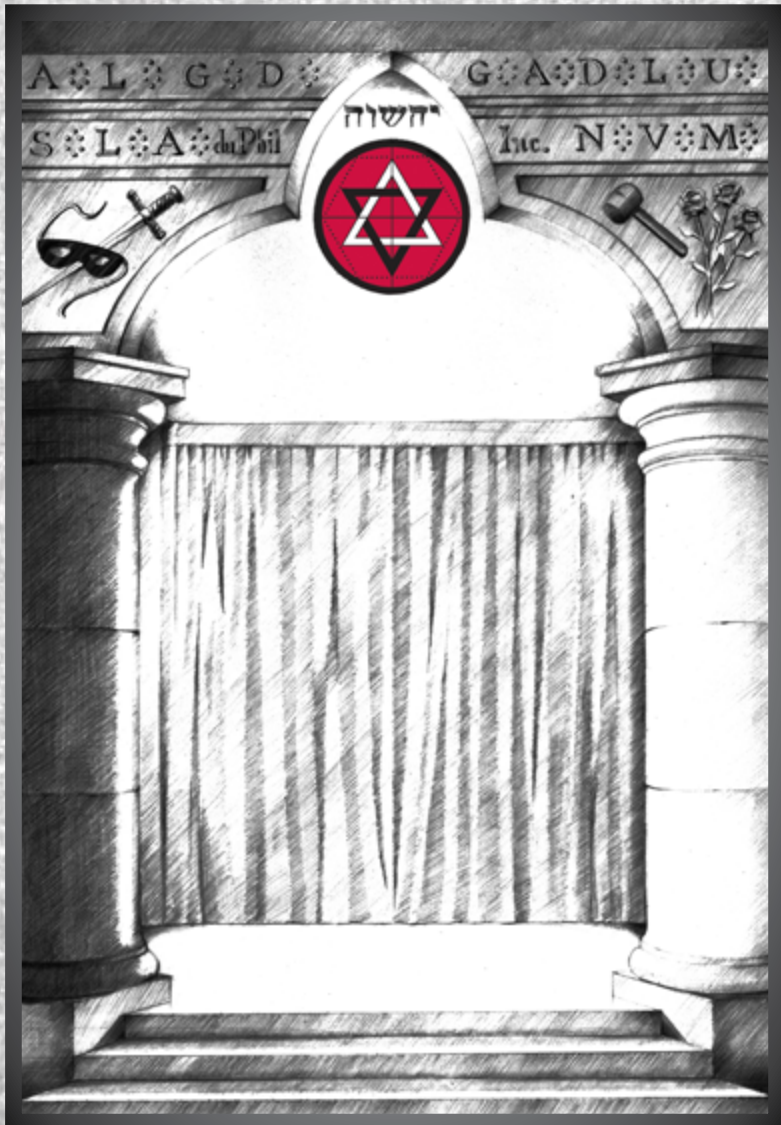


No. 23 2023

# Pantacle





# Traditional Martinist Order

San Jose CA USA  
[www.martinists.org](http://www.martinists.org)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

*Greetings in the Light of Martinism!*

Welcome to the twenty-third edition of the *Pantacle*, the official magazine of the Traditional Martinist Order.

In this issue, we begin with an examination of the meaning of the Pantacle, a symbol chosen to represent the Order by its founders, Papus and Augustin Chaboseau.

Next, we present an introduction to the Order's namesake, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, by Brother Stanislaw Goszczyński and Sister Zofja Goszczyńska. No matter how much you think you know about Saint-Martin, another angle on the biography of the Unknown Philosopher always offers insight and understanding.

In the third article, Sister Josselyne Chourry-Benvelica invites us to explore the intersection of health, therapy, and Kabbalah. Through an exploration of the meaning of certain Hebrew words, Sister Chourry-Benvelica helps open a path to healing that considers more than just a person's physical ailments.

