

The History of the Haitian Gnostics

or, How the Esoteric Movement began in Haiti, on the founding of a Gnostic Church and its eventual migration to North America.

Many people ignore the history of the foundation of the Gnostic Church (specifically the Eglise Gnostique Apostolique) in Haiti and its importance for the Gnostic Church in North America. This article is aimed at filling that gap:

In the 1950's, the Initiatory schools [*Ed. Note. Western initiatory schools*] found their way to Haiti. Many people, both male and female, became part of the flourishing AMORC-style Rosicrucianism since Freemasonry had been deemed "*diabolical*" by the Missionaries (whose mission was both religious *and* political) in Haiti. This was during an era when all the Heads of State, being bound by a concordat, were treated as mere vassals of the Vatican, but since AMORC was little known in Haiti it had not yet made the list of condemned organizations and so there was no risk of excommunication. Anyone with an inclination toward the mystical found, there, a refuge. It was possible to subscribe either via France under Raymond Bernard or via the United States in San Jose California within the Orders of the Emperor Spencer Lewis. Thus, the popularization of Rosicrucianism in Haiti began to spread across the whole country, but in a discreet manner, from Port-au-Prince where the following people were involved: Victor Gabriel, Willer Vital-Herne, Joseph Pratt, Lys Denizard, Felix Herard, Walter Herard, Sanon Jules, Edouard Pierre-Noël, Armand Louis-Jacques, Luc Coiscou, and others, all the way up to Cap-Haitien in the North Department with Pierre Laurent and Jacques Agénor.

On July 26, 1954, a group of occultists, Freemasons, Rosicrucians, and kabbalists gathered together to form an inner circle for the purpose of Esoteric Studies, which they called "Cénacle Alpha et Oméga" and whose motto was the saying of the ancient schools at Delphi: "Know Thyself..." The members of this group had their passwords and signs of recognition, all of which were identical to those of Freemasonry. There were some very influential people among the founders of this group. At the head of the list was the engineer Luc Coiscou, Superintendent of Hasco, who was elected President of the Cénacle (Alpheton) and later became Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Haiti. At his passing to the Eternal Orient, no one could doubt his importance with the grandiose Masonic funeral services held at the Respectable Lodge "l'Etoile No. 5" where he had been the Venerable Master. The surveyor François Avin, who was the director of the movement, held meetings at his home at 36 rue du Montalais, was the Master of Ceremonies of the Cénacle and its Vice President (Anton); Doctor Marcel Tovar Taylor, a noted esotericist and kabbalist who became the Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the 33rd Degrees of Haiti was the Scribe (Albeton) of the Cénacle. A young man, passionate about kabbalah and a lover of the occult sciences, the baby of the group, was the Coordinator of the Library of the Cénacle (Adalton): Roger Victor-Hérard; there were other members, too, such as Roger Loubeau, Louis Carré, Roger Avin, Spenger Fleurimond, Lucien Papillon, Raoul Pierre, Joseph Joanaime, André Ardouin.

Everything was running smoothly for the "Alpha et Omega" until the evening of the altercation which broke out at the door of the Temple of Respectable Lodge "Le Mont Liban No. 22" at 6 rue de l'Enterrment between Brothers Roger Victor-Hérard and Lys Denizard. Victor-Hérard had been prevented entry into the Temple at the instigation of Luc Coicou under the false pretext that they were working Martinism... Lys Denizard, at that time, was a fervent disciple of the Ordre Martiniste Traditionnel. Victor-Hérard wasn't fooled and decided to found a group of the Ordre Martiniste de Papus which took its name from PAPUS, the founder of international Martinism (without Papus, there wouldn't be any Martinism as we have come to know it!). Dr. Philippe Encausse, son of Papus (Dr. Gérard Encausse) had just undertaken the resurgence of his father's Order, since during World War II Hitler's Nazis carried out the destruction and closing of all initiatory organizations... This is the reason why letters were sent from Port-au-Prince to Paris, letters addressed to Philippe Encausse residing

