the third degree. The journey continues for the initiate.

Psychologically interpreted, the physical body of the entered apprentice must divest itself of—or perfect—the ego, personality or psyche of the fellowcraft, in order that the soul of the master mason may achieve divine unity with the spirit of the Creator.

This initial interpretation marks the first degree tracing board out as an extremely valid aid for meditation and reflection, and as the tree of life bears even more fruit, the more it is both intellectualised and intuited over the years, so will the tracing boards. Indeed, are not the tracing boards in some respects a glyph of equal value and import for the mystics of this age as the tree of life for mystics of an earlier age? A *mandala* for the west, perhaps?

In essence, are the tracing boards a truly western mystic tradition created for us by the early speculative Masons, a method for the Renaissance man to contemplate upon in order to develop spiritually, from a peculiarly western perspective?

Taken as individual devices, the sundry items that make up the board bear reflection and, as a conjoined whole, they speak of a mystical journey of man on a spiritual path from the mundane toward the light of gnosis. This is a message bearing great similarity to that inculcated in the Kabbalistic tree of life.

Conclusion

There are number of factors that come through when you look at the history of esoteric orders within New Zealand:

1. The interconnectedness of many of the organisations and the evolution of one society into the next. For example, the SRIA begat the Golden Dawn, which begat the Stella Matutina, even down to the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, to take just one strand.
2. The important factor that Havelock North appears to play in the development of many of the societies, such as Whare Ra, Anthroposophy, Order of the Table Round, Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, and the Martinist Order of New Zealand.
3. Finally, to be a genuine esoteric or secret order, then your existence ought to be a secret, so perhaps the genuinely secret esoteric orders are those that I haven't written of, because their existence remains just that—a secret!

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