

THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN ASPECT OF MARTINISM

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In this excerpt from his book Rosicrucian Reflections, Christian Bernard, Sovereign Grand Master of the Traditional Martinist Order, presents a thorough introduction to the history and mystical teachings of the TMO.



If “chance” has put this book [*Rosicrucian Reflections*] into your hands, and if you have never heard of Martinism, I would like to offer you a brief introduction to it. The following is from a booklet entitled *The Light of Martinism*; your copy may be obtained on request from the headquarters of the Traditional Martinist Order, by visiting its website [www.martinists.org], or via AMORC’s website [www.rosicrucian.org].

The Traditional Martinist Order is an initiatic Order and a school of moral chivalry with its roots in the Western esoteric tradition. Martinists study the natural relationships between the Divine, the universe, and humanity. If we wish to understand our true nature, we must look toward the Divine, says Saint-Martin, for “we can only read ourselves in the Divine, only understand ourselves in the Divine splendor.” If we are no longer in a position today to reach this understanding, it is because we have made the error of separating ourselves from the Divine and losing ourselves in the world of appearances, the temporal world. We have, to some degree, fallen asleep to the spiritual world. Our inner Temple is in ruins.

In our work, Martinists use neither theurgy nor magic, for we conform to the ideal of the Unknown Philosopher—to guide humanity by a natural path to the supernatural. For this, it is not necessary to amass intellectual knowledge, because to progress on the path of reintegration,

“It is not the head that we should rack, but the heart.”

The Martinist uses two “books” in this work: one is the Book of Nature and the other the Book of Humanity. Nature is “the true horn of plenty for your present state . . . it is in effect the meeting-point of all created virtues. Thus, all these Divine virtues, ordained by the Great Principle so as to cooperate in our rehabilitation, are always in existence around us.

This means that God has sown the symbols of His wisdom in nature, that we may find them by ourselves. Nature is thus an immense reservoir of learning for the Initiate.

Martinism originated in France and goes back to the eighteenth century, to a period of great political and economic unrest. At the origin of this movement lie Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and his writings. After his death in 1803, the Order kept a low profile until 1888, when it restarted its activities officially. Martinism’s history is very eventful and, I would suggest, worth taking an interest in.

While I hold the title of Emperor within the Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rose Cross, as worldwide head of the Traditional Martinist Order (TMO), I am assigned the title of Sovereign Grand Master. As such, I have now had the opportunity of speaking to my Martinist brothers and sisters for several decades at conventicles, in Heptads, and during Conventions. The Martinist teachings have their own tone, which complements



but is different from that of AMORC. From among the discourses I have given, I have chosen quite a general one, which obviously I have shortened and modified so it is appropriate for all. This text is not entirely, therefore, the one that my Martinist brothers and sisters had the opportunity of hearing, but they will understand why this is.

Following this text, you will find an interview from a January 2010 history magazine, to complete this brief introduction to the TMO.

The Judeo-Christian Aspect of Martinism

There are many who tend to think that the Martinist path is limited to the traditional principles of original Christianity. This way of seeing things is not incorrect, but it is very incomplete, because the essence of Martinism makes it a tradition which brings together Christian “gnosis” and Jewish mysticism. It therefore seems that I should go back over certain ideas showing that, at the historical level as well as the mystical one, the Traditional Martinist Order is a Judeo-Christian movement, in the most honorable sense of this expression.

From an historical point of view, it is important to understand that the socio-political events that made the appearance of Christianity possible are connected to the cultural and moral values already established by Judaism. It is not a chance occurrence that the same land, Israel, was the cradle of these two great religions. Jerusalem still remains, today, the only city in the world where Jews and Christians can claim equal justification for the deep connections binding them to that place. What is more, the same thing can be said in regard to Islam, since Jerusalem is also a very sacred place in the heart of Muslims.

From a mystical point of view, the advent of the Christian era could only have occurred in Israel, for at that time it was unique in possessing the human conditions making such an event possible. It is therefore not surpris-

ing that this country should have given rise to two of the greatest avatars humanity has known: I am of course referring to Moses and to Jesus. The sacred texts tell us that Moses received the Law, the spirit of the Law, and the spirit of the spirit of the Law. Jesus preached Life, the Way, and the Truth. Consequently, we cannot fail to recognize that they were both sent to bear witness to the same Light and to the glory of the same Divinity.