After this, we present a quote from Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin we would like you to consider. Then, Brother Alain Marbeuf and Brother Guy Eyherabide present an article focused on the influence that Saint-Martin had on his era and beyond. The authors say Saint-Martin "advocated a path that reconciles Knowledge and Love, giving pride of place to the intelligence of the heart, and enabling people to unite with the Divine in their innermost being."

Finally, after a look at what initiation means to Martinists we would like you to consider, we offer a survey of the Unknown Philosopher's second Master, Jacob Boehme. Born in the late sixteenth century, some consider Boehme to be the first German philosopher, and his influence was enhanced by Saint-Martin's translations of his works.

May you ever dwell in the Eternal Light of Divine Wisdom!

Julie Scott  
Grand Master

# The Meaning of the Martinist Pantacle

From a Martinist Manuscript



Historically, it was Papus (1865-1916) who chose the Pantacle as the Martinist symbol. The Martinist version was created in 1891 by Papus and Augustin Chaboseau (1868-1946). After a period of dormancy, the Order was reactivated in 1931 under the name “The Traditional Martinist Order,” which retained this symbol. In fact, a version of the Pantacle was one of the symbols used in the Ordre des Élus Cohens (Order of the Elect Priests), founded in the eighteenth century by Martinès de Pasqually. The latter was one of the Masters of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, to whom Martinism owes its name.

## The Martinist Pantacle

The significance of the Pantacle is studied in detail in the Martinist teachings. For the purposes of this article, we will confine ourselves to saying that it has no religious connotations. It symbolizes Creation (the circle), including the material world (the black triangle) and the spiritual world (the white triangle). Contrary to what it may seem, these two interlaced triangles do not refer to Judaism. As for the colors black, white, and red, they convey a traditional symbolism also studied in the Martinist teachings.

## The Pentagram

It may be useful to point out that the Pantacle, the official symbol of the Traditional Martinist Order, should not be confused with the pentagram, commonly known as the “five-pointed star.”

This symbol, also known to Martinists, represents both the quintessence, i.e., the spiritual essence with which the universe is impregnated, and humankind embodied in matter.

# An Introduction to Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin

by Stanislaw Goszczynski, SI, and Zofja Goszczynski, SI



*I wanted to do good but I did not want to make noise, because I felt that noise did no good and that good did not make noise.*

- Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin



In the great family of nations, notwithstanding the differences of race, nationality, and language, there is a tendency for spiritually awakened people to gravitate to each other; the people of kindred souls who seek the plenitude of their humanity and who, unable to attain it solely on the physical plane, pursue it in the higher regions where their ardent yearning leads them to the very sanctuary of the Living Divinity. Those wayfarers recognize each other by signs visible and invisible, and discover the degree of development and rebirth in the spirit as real and definitely achieved. In cases of special spiritual nearness the link between them becomes so close that even so-called death ceases to be an impediment.

Not always does a spiritually united family exist in the flesh at one time, but each of the members discovers sooner or later its traces, and benefits by the spiritual hoardings of predecessors. Each one on the way to self-development tends to the knowledge of his own self, endeavors to unveil the transcendental, eternal picture concealed in him, to unravel the text of Divine thought deposited in him and attain its fullest and purest manifestation.

Here can be aptly quoted the words of the Gospel of Matthew: "Seek, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you." Whoever ardently desires, perseveringly seeks, and yearns to reach the Divine Ideal with the whole strength of her soul is sure to find support.

Indeed, the courageous conquer the Kingdom of Heaven by subduing the opposition of the lower instincts of nature, by scorning any compromise and tending ever higher toward the Kingdom of Light and Liberty. Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin was such a knight bent on the quest of light. He has been acknowledged as one of the greatest mystics of France, but the work of his life is not solely in the books he wrote. His whole existence was devoted to the idea of a great renaissance of humankind, and he awakened a profound echo not only in France but also in the west and east of Europe. We find traces of this influence in the creative works of our prophetic poets, markedly in Adam Mickiewicz.

