

IESCHOUAH, GRAND ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE

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In this article, Christian Rebisse explores the meaning of the mystical phrase —To the Glory of Ieschouah, Grand Architect of the Universe — leading us to encounter the Christ spirit within our hearts.



Papus took great care to inscribe each document of the Traditional Martinist Order with the expressive formula: *A la Gloire d'Ieschouah, Grand Architecte de l'Univers* (“To the Glory of Ieschouah, Grand Architect of the Universe”). In doing so, he gave Martinism a special complexion. “The Order is indebted to Saint-Martin himself, not only for its seal but also for the mystical name of the Christ . . . which adorns all official Martinist documents.”¹ Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin never used this expression in his writings, however. It seemed interesting to me, therefore, to try to analyze briefly this formula used by Papus and examine the various aspects it raises in the Tradition, and more particularly in Martinism.

The Christian Kabbalah

According to Jewish tradition, the name of the Almighty God is written with four letters or Tetragrammaton composed of the letters Yod He Vau He. In fifteenth century Italy, the “Christian Kabbalah” emerged as a particular branch of the Kabbalah which Christians saw as a handy

means of demonstrating the truth of Christianity. They reasoned that if, before Christianity, the name of God had been presented as a Tetragram, it was because God had not yet completely manifested to the world. With Jesus Christ, God truly revealed Himself and they proved this by using the Hebrew name of Jesus—Ieschouah—which they wrote by adding the letter Shin in the center of the Tetragrammaton.

Pico de la Mirandola promoted this theory in the fifteenth century, popularized by Johann Reuchlin’s book, *De Verbo Mirifico*. Papus, fascinated by the Kabbalah, introduced the custom of calling the Christ “Ieschouah” into twentieth century Martinism. Was he aware of the Renaissance theories regarding this name? This is not clear because his book, *The Kabala, Secret Tradition of the West*, does not deal with this aspect of the Kabbalah.

The Grand Architect

In 1567, Philibert Delorme, speaking of God in his treatise on architecture, used the expression “that grand architect of the universe, God Almighty,” and it ap-



peared to be the first use of the concept. This idea of a God having given order to the universe as an architect probably originates with the Christian Kabbalists such as George of Venice (*De Harmonia Mundi*), even though the notion existed with the Evangelists.² Others took up the theme after Philibert Delorme, notably Kepler in his *Astronomia Nova*. Freemasonry adopted the expression during the eighteenth century as a key point in its symbolism, and since Martinism was born within the Masonic movement during that time, it was therefore normal for it to make reference to the “Grand Architect of the Universe.” However, the expression in Martinism has a special complexion that needs clarification.

Contrary to certain traditions that liken the “Grand Architect of the Universe” to God, in Martinism—or more particularly the philosophy of Martinès de Pasqually and his followers—the expression refers to the Christ. It is not an expression that appears in Pasqually’s well-known treatise but is found in the rituals and catechisms of the Élus-Cohens. And

it should be stressed that for the author of the *Treatise of the Reintegration of Beings*, the Christ is not God in the specific sense as is attributed to Him in Christian theology. In fact, Martinès de Pasqually had a unique conception of the nature of the Christ.

Christos-Angelos

He describes the Christ as “the doubly powerful Spirit” and classifies Him among one of four categories of emanated beings: those called the “octonary spirits,” although, reading Pasqually, one wonders if the Christ is not the sole spirit in this category. This placement, which makes the Christ a sort of superior angel, is not something new. Its origins lie in early Christianity. In fact, the history of Christianity—and more particularly that of Christology—soon reveals that the first Christians did not see the Christ as God incarnate in the world. It is more a case of the concept of Angel-Messiah, that is, ChristosAngelos, dominating Christian thought until the second half of the second century. In early Christian literature, the Christ is sometimes described as an angel, and the Church Fathers gave Him the title of “Angel of Grand Counsel,” a concept taken from Isaiah. It is important to note that the early Christians had divergent opinions regarding the nature of the Christ and this gave rise to a number of controversies. It is only in the fourth century, with the Council of Nicaea, that the dogma of Christ’s divinity was imposed upon all Christians. (The reader who would like more precise details on this subject should consult an encyclopedia or dictionary and look up the terms Arian, Docetist, Nestorian, Monophysite, Monothelite, etc.)

The Names of the Christ

In speaking of the Christ, Pasqually used a variety of names and each one emphasized an aspect of the Divine Mys-



tery. Sometimes, he calls him the “Messias,” a name that Ronsard had used some centuries before. Sometimes, like Bossuet, Pascal, or Corneille, he is called “The Repairer.” He also uses such terms as “Wisdom” or “The Thing.” These terms are also used by Pasqually’s followers, whether Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, Jean Baptiste Willermoz, or others.