If we refer to the histories of their lives as reported in the standard works, we notice that a very close link between these two exceptional beings is made by most experts: both were founders of ethical systems which far surpass the religious dimension alone. Indeed, Moses is being increasingly officially presented as the founder of the Israeli nation and Jesus as a philosopher who came to strengthen and bring into general use the moral and civic codes established by his predecessor. I stress the fact that history does not really seek to pit the message of Christ against Mosaic thought, but that this is done by the religions, which were founded on their own interpretation. Everyone is aware, indeed, of the abyss that was dug over the course of centuries between the Jewish and Catholic authorities. Things being as they are today, for reasons which I do not have to go into, the majority of practicing Jews have chosen to see in Jesus just one prophet among many, while for their part, Christians seem to have forgotten that there is more to the Old Testament than Genesis. Nonetheless, when we refer to the works left to us by those who have more deeply explored the mysticism of these two religions, we notice the esoteric link existing between Judaism and Christianity. To be frank, no mystic can deny the clearness of this link, and if they do, then they cannot hope to go very far in their spiritual quest.

From both the historical and the mystical viewpoint, there does not, therefore, exist an Old and a New Testament: rather, there exists one single Testament, concerning two periods of time which are not opposed to

each other, but which—quite the opposite—complement each other at all levels. With this in mind, I recommend that you read or re-read the Bible, working on the basis that it is made up of two books, the second shedding light on the meaning of the first, and the first serving as the cornerstone for the second. To make an analogy with Martinism, they complement each other just like the “Book of Nature” and the “Book of Humanity,” which are so dear to Martinists. If the Old and New Testaments have been cemented so tightly together by human hands that they form one single book, it is obviously because it should be this way. The Old Testament gives an account of how to apply God’s commandments and thus establish on Earth a kingdom governed in the name and to the glory of the Divine. The New Testament relates what has to be done at the individual level in order to construct the heavenly counterpart of this earthly kingdom.

And so we see that the two great books of the Bible form a duality in the expression of the Divine Word. This duality becomes clear if we will just think about the fact that Moses himself announced the coming of Jesus, and that Jesus stated many times that he had not come to abolish the law of the prophets, but to fulfill it. It thus becomes clear that Jesus is for the New Testament what Moses is for the Old Testament. Each was sent by the Great White Brotherhood and, using the knowledge acquired in the Mystery Schools of Ancient Egypt, they established the foundations of two paths of reintegration, the first at a collective level, and the second at an individual level. The mission of Moses was thus to unveil to humanity the symbolic descent of the “I am,” and that of Jesus was to show the way to follow so that each person would go back up again into the Kingdom of the Father like the prodigal child.

Certain texts record that Moses was a member of a community of Essenes that had been established on Mount Sinai, and that the Law was revealed to him in the temple

of this community. These texts also say that when the Temple of Solomon was destroyed in 587 BCE, the Ark of the Covenant was entrusted to the Essenes of Sinai, while the sacred objects from the Temple were passed on to the members of an Essene community living by the Dead Sea at the same time. These texts further say that the Essenes from the Dead Sea gave the name “Community of the New Covenant” to their community, for they knew that the Master Jesus would be one of theirs several centuries later and that his mission would be to bring about the changeover between the cycles of the Old and New Testaments.

It is difficult to establish the authenticity of these claims; however, there are traditional records which confirm that these two Great Initiates were Essenes. In a recent analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some historians have established numerous similarities with Mosaic precepts. The two seem to have a common basic philosophy, for we find the same references to the oppositions of life as they are symbolized in the Kabbalistic Tree, particularly in what the Essenes described concerning the struggle of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness. Everything thus points to the Jewish and Christian traditions being intimately linked, even if only by the single fact that they merge in the ancient wisdom of Essene thought, which is itself lost in the Primordial Tradition. It seems obvious, therefore, that two mystic currents which are so close cannot be opposed to one another, and that those who imply the reverse are doing so either through ignorance or through a deliberate wish to detract from the truth.

The Traditional Martinist Order has always based its teachings on the esotericism of the Bible and, consequently, on the esotericism of the Old and New Testaments. It is thus a Judeo-Christian mystical Order, in the most traditional sense that can be given to this description. Having a look at certain symbols used during Martinist rituals would suffice to illustrate what I say, but I am not



prepared to do so in this article. Martinists will understand what I am referring to and if, as you read these lines, you wish to know more about this, I invite you to join the TMO. You should be made aware, though, that among the symbols used in this work, there are many which are there to be a constant reminder that Jewish and Christian mysticism constitute the two pillars of the same traditional Temple.