To be able to understand Saint-Martin, one must go deep into his work; peruse his wide correspondence, study his biography (published by Papus, Matter, Franck, and others) presented by many authors and critics, often partially and wrongly.

A keen observer should have no difficulty in discovering the real Saint-Martin, a picture not blurred by superfluous and erroneous suggestions.

His real self passed through various phases of development; a disciple and adept of the esoteric science of Martinès de Pasqually, who was a sociologist, a theurgist, and a mystic; we see the rungs of the ladder he mounted, marked by the very title of his successive books: *The Person of Desire*, *The New Person*, *The Ministry of the Person-Spirit*.

The principal traits of Saint-Martin's character were energy, vigorous activity, and also a fine sensitivity and inborn refinement. His undaunted and unwavering attitude when he stood up in defense of professed ideals, virtually supported by his mode of life, often made him seem hard, even toward friends, but he was the first to suffer. A tenderness springing from the heart would strive to allay the pain he could not help inflicting on others.

The mysticism of Saint-Martin was not abstract and separated from life. He endeavored to penetrate the very depth of the Divinehead and

with the searchlights of knowledge illuminate all aspects of life. He had discovered the secret of happiness on Earth, a perfect balance between law and duty, a harmony of professed ideals with everyday life. He considered that the coexistence of various people should be based on fraternity, leading toward the spiritual equality of all and to the freedom which is the natural outcome of the principles of brotherhood.

The doctrine of Saint-Martin is clear and simple. Its truth can be easily perceived by any person of good will, because the French mystic had first gained the knowledge of divine laws and fashioned his doctrine accordingly. Through his works he desired to diffuse the light of knowledge imparted to him by revelation, and yet a dread of possible abuse on the part of people, unprepared or persistently of bad will, induced him to use the esoteric veil of symbols when approaching truths destined for the initiated. The work of his life made his name immortal, not only in his own country but throughout the world, since the ray, started from the source of universal light, shines irresistibly for the whole of humankind.



Note: This is an excerpt from an article entitled “The Unknown Philosopher,” which appeared in *Rosicrucian Digest* Vol. 25, No. 11, 1947, and can be accessed [here](#).

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## Therapy and Kabbalah

by Josselyne Chourry-Benvelica, SI

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### How do you define illness?

Since everything is composed of energy and vibrations, it is possible to consider that an illness appears when there is an obstacle to the circulation of life energy. From a spiritual point of view (i.e., beyond all judgment), we could say that there is illness when there is a quasi-incapacity (whether temporary or chronic, apart from so-called karmic illnesses) to receive divine vibrations. All medicine related to energy is clear on this point: a sick person, whatever their illness, is a being who has come up against a blockage or obstruction. Kabbalah speaks of *tsinoroth*, the “channels” that link people to the infinite.

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***Disease is in essence the result of conflict between Soul and Mind, and will never be eradicated except by spiritual and mental effort.... Suffering is a corrective to point out a lesson which by other means we have failed to grasp, and never can it be eradicated until that lesson is learned.***

**- Dr. Edward Bach, *Heal Thyself***

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Still on the subject of illness, Sri Aurobindo's companion Mirra Alfassa (The Mother) described it as “something in oneself that clings to, fears, and holds on to its lie.” Like the Kabbalists, she saw suffering as a game of adaptation to new vibrations, or as the obstinate recourse to a recurrent way of functioning, a kind of functional habit programmed into our cells. For The Mother, illness “is always a relapse into unconsciousness due to an inability to sustain the movement of transformation.”

Seen in this light, illnesses are transitions to transformation, expressed by a concentration of pain in certain parts of the body. We will see when we look at body design that each organ and each limb symbolize a particular aspect of our internal geography. Moreover, the *Zohar* does not fail to stress the importance of emotional factors as responsible for many ailments. It also stresses the importance of hygiene and the “spirits” (bacteria) that linger around stagnant water, rotting flesh, and fecal matter. The *Zohar* also contains references to the curative properties of certain plants. According to Talmudic sages Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Akiba, “Plants and medicine are the fertilizer, and the doctor is the farmer.”

