



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MARTINIST ORDER

The origin of the Martinist Order is found in the work and teachings of Martinez Pasquales, a Spanish mystic, adept, and theurgist of the eighteenth century. Much of the life of Pasquales is veiled in mystery. He **was a** direct initiate of the Swedish seer and philosopher, Emanuel Swedenborg, and was well versed in the secret tradition of wisdom as embodied in the esoteric teachings of Egypt, Greece, and the Orient. Moreover, it is known definitely that he was a Rosicrucian. In 1754, he established in Paris a joint lodge of Rosicrucians and Illuminists, and was active during the following two decades in spreading the light of mystical and occult philosophy throughout France and Europe. Shortly after 1760, Martinez Pasquales went to Bordeaux in Southwestern France and founded there a center of activity for an occult Order known as the Cohens Elus, or Elect Priests, which he brought from the Near East. Many persons of mystical inclination and philosophical temperament associated themselves with the Order of Cohens Elus, among them an idealistic young army officer, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, whose life and personality we shall now consider briefly.

L. C. de Saint-Martin was born of noble parentage in Amboise, Province of Touraine, France, on January 18, 1743. He was **a** frail and sensitive child, and early in life manifested the keen intellect, soaring idealism, and pious sentiments which in maturity found full expression in him as a great Christian mystic and Illuminist. An understanding and loving stepmother nurtured the noble ambitions and high sensitivity of the youth. He later expressed himself as forever indebted to her loving guidance and wise education. In accordance with parental wishes, he studied for the profession of law and was admitted to its practice.

However, his inward aspirations and philosophical interests would not let him remain rutted permanently in a work unsuited to his unique talents. Before long, he abandoned the practice of law for service in the army, obtaining through an influential friend a commission in a regiment stationed at Bordeaux. Apparently in those days a military career afforded considerable leisure time, for de Saint-Martin's main purpose in taking a commission was to obtain additional hours for esoteric studies and mystical pursuits. One of his fellow officers was a member of Martinez Pasquales' Order of Cohens Elus. Soon de Saint-Martin met the Supreme Master of the Order and was at once enthralled by its purposes and type of instruction. After due preparation and proof of worthiness, he was initiated into the Rite of the Elect Priesthood in the year 1768 at the age of 25. Eventually, he reached its highest grade, that of the Rosy Cross.

From 1768 to 1771, the youthful de Saint-Martin was honored by serving as personal secretary to Pasquales, and in those years a very close bond developed between the two. The character and teachings of Pasquales made a profound impression upon de Saint-Martin which remained with him all his life and which he freely acknowledged even in later years when he had entered upon an individual creative path. The Supreme Master of the Cohens Elus recognized in the promising, brilliant young man a worthy disciple, one well qualified to carry forward and enlarge upon the work he had begun.

In 1712, personal matters called Martinez Pasquales from France to Port-au-Prince in the West Indies, It was here that he passed away in the year 1774. The burden of his work then fell upon his two ablest disciples, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin and Jean-Baptiste Willermoz. De Saint-Martin and others very close to the late Supreme Master realized that their teacher had never given forth the greater part of his knowledge to any of his students, perhaps finding none of them entirely worthy of such an honor and responsibility. Therefore, with his mentor's passing, de Saint-Martin felt obliged to carry on in an increasingly independent way, evolving a distinctive philosophy in accordance with his own deepening understanding and maturity.

His first philosophical work, published at the age of 32, was Of Errors and of Truth. It has been regarded by many as his most searching work and most fruitful contribution to the literature of mysticism. Like all his later writings, it was issued under the pseudonym of the "Unknown Philosopher." During many years of literary activity he wrote numerous other volumes, including A Natural Table of the Correspondences Existing between God, Man and the Universe; The Man of Desire; Of Numbers; The New Man; The Spirit of Things; The Ministry of Man, and certain excellent translations of writings of Jacob Boehme, the Teutonic philosopher. De Saint-Martin also left to posterity many folios of illuminating personal correspondence.

