



TRADITIONAL MARTINIST ORDER

ORATORY SECTION

THIRD DEGREE



LESSON TEN

"It is not the head which is necessary to advance in Truth; it is the heart."



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CONCURRENCE

The theme of this monograph, the Inner Church, was a favorite subject for Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. By way of illustration, here is an excerpt of what he says in his book *The New Man*.

When we pray with perseverance and faith, and seek self-purification in the active thirst for penance, we can hear that internal voice tell us what the Savior said to Peter: "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

This operation of the mind teaches us that it is the dignity of the human soul, since God is not afraid to utilize it as the foundation stone of the temple; it teaches us how we must have sweet hopes, since this election is a shield against the powers of time, and even against the powers of darkness and abyss; it finally tells us that this is the true church, and therefore, nowhere is to be found a Church where the invisible operation of the mind is not present.

But let us notice that the reason why this operation of the mind constitutes the true Church, is that it is the eternal word which then sets itself in the foundation stone of its choice, as the Savior inscribed his word in the mind of Peter, to whom he spoke face to face. Without the imprinting of the word of God in our soul, the Church cannot rise up. As reflected in the temporal order, buildings that kings intend to build will begin to rise only when, according to accepted usage, the founder's name is inscribed on the foundation stone that he is supposed to have laid himself.

Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743 -1803)



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THE INNER CHURCH

Dear Martinist:

I greet you before the Luminaries of the Traditional Martinist Order!

To conclude this series of monographs dedicated to the major texts of Judeo-Christian tradition, we will look at a special topic, the Inner Church.

First, it seems useful to indicate that the notion of the Inner Church appeared with Illuminism, an esoteric school of thought that developed in Europe around the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. With a few exceptions, this esoteric school of thought was Christian, but was not linked to any organized Church, not even Protestantism, which gave itself the mission of renewing Christianity. At that time, Illuminism predicted the imminent disappearance of the Outer Church, to the benefit of an Inner Church, a Church without a material structure. Thus, the Illuminists separated themselves from the official Christian teachings, considering that they were too dogmatic and reduced humanity to the status of a puppet manipulated by the Creator. They saw in the human being an intermediary between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Even further, they believed that humanity had the power, and even the duty, to study the connections uniting us to nature and to the Divine. Preferring the inner quest to exterior worship, they gave an important place to initiation.

If the Illuminists only began to appear at the end of the eighteenth century, they benefited from the influence of mystics preceding them, notably Jacob Boehme (1574-1624) and Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1722). Among the adepts of Illuminism can be cited Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1710-1780), Martinès de Pasqually (1727-1774), Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803), Frederic Rodolph Salzmänn (1749-1821), Karl von Eckartshausen (1752-1803), Ivan Loupouchine (1756-1816), Madame de Krüdener (1764-1824), and Franz von Baader (1765-1841). Although these Illuminists had at times different views on the manner of interpreting certain particularities of Christian doctrine, they were all in agreement that the very essence of Christianity was beyond the organized Churches, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox.

Karl von Eckartshausen, whom we have just referred to, was one of the major representatives of Illuminism. In his famous work, *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary*, he presents his conception of the Inner Church, which he also called the *Community of Light*. Rather than paraphrasing it, we suggest to you some particularly evocative paragraphs:



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It is necessary, my dear Brothers and Sisters within the Lord, to give you a clear idea of the Inner Church; of that luminous Community of God, which is scattered throughout the world, and which is governed by truth and united in the spirit. This Community of Light has existed since the first day of the world's creation, and its duration will be to the last day of time. It is the Society of the Elect who know the Light in the darkness, and discern it within their own work.

This Community possesses a school in which all who thirst for knowledge are instructed by the Spirit of Wisdom itself; and all the mysteries of God and of Nature are preserved in this school for the children of light. Perfect knowledge of Divinity, of Nature, and of Humanity, is the object of instruction in this school. It is from this school that all truths penetrate into the world; it is the School of Prophets, and of all who search for wisdom, and in this united Community, truth and the explanation of all mysteries may be found. It is the most interior of communities, yet possesses members from many worlds. Here are certain things one should know about this school:

For all time there has been an exterior school based on the interior one, of which the exterior is only the outer expression and outline of the interior. From all time there has been an interior assembly; a society of the elect, of those who sought for, and had the capacity for, light. This inner society was called the Inner Sanctuary or the Inner Church. All that the external church possesses in symbol, ceremony, or rite, is the letter expressed outwardly of the spirit of truth residing in the Inner Church.