Talmudists and Kabbalists have always respected “the sacred realm of the body,” integrating it into a totality, and the psychosomatic aspect of illness is not forgotten. The Jewish mystical path has long dealt with human afflictions and developed the idea that health is not the absence of disease, but the characteristic of a positive state of being.

The sages have attested that there is a unique and original path for everyone. Baal Shem Tov said that “no two people are endowed with the same abilities,” so the path to transformation is different for each of us. Our panaceas are personal, our palliatives and our “crutches” are not identical, even if some people suffer from the same illness, or vibrate on the same religious path or share the same philosophy of life.





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***Each person born into this world represents something new, something that did not exist before, something original and unique.... The very first task of every person is the actualization of their unique, unprecedented, and never-repeated possibilities, not the repetition of something that another, even the greatest of all, has already accomplished.***

**- Martin Buber**

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Rabbi Meshulam Zusha of Anipoli (1718-1800) expressed the same idea: “In the next world, they won’t ask me: Why weren’t you Moses? I will be asked: Why weren’t you Zusha?” It is the importance of being that is emphasized here, the realization and not the imitation, initiative and not servility, a sense of responsibility and not laxity and cowardice. The Kabbalist is not a “formatted” being; through their own experiences, they find coherence in the acts of their existence and bring awareness to the triangular manifestation of their daily thoughts, words, and actions. They try not to “miss the mark.”

**Health is a daily dynamism that can only be maintained  
through movement and evolution.**

Pain is that of a new birth, that of moving from one place to another, that of learning how to function in a new, unfamiliar way.

*ke’ev* = “pain, suffering”

Pain invites us to make a transformation if we make it an ally rather than an enemy, if we listen to it as a Kabbalist who links the words (ailments) to their common root. Then, through the magic of the letters, it becomes *kaph-aleph-vet*:

*ka’av* = “like a father”

(protects us, cares for us, alerts us to danger).

All healing requires a modification of the patient's mental patterns, and implies a rethinking of existential issues and, above all, of consciousness. This work requires the Word.



***The Word frees a person from their pincers.***

**- Rabbi Nahman of Braslav**



The Greek *terapeia* and the the Hebraic *therouphah* have deeper meaning than their usual definition – therapy. Simply treating an illness by considering only its effects is a deception that traps the patient in a lie. To pretend to cure an illness without understanding its roots or its causes is to deny the patient the possibility of taking charge of their own life. The Kabbalist tradition insists on the importance of empowering all beings by making them aware of their ills through words.

*mahalab* = “disease”

The root of this word is:

*mahal* = “to forgive, to forgive oneself.”

**What do we have to forgive or forgive ourselves for?**

Does this mean we are ill because of unconscious or deferred resentment or anger? What is the cause of our renunciation or abdication in pain? In that case, any illness would be a kind of defilement (unrelated to the notion of malady) or confinement.

*halah* = “defilement”

Every illness is therefore an enclosed space that needs to be enlarged in order to regain its vital space. Incidentally, the word *mahilah* (“vital space”) has exactly the same letters as *mahalab* (“disease”). This word only appears with Jacob in the book of Exodus (chapter 21, verse 19).

## Illness is a lost vital space

But the Hebrew language teaches us that every illness contains its own cure, because by taking the same letters again and swapping them, we obtain the word

*hahlamah* = “healing.”

The root of this word is:

*halam* = “to be healthy.”

The Talmud says that the Divine created healing before disease.



***Suffering is only an alternative to our freedom.***

**- Adin Steinsaltz**



The entire universe acts as a regulating organism, and our bodies are no exception to this law. When a member does not fulfill its function, cosmic need forces it back to its specificity or destroys it. The anarchism (from the Greek *anarkhos* = “absence of a ruler”) is chaos within archetypes (from the Greek *arkhetupos* = “primitive model”), an incoherent world that no longer has a *sham* (“meaning”) nor a *shem* (“Name” to designate the Divine); in other words, a world of meaninglessness that has lost its foundations. A world that, by extension, rejects the divine archetype is a *mabul* (“deluge”). Cancer is a disease that best explains this phenomenon. We speak of cellular disharmony, when certain cells are no longer aware of their specific role in the organism. Normally, each organ is supposed to possess its own global consciousness, itself made up of the union of cellular consciousnesses within it.