The most enigmatic word Pasqually uses for the Christ is *Hely* (written with an “H” and not Ely with an “E” as in the prophet). He says this name means “the force of God” and “receptacle of Divinity.” What Pasqually intends to point out here is that the Christ is not only the personality born around two thousand years ago but is above all the “Universally Elect,” that is, a being who was chosen to fulfill a number of missions. This Universally Elect had incarnated at various times in history to guide humanity, and the concept of considering the Christ as a prophet or emissary sent by God was a common one in Judeo-Christianity. It can be found for example in the *Clementine Homilies*, which speak of the Christ as *Verus Propheta*, an emissary sent several times from the time of Adam, through Moses, to Jesus.³

The Recurring Messiah

According to Pasqually, Hely, or the Christ, manifested through the line of prophets, the guides of humanity, and those called the Elect. Among these, he cites Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Zorobabel, and Jesus Christ, who were all channels for the manifestation of Hely. However, he considers that Hely manifested his greatest glory in Jesus Christ.⁴

This particular aspect of Pasqually’s teachings corresponds to that of Judeo-Christianity. During early Christianity, the nature of the Christ had not yet been made into dogma. Some considered Him to be an angel, others a prophet, and yet others



the Messiah. In fact, the early Christians were more preoccupied with the Christ’s message rather than with constructing intellectual theories concerning the mysteries of God’s nature. He was considered an emissary of the Father but generally not likened to God. That Pasqually linked himself with minimal Christianity and the concept of an emissary who has appeared under different names on several occasions is particularly interesting. If we extend this concept to include all religions, then we could say that it is the same God who manifested in those guides who are the originators of these religions, and that, therefore, the same light radiates under apparently different guises.

The Organizer of Chaos

According to Pasqually, the first intervention of the Christ in history goes back to the origins of the world, to the moment when Creation was still in a state of Chaos. As the *Treatise* explains, ternary spirits act-

ing on God's command created the material world. From their work, a world, still in the state of chaos, was born and the first mission of the Christ, of Hely, was to put order into this initial Chaos. And so the Christ's descent into the very bosom of Chaos organized Creation and the physical world. In this way, it could be said that the Christ was the Architect of Creation, the organizing Word; and Martinès de Pasqually, as well as Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, saw the Christ's function as "Grand Architect of the Universe" in just such a way.

The Instructor

In the Treatise, Pasqually points out that, after the Fall, Adam became aware of his error and begged for divine forgiveness. Given the sincerity of his plea, God sent Hely to "reconcile" him. However, because Adam was now incarnated into the world of matter, he had to receive instructions on how to conduct his life henceforth in accord with his mission. His place in the material world prevented him from using the spiritual faculties with which he was originally endowed. Hely was therefore given the task of passing on a new teaching to the world and Seth, Adam's third son, was chosen to receive these secret teachings which were, after him, handed down from generation to generation to all of humanity.

The Year 4000

In the seventeenth century, Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656), an Irish theologian, composed a biblical chronology based on the New Testament, establishing that the Earth had existed for four thousand years at the time of Christ's birth. This chronology was generally accepted by various English churches during the eighteenth century and was also adopted by Masonry in the Anderson Constitution. And so, for Freemasons, the year 1796 was considered as the year 5796 (1796

+ 4000). Pasqually went along with this opinion and taught that the Christ had descended to Earth in the year 4000. The coming of Jesus Christ into the world now brings us to the two aspects of the Christ: firstly that of "Repairer" and secondly of "Reconciler."

The Repairer

A number of Elect have guided humanity since the time of Adam and each has brought a message suited to the advancement of humanity. However, according to the Martinist Tradition, humanity had not been able to attain a certain stage of spiritual evolution until the advent of the Christ. In effect, the Christ's mission was not to save people, but to open a cosmic channel allowing humanity to cross certain spiritual spheres, inaccessible until then. Although He had opened the way, it was up to humanity to ascend along the path. The Christ did not save humanity by doing the work it alone has to do, but opened a way and showed the world how to travel along this path.

To open this way, the mission of the Christ and His incarnation was that of the Repairer. In effect, he fulfilled the task of "reparation," of recreating order and purifying Creation. He carried this out on two levels. On the earthly plane, He regenerated the three bases constituting the material world: sulfur, salt, and mercury by washing them of their dross. In the celestial world, He regenerated the seven pillars of the Universal Temple, which are the seven planets of the celestial world from whence the divine virtues flow into the temporal world. The regeneration of the seven sources of life was made effective during Pentecost, that is, seven weeks or forty-nine days after Easter. Saint-Martin writes that then "a fiftieth portal opened from which all slaves awaited their deliverance, and which will reopen again in the final days."⁵



The Reconciler

What characterizes the function of the “Reconcile”? “Reconciliation” is the preliminary stage each person must cross in his or her evolution towards reintegration, humanity’s final stage of collective evolution. In this process, the person lives an important inner experience in which the Christ is met, according to Saint-Martin. The Christ is, in effect, the cosmic intermediary indispensable to the regenerative process. For this reason, the Martinist Tradition speaks of Him as the “Reconciler.”