Besides the symbols, the words spoken in the Martinist rituals are also a constant reminder of the Judeo-Christian essence of Martinism. This is why the Divine is called the “Grand Architect of the Universe,” to which the Kabbalists used to refer. Alongside this reference to the eternal God of the Old Testament, Martinists also refer to the Cosmic Christ *Ieschouah*; that is, a Divine Force of which Jesus was the earthly incarnation. We can also call upon numbers to demonstrate that Martinism imparts Jewish mysticism just as much as it does Christian mysticism: you will no doubt be aware that the number 7 is the number of the Old Testament, while the number 8 is that of the New Testament, and these two numbers play a big role in Martinist symbolism.

The first duty of a Martinist, in her or his thoughts, words, and actions, is to implement the virtues demonstrated by all the Masters who have influenced the moral, cultural, and spiritual evolution of humanity. Another duty is to contribute to the coming of a universal religion. Such a religion can only come about if humanity manages to understand that all the current great religions come from a single Tradition. In this piece, I have confined myself to the clear link uniting Judaism with Christianity, but I could have compared other religious currents in the same way and made the same observations about their esoteric unity. Whenever the situation presents itself to us, it is vital to make it known that it is humanity’s ignorance that sets religions against one another;

and that any Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, and Christian, if truly applying the spirit of their faith, can see Buddha, Muhammad, Moses, and Jesus as different incarnations, for different peoples in different times, of one and the same Divine Word.

Interview

The Traditional Martinist Order is today considered the most dynamic Martinist movement. Present throughout the world, it works via various jurisdictions based on written and spoken language, each directed by a Grand Master and under the supervision of Christian Bernard, who holds the office of Sovereign Grand Master.

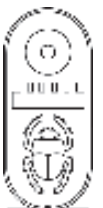
A.H.: *Christian Bernard, you are the current Sovereign Grand Master of the Traditional Martinist Order. Without going into its history, which is dealt with at length in this magazine, can you tell us in a few words what the TMO is?*

C.B.: It is by definition a philosophical, initiatic, and traditional movement which goes back to Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, the eminent eighteenth century French philosopher. Its purpose is to perpetuate the teachings he passed on to his students. Today, these teachings can be received in two ways: orally, by attending a Heptad or an Atelier; and in written form, by the home-study of material sent out from the Order’s headquarters.

A.H.: *But Louis Claude de Saint-Martin did not create a Martinist Order as such, did he?*

C.B.: No. In his lifetime, he only taught a few students, whom he chose cautiously. The tradition is that after his death a Circle formed, known by the name *Société des Intimes* (Society of Intimates). Those who belonged to it met from time to time and discussed the writings of the Unknown Phi-

- losopher, Martinès de Pasqually, and Jakob Boehme.
- A.H.: *What do the Martinist teachings deal with?*
- C.B.: In a general sense, they offer an esoteric approach to the major subjects which are characteristic of the Judeo-Christian tradition, such as the origins of creation, the fall of humanity, the reintegration of beings, the true mission of Christ, the science of numbers, heavenly symbols, angelology, and so forth; the Kabbalah is studied, as is the hidden meaning of the Old Testament and the Apocryphal Gospels, and much more.
- A.H.: *What do you mean when you say an “esoteric approach?”*
- C.B.: To Martinists, it is clear that many subjects in both the Old and New Testaments have a symbolic and allegorical dimension. And so if we want to understand their deeper—and maybe their hidden—meaning, it is necessary to go beyond a literal interpretation. It is the specific purpose of the Martinist teachings to decipher the mystical truths contained in the Bible, while also drawing on the exegeses and the apocryphal writings.
- A.H.: *Can you give us an example?*
- C.B.: According to Genesis, the world was created in six days. It is clear that such a thing is not possible. Similarly, humanity cannot stem from an original couple, Adam and Eve. These accounts in Genesis in fact equate to ontological, cosmological, and cosmogonical laws and principles which are explained in Martinism.
- A.H.: *How long are the Martinist teachings?*
- C.B.: They consist of three degrees each requiring two years of study, before moving on to a final degree called the “Circle of Unknown Philosophers.”
- A.H.: *It is said that initiation is crucial in Martinism. What is the truth of this?*
- C.B.: To be considered a genuine Martinist, you must indeed have been initiated in a Temple by an initiator who has been duly initiated into Martinism, and so on going back in time. This initiation has a double purpose: to transmit to the receiver the spiritual influx which makes him or her ritually a Martinist; and to admit the initiate in the traditional manner into the Martinist lineage.
- A.H.: *But what does that mean for Martinists who study the teachings at home and do not attend a Heptad or Atelier?*
- C.B.: They can be said to have access to the Martinist teachings, but not to truly be part of the Martinist lineage. They can, though, be initiated in a Temple whenever they wish.
- A.H.: *At first glance, it might be thought that the Martinist teachings are very intellectual. Is this the case?*
- C.B.: It is a fact that Martinist study, whether in the oral or the written form, requires work of a reflective nature. But it would be a mistake to think this intellectual procedure is all there is to Martinism. We also have to learn to feel the emotional aspect of Martinism. We should recall that Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin himself said in this respect that “It is not the head that we must rack; it is the heart.” What is more, Martinism is often described as the “Way of the Heart,” which is most telling.
- It should also be stated that the Martinist teachings are every bit as practical as they are theoretical. They therefore incorporate many experiments whose purpose is to awaken our inner consciousness and thereby increase our sensitivity to that which is most divine in us and around us,