An illness often appears as a little *mabul* that makes noose-like knots. Through work on yourself, you will have to untie the knots and the obstacles.

*qesher* = “knot”

Inverting the letters gives us:

*sheqer* = “falsehood.”

Note that in English, “shake up” means “big reorganization.” It has a strange harmony with the medical assessment, specifically the word “checkup.” To heal, we need to shake up the knotted ball of our falsehoods, in order to control and restart the free circulation of

*shephah* = “vital influx.”

Inverting some of the letters gives:

*pesbah* = “fault, prevarication.”

Sometimes, we can no longer untangle the knots stacked up like strata, so a chronic illness can set in. We are then in chaos in our unconscious. The barriers and blockages are *shatan* (meaning Satan, who personifies our resistance to being); we must therefore dissolve these knots!





LOUIS-CLAUDE DE SAINT-MARTIN

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*"It is in vain that we pretend to arrive at the fullness of truth by reasoning. By this way we reach only rational truth; still it is infinitely precious, and full of resources against the assaults of false philosophy. The natural lights of every person of aspiration have indeed no other source, and it is therefore of almost universal use; and yet it cannot impart that sentiment and tact of active and radical truth from which our nature should derive its life and being. This kind of truth is given of itself alone. Let us make ourselves simple and childlike, and our faithful guide will cause us to feel its sweetness. If we profit by these first graces, we shall taste very soon those of the pure spirit, afterwards those of the Holy Spirit, then those of the Supreme Sanctity, and, lastly, within our interior, we shall behold the all."*

# The Influence of Saint-Martin: From the Ordre des Élus Cohens to the Traditional Martinist Order

by Alain Marbeuf, SI, and Guy Eyherabide, SI

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Despite recent archival discoveries and advances in genealogy, the life of Martinès de Pasqually, unlike that of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, still leaves historians wondering about his origins, his early adulthood, and the creation of the Ordre des Élus Cohens (Order of the Elect Priests). As our aim is to retrace the evolution of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin's thought from the time of Pasqually's death, i.e., from 1776, when the last lessons were held in Lyon, we will focus on the period from 1776 to 1803, the year of Saint-Martin's death.

Traveling between Amboise to visit his ailing father and Lyon, the home of Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, Saint-Martin gradually distanced himself from Freemasonry around the same time that he inaugurated his production of works with *Des Erreurs et de la Verite (Of Errors and of Truth)*, published in Edinburgh in 1776 under the pseudonym of the "Unknown Philosopher." Saint-Martin continued to travel and to stay a few places in France: Paris in the spring of 1776 at the home of the Marquise de La Croix, Élus Cohen; a mission to Toulouse from July to August; a further Parisian sojourn in 1777; and a return to Lyon in late July of the same year.

From 1778 onward, he worked on his second book, *Tableau naturel des rapports qui existent entre Dieu, l'homme et l'univers (Natural Table of Correspondences Which Exist Between the Divine, Humankind, and the Universe)*, which was published in 1782. Saint-Martin became a member of l'Ordre interieur du Rite Rectifié (The Internal Order of the Rectified Rite), but resigned in 1790. He then began to distance himself from the theurgical practices of Martinès de Pasqually and, after

frequenting the Société de l'Harmonie (Society of Harmony), created by the German physician Franz Anton Mesmer, he turned away from anything that reminded him of occultism.