Saint-Martin expressed this idea in a veiled manner in a number of his works. For example, in *Of Errors and Truth*, when he points out that the eighth page of the “Book of Mankind” [Humankind] deals with the temporal number of those who are the “sole support, the sole force, and the sole hope of humankind.”

The Imitation of Christ

Through His mission, the Christ did not simply accomplish purification or open a pathway. He also showed the world the road to follow for attaining mystical regeneration. Through His incarnation, He wanted to describe to the world its real situation, to trace out the complete history of its being and the way back to the Divine. For Saint-Martin, the process of mystical regeneration is accomplished through an inner imitation of the life of the Christ. In his book *The New Man* [Person], he sets out the steps of this process from the Annunciation to the Resurrection, that is, from the visit of the angel, the faithful friend who reveals the coming birth of a new inner person, to the recovery of glorious body that marks our ascent towards the superior spheres where our regeneration finds its crowning achievement.

The various events of the Christ’s life are the archetypes symbolizing the various spiritual stages we can experience inwardly

by incorporating within us the mystical body of the Christ. According to the Unknown Philosopher, the outcome of this regeneration will take humanity further than the Christ because it is called upon to carry out a mission greater than His.

Jesus Christ

As you will have noticed from the beginning of this article, on no occasion have we spoken of Jesus, but of the Christ. This warrants some explanation. For Martinists, the Christ is above all a timeless figure who has incarnated on several occasions. Jean-Baptiste Willermoz saw in Jesus Christ a dual being: a man, Jesus, whose corporeal vehicle had sheltered the Christ. Jesus Christ was for him not an ordinary being, but a man chosen to raise humanity from its exile by showing people the way. This “man” is not God, but a man, a second Adam who was specially linked to the Christ in His incarnation. For this reason, his name is dual: “Jesus Christ.” The Christ (Hely), who was his guide and often acted through him, assisted the man Jesus in his special mission. Jesus had made Hely’s will his own and his acts were the reflection of divine thought. While people are ternary beings, Jesus Christ is quaternary. To his three human elements, a fourth is added, the Divine presence of the Christ or Hely. Jesus Christ, the New Adam, had succeeded in His mission where Adam had failed. He strove to unite his Will with God’s through the Christ as an intermediary. Henceforth, the second Adam was completely dissolved in the Christ and made One with Him.

This aspect which Willermoz developed in his *Treatise on the Two Natures* is not formulated explicitly by Martinès de Pasqually, but it is possible to think that Willermoz derived it from his Master. Noticeably, both do not identify the Christ with Jesus. Perhaps Pasqually would have developed this point had he finished his



Treatise because this JudeoChristian *midrash* should have extended up to the Ascension of the Christ, but stopped at Saul. For Willermoz, it was not the Christ who suffered the Passion but Jesus, because the Spirit of Hely was insensitive to pain. At the time of the Passion, humanity was alone in its suffering and for this reason, as Pasqually teaches, he said on the cross: “Hely [and not Lord] why hast thou forsaken me?”

Saint-Martin

The various points raised in this article explain how we can understand the concept of “Ieschouah, Grand Architect of the Universe.” We cannot enter into all aspects of it here and shall have to be content with the essential elements. Besides, to attempt to define the Christ from an ontological point of view is really a foolhardy exercise. On this subject, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin was more reserved than his friend Willermoz. When, one day, a disciple asked him questions on this point, he replied: “Confine your teachings to the divinity of Jesus Christ, His all powerfulness, and direct, as much as possible, your disciples away from an investigation into the make-up of Jesus Christ who has been a stumbling block for so many.” Saint-Martin’s reserve on this point seems to us

most reasonable. In the fourth century, one of the Church Fathers, St. Ephraim, had already maintained that it was humanly impossible and unreasonable to want to define God. He became more devoted to developing a theology based on poetry rather than dogma.⁶

And for us modern Martinists, as was the case for Saint-Martin, isn’t it more important to dedicate ourselves to meet the Christ, Ieschouah, Grand Architect of the Universe, within our hearts rather than seek to understand him with our heads?

ENDNOTES

1. Papus, *Martinesism, Willermozism, Martinism, and Freemasonry, Initiation*. March 1899, p. 221.
2. Negrier, Patrick, *Le Temple et sa symbolique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997) p. 71.
3. Robert Amadou has developed this interesting aspect of Martinès de Pasqually’s theosophy in his introduction to the *Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings* (Le Tremblay: *Diffusion Rosicrucienne*, 1995) pp. 28-32.
4. Pasqually, *Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings*, sections 33 and 89.
5. These points are explained in detail by Louis Claude de Saint-Martin in his *Natural Table of Correspondences*, edited by R. Dumas, pp. 290-294.
6. In his book *The Eye of Light: the Spiritual Vision of St. Ephraim*, Sebastien Brock offers a presentation of key themes, as well as an anthology of the most beautiful texts from this little-known Syrian theologian-poet (edited by Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1991, p. 368).