Hence this Inner Church is a Society composed of members scattered throughout the world, yet interiorly bound in the spirit of love and of truth, and which has been occupied with building the Grand Temple of the regeneration of humanity, through which the Reign of God will be manifest. This society is in the communion of those who have the greatest capacity for light. These elect are united in the spirit of truth, and their chief is the Light of the World himself, Jesus Christ, the one anointed in Light, a special mediator for the human race, the way, the truth, and the life; the primitive light, the wisdom, and a particular medium by which humanity can return to God.

The Inner Church was formed immediately after the fall of humanity, and received directly from God, the revelation of the means by which fallen humanity could rise again to its dignity and be delivered from its miseries. The Inner Church also received the original treasure of all revelations and mysteries; it received the key of true science, both divine and



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natural. However, when humanity multiplied, the frailty of humanity and its weakness necessitated an exterior society, which veiled the inner one and concealed the spirit and the truth in the letter.

Many people were not capable of comprehending great inner truth, and the danger would have been too great to entrust what is most holy to people incapable of it. Therefore, inner truths were wrapped in external and perceptible ceremonies, so that humanity, through the perceptible and the outer, which is the symbol of the interior, might be enabled to approach the inner spiritual truths safely, once again, by degrees. And yet, the interior has always been entrusted to those who in their day had the greater capacity for the Light, and they became the sole guardians of the original trust, the High Priests of the Sanctuary, the possessors of the original treasure.

When it became necessary that inner truths should be enfolded into exterior ceremony and symbol, on account of the weakness of humanity, which was not capable of bearing the Vision of Light, then exterior worship began. It was, however, always the model and symbol of the interior, that is to say, the symbol of the true homage offered to God in spirit and in truth.

The difference between spiritual and animal humanity, and between rational and sensual humanity, made the exterior and interior necessary. Inner and spiritual truths passed into the external, wrapped in symbol and ceremony, so that animal humanity could become aware of these, and thereby could be gradually led to the inner truths. Hence external worship was a symbolical form of the inner truths, and of the true relationship between Humanity and God before and after the Fall, and of humanity's most perfect reconciliation. All the symbols of external worship are based upon these three fundamental relationships....

The Community of Light has been throughout time, a true school of God's Spirit. Considered as a school, it has its Chair, it has its Teacher; it possesses a Book in which disciples study forms and objects; and, in short, it has a method by which they study. This school also has its degrees through which the spirit may develop itself progressively, always rising higher and higher.

The first and lowest degree consists of moral good, by which the simple will, subordinated to God, is led to the Good through Jesus Christ, the pure motivating force of



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will, which the will receives through faith. The means, by which the spirit helps itself in this degree, are called Inspirations.

The second degree consists of rational intellectuality, by which the understanding of the man or woman of virtue, who is united to God, is crowned with wisdom and the light of knowledge. The means that the spirit uses to accomplish this in the second degree is called Interior Illumination.

The third and highest degree is the complete opening of our inner sensorium, through which the inner self arrives at an objective vision of true and metaphysical verities. This is the highest degree, where faith becomes vision. The means that the spirit employs for this is True Vision.

In his book, Eckartshausen also explains that the Inner Church has always been under the direction of the Sages that succeeded each other in an uninterrupted manner throughout history, forming a quasi-divine filiation. According to him, these exceptional beings were agents of Divine Light and were missioned to bring humanity closer to their true destination, the Kingdom of Heaven. All have worked, and still work, in the interest of humanity, under the direction of the Christ, considered both as the Envoy of God on Earth and the Spiritual Guide of Humanity.

In another book titled *Magic: The Principles of Higher Knowledge*, Eckartshausen also describes the Inner Church and describes his Temple in very strange words. Paraphrasing this description, here is how Antoine Faivre, historian of esotericism, presents it:

The Temple of the Mysteries rises on a high rock; thorns cover the path leading to it. It is so high that people doubt its existence, and others consider it as an ancient legend. At the beginning of the path, we find ignorance, and its siblings idiocy and laziness. Midway is erected the Temple of self-love. There, Pride offers to travelers a cup in which they drink avidly and become drunk with their own "selves." On the front of this Temple is written: "Sanctuary of the Wisdom of the World." Those who stop there pretend that there is no other Temple above. A thousand steps from there, we find a lonely cottage inhabited by a hermit. On the door, we can read: "House of Humility." There, we learn to know ourselves; modesty will accompany the travelers on rocks that they would not be able to climb without, preventing them from getting lost on the paths of curiosity. Lastly, it will lead toward the Master of all Mysteries, that is, the Pure Will, a friend of the highest



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knowledge. Then will come wisdom, the most beautiful of graces, which will lead them to the Temple of the Mysteries. If the travelers wish to marry wisdom, Wisdom will offer them this Temple as an engagement gift.