Meanwhile, after a trip to London, he arrived in Strasbourg in September 1788 and met Charlotte de Boecklin. This meeting and his stay in Strasbourg, which continued almost uninterrupted until July 1791, were to change the course of his life, as his host introduced him to Jacob Boehme, who had lived from 1575 to 1624. At the height of his happiness, having decided to learn German, Saint-Martin immersed himself in the theosophy of the “Shoemaker of Görlitz” and decided to translate his works. Saint-Martin completed the first French translation of *L'aurore naissante* (*The Emerging Dawn*) in 1797, *Trois principes de l'essence divine* (*Three Principles of the Divine Essence*) published in 1802, as well as *Quarante questions sur l'âme* (*Forty Questions Concerning the Soul*) and *La Triple Vie de l'homme* (*The Threefold Life of a Person*), which he completed in the year of his death.

To the end of his life, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin retained the dynamic, dramatic framework of the universe provided by Martinès de Pasqually, which was always evident in his writings. Saint-Martin eventually abandoned all reference to theurgy, distanced himself from all ritual accompaniment, and took the German theosophist Boehme

as his “second Master.” This enabled him to develop a philosophy free of all constraints, in the straight line of a Christianity reminiscent of Quietism and Madame Jeanne-Marie Guyon’s doctrine of “Pure Love”: prayer, meditation in the depths of our soul, and the happiness of being in the midst of others should help us to overcome passivity when the heart becomes impregnated with Divinity.



*Seal of Martinès de Pasqually.*

While reading Jacob Boehme did not revolutionize the worldview of the Unknown Philosopher, it did enable him to understand, clarify, and deepen certain intuitions and give them personal expression. What has come to be known as the “Way of the Heart” marked a virtual break with Martinès’s theurgy: like Boehme, Saint-Martin was convinced that the Divine could only be found in the depths of one’s own heart. He adopted the idea that the Divine Wisdom which permeates us can constitute a mystical union: the “marriage with the Sophia.” Evoked on several occasions, the Sophia represents the feminine part of the Divine: the Bride of the Song of Songs, and the Shekinah of the Kabbalists, the bridal chamber of the Valentinians in the Gospel of Philip, and the Sakina in Sufism are just some of the manifestations.

This path emphasizes the importance of desire in the Divine and humankind, the role of the Eternal Feminine identified with Wisdom, the importance of the individual as center and mirror of the Divine, the sacrifice of the will enabling the birth of the Divine in people, “the Divine Begetting,” as Saint-Martin puts it, the essential role of Christ the Redeemer who reintegrates humankind into Divinity.

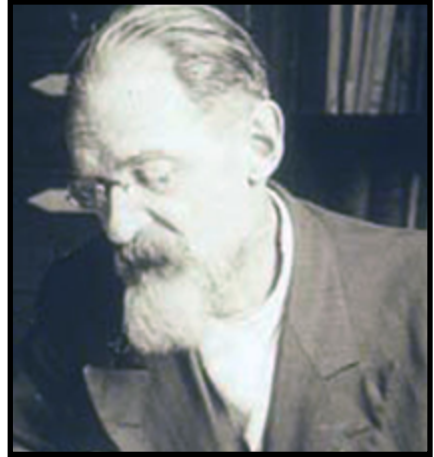
In short, Saint-Martin, like Boehme, advocated a path that reconciles Knowledge and Love, giving pride of place to the intelligence of the heart, and enabling people to unite with the Divine in their innermost being.

What influence did Saint-Martin have, particularly in France? After a meeting with François-René de Chateaubriand in 1803, and with mystics inspired by his spiritual approach and exemplary life, Saint-Martin went on to influence major names in French literature, such as poet Gérard de Nerval and novelist Honoré de Balzac. Balzac’s novels are imbued with mysticism: *Séraphita*, published in 1834, is clearly influenced by Teresa of Ávila, Jacob Boehme, François Fénelon, Madame Guyon, Saint-Martin, as well as Karl von Eckartshausen and Emanuel Swedenborg; *Le Lys dans la vallée* (*The Lily of the Valley*), published



in 1836, indirectly recalls Saint-Martin's stay in Indre-et-Loire, with the niece of his patron, the Duchesse of Bourbon.