at 42 Boulevard du Mont parnasse... The Chamber of Direction of the Ordre Martiniste issued a patent establishing the creation of the first Martinist Circle in the world: le Cercle Lux No. 1, for which François Avin was the first President, and brother Roger Victor-Hérard was the first Secretary; the other founding members were brothers Louis Carré, Roger Avin, and Camoens Cornet who was the Venerable Master of the Respectable Lodge La Judée No. 37 at the Orient of Arcahaie, a lodge which had been dubbed "Lodge of the Intellectuals" because intellectuals in the country such as Senator Emile Saint-Lot, Judge Roger Bernadotte, Dean of the Law School of Port-au-Prince, Judge Roc J. Raymond who was exalted there as a Kadosh Templar. Camoens Cornet quo became its Venerable Master had received Masonic Light there. Camoens Cornet, Eminent Commander of the Sovereign Encampment of Kadosh Templars of the Valley of Arcahaie became Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of 33rd degrees of Haiti. From the very beginning, isolated Martinists rallied around the Cercle Lux No. 1, including Victor Gabriel, Edouard Pierre-Noel, Edgard Gilles, René Leroy – lawyer for the Bar of Port-au-Prince and Director of the high school 'de Miragoane' or 'de l'Ance à Veau,' promoted to the position of Commissioner of the Government at l'Anse à Veau where he was arrested by the Prefect of the Government and handed over to Port-au-Prince where he was shot at Fort-Dimanche for a lack of zeal for the dictator Duvalier and his lack of enthusiasm toward Duvalier's uncensored plans in general. May his memory live on among his Brothers and may his remains rest in Peace in the lagoons of Fort Dimanche where reigned the famous Lieutenant d'Ardignac in the tranquility of yesteryear. The Martinist Circle flourished at first glance from an administrative point of view, but was stagnant in terms of initiations, the members were preoccupied by a particular inconvenience: they could not receive the Papyrus Martinist Initiation because there was not a Martinist Initiator. Contrary to what was done in the Traditional Martinist Order which undertook a mercantile initiation by correspondence, the Papyrus Martinist Order had a free initiation and was practiced by direct contact between the Initiator and the Initiate and the Initiatory Transmission took place from mouth to ear and not by correspondence.

Voyages to Europe were very expensive by plane and too long by boat; appeals were made to the offices of Brother Edgard Gilles, Traditional Martinist and Rosicrucian who had rallied around the Circle of Martinist Studies Lux No. 1, the first Circle to be installed in the world, on 21 September 1961 at the Autumnal Equinox. Bro. Edgard Gilles worked for Pan American Airlines in the Control Tower and could benefit from an extremely reduced fare as an airline employee which would greatly help Lux Circle No. 1. Most unfortunately, however, Bro. Gilles suddenly died from a heart attack. He passed beyond the veil surrounded by his parents, his brothers and friends... Pease be upon his sweet soul!

This was followed by Bro. Willer Vital-Herne entering onto the National Initiatory chessboard, a man who, in the history of the Initiatory Evolution of Haiti will remain a figurehead for having been the Initiator, Agent vector No. 1 of both Martinism and Gnosticism in Haiti.

Bro. François Avin, president of Martinist Circle Lux No. 1, met Bro. Willer Vital-herne, a pharmacist who was arranging his papers to allow him to leave for France. He announced to Bro. Avin that he was leaving very shortly for Paris. Avin explained to him the sort of service he could render during his visit to Paris. Vital-Herne who was a Rosicrucian acquiesced to the desires of Avin and asked him to visit us in order to receive the necessary formalities. One afternoon, we welcomed Vital-Herne into our residence on Rue Roux who informed us that he had come in the name of Bro. Avin. We then gave him a letter of introduction addressed to Dr. Philippe Encausse which named him as our representative to be initiated to the various degrees of the Order and above all to the degree of Initiator so as to allow the initiatory transmission of the Martinism of Papyrus to exist in Haiti. The first Initiations began in 1964 with Vital-Herne who had become the president of the Group, since, according to the regulations of the Ordre Martiniste, it was necessary to have previously received the degree of Initiator before becoming President of a Group, because only the Initiation to the degree of Initiator allowed the President of the Group to preside and to transmit the Initiation, and because a President without this degree is nothing more than a jackanapes.

A year later, Vital-Herne again left for France: a new letter was addressed to Encausse. We made it known to the Grand Master of the Ordre Martiniste that there was an urgent need the Vital-Herne to be initiated as a

Grand Initiator. This grade invested powers permitting the initiation of Initiators in turn, to which Vital-Herne acquiesced, and upon receiving our letter addressed to the Grand Master Philippe Encausse, he was initiated to the grade of Grand Initiator and invested by the Chamber of Direction of the Order with the powers of National Delegate of the Ordre Martiniste for Haiti. (Please excuse this long digression, but it was necessary to better understand the history of the Eglise Gnostique in Haiti and in America).

Victor-Hérard, at the time of this second voyage by Vital-Herne for France, also gave him another letter, but this time addressed to the Most Illustrious and Most Puissant Brother Robert Ambelain who had invested Victor-Hérard with the functions of Venerable Master by virtue of a patent accorded to Hérard by the Grand Lodge of France of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraïm enabling him to preside over the works of the Lodge Melchisedek in the Orient of Port-au-Prince, a Lodge functioning under the Obedience of the Rite of Memphis-Misraïm.

