

# A Brief History of The Martinist Movement

by  
an Unknown Brother

## The Legend

The very name **Martinist** conjures images of the mysterious and the unknown adept who has at his (or her) command occult powers and who studies "quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore." Martinists are known to be theurgists, alchemists, and Grailists. Since such persons as the Count of St. Germain, Cagliostro, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Eliphas Levi, and Arthur Edward Waite were Martinists, Martinism and Martinists have been identified as major forces in the occult and esoteric movements of the last three centuries.

## Who are the Martinists?

At the height of the French Reign of Terror (1793-94) which followed the French Revolution, there lived in Paris France's greatest mystic-philosopher, **Louis Claude de Saint-Martin** (1743-1803).

As a young man, Saint-Martin sought a source of the ancient, secret teachings which his heart desired. That longing was fulfilled when, in his early twenties, Saint-Martin received Initiation from the Rosicrucian adept **Martines de Pasqually**. Upon the cornerstone of this *Initiation*, Saint-Martin erected a great edifice of mystic philosophy which he expressed through such books as *Of Errors and Truth*.

Even though he wrote as the **Unknown Philosopher**, the books won Saint-Martin international acclaim and attracted many men and women students who were keen to study with him and to enter the ancient mysteries.

In May of 1789, the French Revolution erupted, and when the Reign of Terror began in 1793 under the direction of Maxmilien Robespierre, a major target for execution was the nobility. In the midst of uncontrollable civil disorder and chaos, and at great personal risk because he was of the noble class of Marquise, Saint-Martin secretly met his men and women students in his apartments and Initiated them into the theurgical mystic philosophy which he had received and enhanced. The peril to their very lives from the executioners of Robespierre was so great that Saint-Martin's students wore cloaks and masks even in their meetings to conceal their identities. Even today, Martinists do not reveal the identities of their Brother or Sister Initiates. Indeed, even themselves they do not reveal unless they choose to do so.

From those trying times and from those Initiatic secret meetings grew **Martinism**, a **system of mystical Christian Illuminist philosophy and theurgical procedure** whose purpose is to establish the **Reintegration** of mankind back into its original divine state.

In order to accomplish the task of Reintegration, the Martinist needs considerable metaphysical knowledge and Theurgical abilities. Indeed, it is to his use of theurgical powers that Saint-Martin attributed the fact that neither he nor his students suffered from the hands of Robespierre's henchmen.

Saint-Martin's student-Initiates eventually became known as **Martinists**, men and women Christian adepts who to this day have continued to transmit not only The Initiation of Saint-Martin, but also his esoteric and theurgical instruction. By 1797, the Martinists had become so widespread and influential that the reactionary Robespierre supporter, C.-L. Cadet-Gassicort, in his book, *Le tombeau de Jacques deMolay (The Tomb of Jacques DeMolay)*, published in Paris in 1797), warned his fellow fanatics (on page 91)...

Of these mysterious initiates--now become numerous, bold, conspiring--all [conspiracy] was born: Jesuitism, magnetism, Martinism.....

### **The Teachings of Authentic Martinism**

Martinism is a system of mystical Christian Illuminist philosophy and practice based upon the transmission of an Initiation (called by Martinists *The Initiation*) and the secret instruction and public writings of French philosopher **Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin** (1743-1803). St. Martin's major published works include *Of Errors and Truth*, *The New Man*, and *The Spirit of Things*. (See Waite's *The Unknown Philosopher* for a complete bibliography of St.-Martin's works.) Saint-Martin was initiated into the Order des Elus-Cohens, an esoteric and magical group founded by Rosicrucian and Freemason, Martines de Pasqually (?-1774).

Saint-Martin eventually developed a preference for mysticism rather than for Pasqually's medieval magical practice. Saint-Martin's system of Christian Illuminism was derived from the Initiations he received from Pasqually and from the transcendental writings of **Jakob Boehme** and other French, British, and German mystics. Saint-Martin privately propagated his system by way of his *personal* initiation and *private* instruction of his men and women students.