The philosophical writings of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin met with immediate interest and wide approval. Groups calling themselves "Societies of the Unknown Philosopher" were formed to study his teachings. The last decades of the eighteenth century in France were exceedingly turbulent, holding within their course one of the greatest social and political revolutions of history. Throughout the entire period, de Saint-Martin continued his writing and teaching. Of noble birth, handsome in appearance, and having a very gracious and pleasing personality, he moved in the highest circles of French society and culture, winning converts to his ideas and doing much to disseminate mystical teachings among those who were prepared and worthy. Although of the proscribed nobility, he was not molested seriously during the Reign of Terror or any other violent upheavals of the revolutionary epoch. He was, in fact, summoned later to Paris to serve on the faculty of the Ecole Normale, or Normal School, which was assigned the task of educating teachers for the new France.

At various times during the last half of his life, de Saint-Martin also journeyed abroad to England, Italy, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe. A three-year period in Germany, devoted principally to a study and translation of the works of Jacob Boehme, was one of the happiest intervals of his life. He passed away at the age of 60 on October 13, 1803, following a seizure of apoplexy.

During all these years while de Saint-Martin was writing numerous brilliant works and giving special attention to individual initiation, Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, also an initiate of Martinez Pasquales' and a prosperous merchant of Lyons, was active in extending the boundaries of the Order by forming groups and lodges and making effective the philosophy given out by Pasquales and de Saint-Martin.

Gradually, the lodges stemming from the earlier work of the Cohens Elus and the study groups of the Unknown Philosopher evolved into temples of Martinism. It is important to note that while many of its officers and members were active in Masonic circles, the Martinist Order itself was not a Masonic body. It has always preserved an independent and unique status.

Following the transition of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin and throughout the storms of the Napoleonic era, the Martinist Order was not very active. The traditional teachings and ceremonies were privately transmitted by groups of initiators in Italy, Germany, and France. After a long period of relative stagnancy, a great effort was made in 1887 to unite the various semi-independent groups which composed the Order. This movement to accomplish an effective diffusion of Martinist teaching and influence was crowned with success in 1890 by the formation of a Supreme Council of the Martinist Order, comprising twenty-one members.

The Supreme Council held authority over all lodges of the world. The renowned French mystic, Papus (Dr. Gerard Encausse), was elected its first president. Under the brilliant and indefatigable leadership of Papus, the Order grew rapidly, and by 1900 there were hundreds of active members in most parts of the world. Papus became a famous authority on the subject of Martinism. His writings remain the most reliable reference source available. The World War of 1914-1918 greatly affected the growth and activity of the Order. Its president perished in the heroism of a physician's service, and many of its leaders and members did not survive. In fact, following the war, the Martinist Order was virtually dormant in Europe.

In 1931, the Order was revived principally through the efforts of Augustin Chaboseau, who was one of the three survivors of the Supreme Council of 1890. He had been initiated into Martinism three years before the illustrious Papus. Augustin Chaboseau served as Grand Master and president of the Supreme Council until his transition on January 2, 1946.

In August, 1934, in Brussels, Belgium, Grand Master Chaboseau, with the approval of the Supreme Council, conferred upon Dr. H. Spencer Lewis, then Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, of North and South America, the title of Sovereign Legate of the Martinist Order for the United States of America. Dr. Lewis had previously been initiated into the various rites of the Order in Brussels, Belgium, and Lausanne, Switzerland. The title of Sovereign Legate, with the Charters that accompanied it, granted him the exclusive power to reestablish the inactive Traditional Martinist Order in the United States under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Council in Paris.

The foundations for the reorganization of the Martinist Order in America were well laid by Dr. H. Spencer Lewis before August 2, 1939, the date of his untimely transition. In the early fall of the same year, the Supreme Council of the Martinist Order met again in Brussels, Belgium. The highest dignitaries of the Order in Europe were present. Upon that

occasion, the Supreme Council voted that Ralph M. Lewis, son of the late Dr. H. Spencer Lewis and his successor as Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, who had been initiated into the Martinist Order in Europe, be entrusted and empowered to continue the reestablishment of the Traditional Martinist Order. Therefore, the charters, documents, manifestoes, and other necessary materials for the advancement and growth of Martinism were transmitted to him just prior to the suppression of the Martinist Order in Europe during the second World War, which began in September 1939.

At the present time, the Martinist Order functions under the traditional constitutional requirements designed by the Supreme Council. It has five officers under the leadership and direction of the Sovereign Grand Master, Ralph M. Lewis. The Supreme Temple and Sovereign See for the World is located at Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California 95191.

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