The mystical, but discreet, influence of the Unknown Philosopher resurfaced when Papus and Augustin Chaboseau, both doctors and occultists in Paris, met at the end of the nineteenth century. Acknowledging a lineage going back to Saint-Martin, and in memory of Martinès de Pasqually, they founded the Martinist Order in 1891.



*Augustin Chaboseau.*

The disappearance of Papus, a front-line doctor during the First World War, in 1916, and the proliferation of competing esoteric organizations in the inter-war years, finally led Chaboseau to transform the Martinist Order – of which he was Grand Master in alternation with Victor-Emile Michelet – into the Traditional Martinist Order (acronym TMO) in 1931. The Order was officially established in 1939 in the United States by Ralph Maxwell Lewis, Emperor of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis. After the Second World War, thanks to him, the TMO was able to develop worldwide under the fruitful sponsorship of this Traditional Order.

Following in the footsteps of Papus and Augustin Chaboseau, the Traditional Martinist Order is a truly traditional, authentic path, rooted in the Judeo-Christian Tradition, as it has been perpetuated since Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, from the influences of Martinès de Pasqually and Jacob Boehme.

# Martinist Initiation

From a Martinist Manuscript



*Former Sovereign Grand Master Ralph Maxwell Lewis's  
Certificate of Initiation by George Lagreze.*

By definition, the Traditional Martinist Order is an initiatory movement on two levels: first, its teachings are transmitted gradually, in order to contribute to the spiritual awakening of every Martinist. Thus, from month to month and year to year, every member receives an initiation into the Knowledge that the Order has perpetuated since its origins, which is addressed not to the intellect, to the mind, but to the soul. In this way, the aim of Martinism is to foster inner development and awareness of the Divine Self.

Second, each degree of the Traditional Martinist Order is preceded by a particularly inspiring initiation. The only way to receive it is to go to a local Heptad or Atelier, where it is passed on in all its traditional purity, under the guidance of officers and in the presence of other candidates and witnesses. These were originally devised by the founders of the Martinist Order, notably Papus (1865-1916).

In line with these few explanations, here is Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin's definition of initiation, which applies perfectly to the goals pursued by the Traditional Martinist Order:

The central initiation is that by which we can enter the heart of the Divine, and bring the heart of the Divine into us, in order to make an indissoluble marriage.... There is no other mystery for arriving at this holy initiation than to sink deeper and deeper into the depths of our being, and not to let go until we have succeeded in drawing out the life-giving root, because then all the fruits we must bear, according to our kind, will occur naturally both within and outside of us.

## Jacob Boehme

From a Martinist Manuscript

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*If I pick up a stone or a lump of earth and look at it, I see the superior and the inferior, I even see the whole world.*

- Jacob Boehme, *The Mysterium Magnum*

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Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) was an extraordinary figure. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel saw him as the first German philosopher. He influenced Isaac Newton, Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. As for Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, he considered him to be his second Master.

Boehme was born in 1575 near Görlitz, a town close to the border between Germany and Poland. After attending the village school, he learned the cobbler's trade. Beginning in childhood, his life was punctuated by strange signs, heralding an exceptional destiny.

One day, while he was guarding his master's absent store, a stranger entered. The man approached him and looked at him as if penetrating to the very depths of his soul. The man said to him:

Jacob, you are a little thing, but you will be great and become another man, so much so that you will be a source of amazement to the world. Therefore be devout, fear the Divine, and revere Its word. Above all, read carefully the Holy Scriptures, in which you will find consolation and instruction, for you will have much to suffer; you will have to endure poverty, misery, and persecution; but be courageous and persevering, for the Divine loves you and is propitious to you.