The *Initiation* Saint-Martin transmitted included the elements of Illumination, enlightenment, and empowerment, as well as certain Rosicrucian elements. By the end of the 18th century, Martinism and Rosicrucianism were closely identified, an identity which continues into modern times. Saint-Martin's students eventually became known as **Martinists**. After Saint-Martin's death in 1803, his students continued to teach and initiate new students privately and independently, just as Saint-Martin had taught them to do. Martinist topics of study in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries include Christian mysticism, esotericism, theosophy, Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and related subjects.

### **The Martinist Initiation**

Entrance into authentic Martinism has always been by way of private invitation to receive in person *The Initiation* as it was received and conferred by Louis Claude de

Saint-Martin himself. This mysterious and secret Initiation is a ritual ceremony that, to be valid, **must** be passed on from person to person in an unbroken line from Saint-Martin himself. A true Martinist must be able to show that his or her **Line of Filiation** has been transmitted person-to-person and without a break in the Line. *The Initiation* confers powers and abilities which enable a Martinist to understand and apply the ancient esoteric wisdom and theurgical processes taught by **The Unknown Philosopher**. The goal is for the Martinist to develop and live a Christian spiritual life and to become an adept in esoteric wisdom and practice, especially in Rosicrucianism. Because the Martinist is theurgically empowered by The Initiation and because the Martinist carries the secret wisdom and knowledge of the Adept, it is no surprise that Martinism is considered by Initiates and non-initiates to be the very hub and spoke of esotericism and mystical wisdom.

### **The First Supreme Council**

In 1890-91, the respected French esotericists and theurgists, **Pierre Augustine Chaboseau** and Dr. **Gerard Encausse**, formed the first Martinist Supreme Council consisting of Gerard Encausse, Pierre Augustin Chaboseau, Paul Adam, Barlet, Maurice Barres, Burget, Lucien Chamuel, Stanislas de Guaita, LeJay, Montiere, Josephin Peladan, and Paul Sedir. Soon after the formation of the first Supreme Council, Maurice Barres and Peladan left to develop Rosicrucian societies, and they were replaced by Marc Haven and Victor-Emile Michelet. This Supreme Council divided *The Initiation* into its four constituent parts, the Degrees of Associate, Initiate, S...I...:, and S...I...I...: (sometimes also known as the *Unknown Philosopher* degree), and established Martinist groups with officers. Not all Martinists at first entered the newly-organized Martinist Order, preferring to continue their independent operations. To this day in Europe, one might still find a few independent *free* Martinists.

### **Famous Martinists**

Well-known members of the Martinist movement include Gerard Encausse, Augustine Chaboseau, Sar Hieronymous (Emile Dantinne), Eliphaz Levi, Lord Bulwer-Lytton, the Comte de Saint-Germain, A.E. Waite, H.P. Blavatsky, John Yarker, J.I. Wedgwood, Victor Blanchard, Honorè Balzac, Pamela Coleman Smith, Margaret Peeke, Czar Nicholas II of Russia, and many others in the fields of government, religion, literature, education, business, and the arts.

### **To Those Who Seek**

The Martinists...admired by the wise...feared by the tyrant...persecuted by the dictator...respected by the mystic...sought by the Seeker. Since the XVIIIth century, the Martinists have been found at the very heart and center of esotericism and mystical belief in all its various expressions. While the Martinist Order is not a secret society, rarely do individual Martinists allow themselves to be seen directly; generally, only a hint of their presence is noted. Yet always, their influence is great, and their charisma

is felt by those who know. Frequently are they discussed by the uninitiated who have little knowledge or understanding of the Martinists or their abilities. Today, Martinism flourishes, and its portals are still open to the *Men and Women of Desire* who wish to exit the *Forest of Errors* and enter the Light to be found at the Gates of Mercy.

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