The Patent of Constitution had been signed by the Sovereign Grand Master Robert Ambelain and also bore the signature of the Grand 1st Surveillant, Dr. Philippe Encausse, Grand Master of the Ordre Martiniste. At this time, Bro. Ambelain was Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ordre Martiniste (Inner Circle), Sovereign Grand Master of the Ordre Martinéziste (Elu-Cohen), Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ordre Kabbalistique de laRose+Croix, and he had just founded the Eglise Gnostique Apostolique of which he was the first Ecumenical Patriarch. Bro. Vital-Herne, upon his arrival in Paris, went to the residence of Patriarch Robert Ambelain at 12 Square du Limousin, in order to give him the letter he carried on our behalf, being completely ignorant of to what the contents of the letter pertained.

Bro. Ambelain acknowledged this straightaway and informed the messenger that the Patriarch of the Eglise Gnostique Apostolique and called for the conferral of Minor Order, Major Orders, and the Episcopacy on Bro. Vital-Herne for the establishment of a Gnostic Church in Haiti. “But that’s out of the question,” Vital-Herne objected. Patriarch Ambelain did not leave him enough time to pull himself together. He called upon the Gnostic Bishop of Paris, Roger Pommery, to ask for his immediate presence at the patriarchal seat in order to draw up an agenda for the conferral of the Orders upon this Haitian brother representing the Initiatory Orders of his country; Vital-Herne was also Sovereign Grand Inspector General, 33° and an active member of the Supreme Council of 33°s of Haiti.

It was obligatory to be at least a Master Mason in order to have the capacity of belonging to the Gnostic Clergy, because the Eglise Gnostique Apostolique only receives among its faithful persons belonging to initiatory societies, such as Freemasonry, the Odd Fellows, and esoteric societies: AMORC, Martinism, Martinezism, all organizations slapped with excommunication by Papal Bulles such as: IN EMMINENTI of Clement XII in 1738, PROVIDAS of Benedict XIV in 1751, the edict “QUO GRAVIORA” of Leo XII in 1825, the encyclical “HUMANUM GENUS” of Leo XIII in 1884. The Eglise Gnostique, then, gave asylum to all those banished, those excommunicated through the will of the Roman She-Wolf.

Mgr. Vital-Herne received, after his Episcopal consecration, the title of Primate of Haiti, which has been modified to that of Primate of the Antilles and of the Caribbean. We will provide the initiatory curriculum vitae of Mgr. Vital-Herne at a later point. Because it was our intention to establish the Gnostic Church in Haiti, we broke the news to Bro. Edouard Pierre-Noël who mocked us and turned on us in derision saying to us in a mocking tone: “You’re going to make me a Canon?” A little while after our departure from Haiti, about twenty years ago, he solicited Mgr. Vital-Herne for admission into the Gnostic Clergy. Mgr. Vital-Herne consulted us to find out if we had any objections. A lot of water has passed under the oak bridge since then! Let him pass, was our response. He was admitted up to the Diaconate, but due to a curious malediction never received the Gnostic Priesthood...he pretends to have received the Priesthood during a visit to Chicago, but it must have been for the Nouvelle Alliance, but not the Eglise Gnostique Apostolique, because as of 1981, Mgr. Clement Papillon had abjured Gnosticism in order to rally around the Nouvelle Alliance of Canada (non-existent today), but an important question must be presented to Pierre-Noël: Isn’t it prudent to present your Charter of

Ordination in order to corroborate these declarations in Haiti, declarations which we would like to keep clear of all fallacies...

We will publish, just as we have done for Mgr. Papillon, at another time, the letter of demission of Mgr. Gaspard Mervilus, who resigned from the Ordre Martiniste and from the Eglise Gnostique as of May 8, 1984, because Mgr. Mervilus falsely pretends to have been chased out of these organizations, which is certainly not in conformity with the truth! We were always refused publication of this letter of resignation written on May 8, 1984, not wanting it to be disparaged by certain dignitaries. Today we hand it over to the wisdom of our Gnostic and Martinist brothers and sisters. The reader will judge It is worthwhile to bring to the light for the Public and for the Gnostic Community that ALL Episcopal consecrations, ALL sacerdotal ordinations carried out respectively by Mgr. Gaspard Mervilus and Mgr. Alphonse Duyon after the date of resignation or of deposition were NOT carried out in the cadre of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Eglise Gnostique Apostolique Catholique of 1970, a Church directed by the Autocephalous Gnostic Apostolic Primacy of North America, and consequently are NOT registered by the Gnostic chancery, and are therefore OUTSIDE of the International Gnostic Community.

Of course, this resignation so desired by many Gnostic and Martinist Initiates brought about a Douyon-Mervilus conflict, a conflict which frustratingly was worsened following the publication in journals of the famous letter of General "Lyzincourt" in the Haitian underground of New York. Everyone knew full well who this Lyzincourt was and laughed up their sleeves in spite of denials. We also well recall the articles of La Truelle flagellating the Group Musset...

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