*A 1686 depiction of an apocryphal tale regarding a young Jacob Boehme. The Dutch caption describes a story in which Boehme upsets “the preacher Gregor Richter in Görlitz, who was hostile to him in front of everyone.” Richter became so upset at Boehme’s behavior that Richter “showed him the chamber door and threw one of his slippers at his head.” Boehme then “meekly picked up the slipper, put it back on the foot of the angry preacher, and went on his way, wishing him every blessing.”*



The one nicknamed “the Teutonic Philosopher” became a master shoemaker. In 1599, he married Catharina Kuntzchmann. They had four children together. He became involved with Martin Moller, the village pastor, and took part in the activities of a small group of scholars that this preacher gathered around him to study the ideas of Paracelsus and Valentin Weigel. In this group, Boehme received the seeds from which he would draw fruit through his own meditations.

His biographer, Abraham von Franckenberg, wrote: “Jacob Boehme was a good husband and an excellent father. He applied himself to his profession in such a painstaking and honest way that, ten years later, he became the owner of a house inside the city.”

The young man’s life took a decisive turn in 1600, the year during which he had a significant experience. He was suddenly seized by the vision of a pewter vase, which lead him into a profound mystical ecstasy, a universal communion.

“I saw,” he said, “and understood more in a quarter of an hour than I had learned in many years in schools and universities.” A few years later, in 1610, he wrote *The Emerging Dawn or the Root of Philosophy, Astrology, and Theology*, a text in which he recorded the teachings he drew from this experience.

In 1612, the new Görlitz pastor, Gregorius Richter, was informed of Boehme's revelations. From then on, he persecuted the cobbler. Despite this harassment, Boehme tried to remain serene, taking refuge in prayer and meditation.

In the years that followed, he underwent several significant mystical experiences that led him to defy his pastor's wrath to take up the pen once again. In 1619, he wrote *Three Principles of the Divine Essence*, a work in which he attempts to understand the foundations of evil by examining the question of origin and Creation. Other works followed, such as *The Threefold Life of a Person*, written in the winter of 1619.

His texts circulated in manuscript form, and his readers, often illustrious figures, came to question him or wrote to him for clarification of divine mysteries. In response to a friend, Balthasar Walter, he wrote *Forty Questions Concerning the Soul*.



Among the Teutonic Philosopher's best-known works is *The Signature of All Things*, written in 1621, which takes up the theory of "signatures," a key notion in Paracelsian medicine, whereby bodies are merely external figures whose characteristics reveal aspects of the soul. This book is probably one of the most complex that Jacob Boehme wrote.

Among his most important texts is *The Mystorium Magnum*, written in 1623. It is a voluminous work subtitled "An Exposition of the First Book of Moses." Its author endeavors to reveal the secret meaning of the text of Genesis. He offers a particularly original reflection on the nothingness – which he refers to as the Ungrund – that precedes Creation. His observations, which are similar to those of the Kabbalists on the Ain-sof, were to have a great influence on generations of thinkers, notably Nikolai Berdyaev.



*Statue of the Divine Sofia in Sofia, Bulgaria.*

Jacob Boehme's philosophy is based on the highly complex cosmogony of "Eternal Nature" and the seven spirit-sources, and his theories on Sofia, the celestial bride of the first Adam, are imbued with great depth. In his works, he insists on humankind's primitive androgyny, presenting a theory that was to have a major impact on Western esotericism. His language draws heavily on Paracelsian alchemy. His texts are imbued with a poetic range that Emile Boutroux described as "a shimmering fog."

Thanks to the books devoted to him by Alexandre Koyré, Pierre Dehaye, and Basarab Nicolescu, the thought of the man sometimes referred to as the "Prince of Christian Theosophy" is now more readily accessible. These works were not published until after Jacob Boehme's death in 1624. Johann Georg Gichtel (1638-1710), one of his most important posthumous disciples, devoted himself to their publication at the end of the seventeenth century. At the same time, they were also translated into English, and their author counted many disciples in England, such as John Pordage, Jane Lead, and William Law. In France, Boehme's thoughts were discovered through translations by Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, whose transcriptions are sometimes judged clearer than the original texts. Thanks to Nikolai Berdyaev and Serge Bulgakov, Jacob Boehme's philosophy has spread as far as Russia.