As you have seen, the Inner Church, as Eckartshausen describes it, is symbolic and has no material existence. In other words, it does not possess any structure comparable to what the Christian Church established throughout the world. Also, it does not have any clergy in charge of transmitting a particular credo. This Church actually corresponds to a spiritual Community reuniting the souls of all those who have faith in the message of the Christ, and thus, is independent of the religions claiming it. Herein, we can say that Martinism, through its teachings and rituals, has the goal of introducing us to the heart of the Inner Church. This supposes that the Traditional Martinist Order takes its essence and its reason for being from the Inner Church.

Since the Inner Church corresponds to a spiritual Community, we can go there only by calling the noblest faculties of our soul and, solely by having recourse to mystical practices such as prayer and meditation. Regarding this, here is what Eckartshausen wrote in *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary*:

If our inner eye is illumined by the Divine Light, then it is the true inner sun, through which all objects come to our knowledge. As long as the Divine Light does not illumine this eye, our inner self lives in darkness. The dawn of our inner self begins when this Light rises. The sun of the soul shines on our intellectual world, as the exterior sun shines on the outer world.

This spiritual sun is Jesus Christ! Because as the outer sun possesses the light and the heat, bringing everything visible and making everything fructify, so is this inner sun, rending all susceptible to be known in the spirit and active in the heart. Because wisdom and love are its power, the reason and will of humanity are its organs. It perfects our powers with wisdom and our will with love.

In conclusion, we will say that as the Illuminists of the past have done, we can conceive the Inner Church as a spiritual Assembly formed by the souls of those who follow or have followed the Christic message. We can also see in it, the symbolic expression of the Church that is found in the depths of ourselves. Seen from this viewpoint, it corresponds to our Inner Temple, whose access is possible by following the Way of the Heart so dear to Martinists. Indeed, here is what Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin said about this topic:



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"Yes, New Man or New Woman, here is this true temple, the only one where you can adore the true God in the manner that Divinity desires, since all representative and figurative temples that Divinity has allowed Its wisdom to grant to you during your passage in the visible regions, are only the avenues of this invisible temple, to which the Divine desires to see all the nations of the universe, arriving in droves. The heart of humanity is the only port for the vessel set afloat on the sea of this world by the great sovereign. This ship transports travelers to their homelands, and in the human heart, it can find a sure asylum against the violence of the waves, and a solid anchorage against the tempestuous winds."

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

SUMMARY

After carefully studying this monograph, read the following summary. It contains the major points that you may want to reflect and meditate on during the coming days. If you have trouble understanding one of the points, return to the explanations given in the monograph. Immerse yourself in learning the points covered in this summary before proceeding with the study of the next monograph.

- The notion of the Inner Church appeared with Illuminism, an esoteric school of thought that developed in Europe around the end of the eighteenth century, and the beginning of the nineteenth century. With a few exceptions, this esoteric school of thought was Christian, and was not connected to any organized Church.
- The Illuminists saw in the human being an intermediary between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Even further, they believed that humanity had the power, and even the duty, to study the connections uniting us to Nature and to the Divine. Preferring the inner quest to exterior worship, they accorded an important place to initiation.
- Karl von Eckartshausen, one of the major representatives of Illuminism, in his famous book, *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary*, presents his conception of the Inner Church that he also called the Community of Light.
- The Inner Church, as described by Eckartshausen, has no material existence. In other words, it does not possess any structure comparable to what the Christian Church established throughout the world. Also, it does not have any clergy in charge of transmitting a particular credo. This Church actually corresponds to a spiritual Community reuniting the souls of all those who have faith in the message of the Christ, and thus, is independent of religions claiming it.
- Martinism, through its teachings and rituals, has the goal of introducing us to the heart of the Inner Church.
- Since the Inner Church corresponds to a spiritual community, we can go there by calling upon the noblest faculties of our soul and by having recourse to mystical practices such as prayer and meditation.
- We can also see in the Inner Church the symbolic expression of the Church that is found in the depth of ourselves. Seen from this viewpoint, it corresponds to our Inner Temple, whose access is only possible by following the Way of the Heart so dear to Martinists.

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