- which of course presupposes that we are spiritually inclined.
- A.H.: *Do you have to be either Jewish or Christian to become a Martinist?*
- C.B.: No. Martinism is open to any person who is interested in Judeo-Christian esotericism, whether or not they belong to the Jewish or Christian religions. For those Jews and Christians who are Martinists, experience shows that the teachings they study within the Order enable them to better understand the ontological foundations of their cornerstone religion.
- A.H.: *Is the Traditional Martinist Order open to women?*
- C.B.: Of course. Women were allowed into Martinism from the eighteenth century. The same applied at the time of Papus.
- A.H.: *Does the TMO have any political involvement?*
- C.B.: No. It is completely apolitical, which is why it has among its membership people whose views are different in this field, and are even opposite.
- A.H.: *You are also the worldwide head of the Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rose Cross. Why this dual office?*
- C.B.: Because AMORC has been sponsoring the TMO since the beginning of the twentieth century, and 90 percent of Martinists are Rosicrucians. The Grand Masters of AMORC are all Grand Masters of the TMO as well. Having joint responsibility for these two related Orders means that the respective activities can be conducted in perfect unison.
- A.H.: *And how many Rosicrucians are Martinists?*
- C.B.: About twenty percent. This is explained by the fact that not all Rosicrucians are necessarily interested in Judeo-Christian esotericism.
- A.H.: *What difference is there between Martinism and Rosicrucianism?*
- C.B.: As I mentioned, the Martinist teachings have a Judeo-Christian undercurrent, which does not mean, however, that they are of a religious character. The Rosicrucian teachings are wider and more universal, in the sense that they are connected to the Primordial Tradition and transcend all religions that exist or have existed. You could picture the Order of the Rose Cross as a tree, of which the Traditional Martinist Order is one branch.
- A.H.: *And is there a link between Martinism and Freemasonry?*
- C.B.: I am not a Freemason, but from what I understand certain Masonic rituals are very similar to Martinist rituals. This is mainly explained by the fact that Martinès de Pasqually, initiator of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, belonged to Freemasonry.
- A.H.: *Do Martinists have the opportunity to meet other than at the meetings held in the Heptads and Ateliers?*
- C.B.: Yes. The TMO regularly organizes Conventicles which are held at regional, national, and international levels, enabling Martinists from varied backgrounds to meet and to work together. In this respect the TMO is a true Fraternity.
- A.H.: *In one sentence, how would you define the Martinist ideal?*
- C.B.: It is an ideal of spiritual chivalry, based on the desire to develop wisdom within oneself in order to make a better world.
- A.H.: *As Sovereign Grand Master of the TMO, what view do you have of the world today?*
- C.B.: The same view that I have as head of AMORC. To be exact, I think that

humanity has gone away from the Divine and that it risks losing its soul in its mad rush towards materialism; it needs to reconnect with a true spirituality, that is to say a non-religious spirituality, based on the esoteric ternary of Humanity–Nature–the Divine, as conceived by Martinists, the Rose-Croix, and other mystics.

A.H.: *What is their concept of the Divine, then?*

C.B.: They see in the Divine the intelligence, the consciousness, the energy, the force (the name does not matter) which is at the origin of Creation, and which manifests through it according to laws which are impersonal, unchanging, and perfect. Indeed, the happiness to which the whole of humankind aspires, is to be found in studying and keeping to these laws. But people must become more aware of them, and act more in accordance with them.

