

= Antoinism =

Antoinism is a healer and Christian @-@ oriented new religious movement founded in 1910 by the Walloon Louis @-@ Joseph Antoine (1846 ? 1912) in Jemeppe @-@ sur @-@ Meuse , Seraing . With a total of 64 temples , over forty reading rooms across the world and thousands of members , it remains the only religion established in Belgium whose notoriety and success went outside the country . Mainly active in France , the religious movement is characterized by a decentralized structure , simple rites , discretion and tolerance towards other faiths .

Raised a Catholic , Antoine worked as a coal miner in his youth , then as a steelworker , before performing his military service in 1866 . After marrying Catherine in 1873 , he moved several times for professional reasons . Deeply impressed by Allan Kardec 's writings , he organized a spiritualist group in the 1890s . In 1893 , the death of his son marked the definitive loss of his faith in Catholicism . In 1896 , he explained his Spiritist views in a book , then discovered the gifts of healing . Quickly known as a healer , he gathered many followers , mainly among workers disappointed by Catholicism or medicine . In 1906 , he broke with Spiritism and started a religion , then published three books outlining his doctrine and consecrated the first Antoinist temple . After his death in 1912 , Catherine ensured the continuity of the religion , promoting a centralized worship around the person of her husband and providing additional rules in the organization . When she died in 1940 , some differences happened between the French and the Belgian temples .

Antoinist beliefs combine some elements of Catholicism , reincarnation , and healing . In the Antoinist views , the man must reach consciousness by getting rid of the illusion of matter produced by his intelligence ? the source of evil and suffering . The purpose of the life is to release oneself from the cycle of reincarnation through a moral progression aided by " fluids " ? all human actions , acquired by silent prayer and the harm caused by diseases and enemies . As freedom of conscience and free will are considered very important in Antoinist creed , the religion does not practice proselytism and is not exclusive . It does not provide any prescription on social issues . Although focused on healing , Antoinism does not interfere with the medical field , and does not discourage the resort to traditional medicine .

Simple and brief , services are performed in the temples , generally twice per day , and are composed of two forms of worship : " The General Operation " , which consists of the transmission of the fluid to the churchgoers , and " The Reading " of Antoine 's writings . Members who performed the services wear an entirely black dress , as sign of an intense involvement in the religion ; they are not paid . Temples are also the place of consultations of a healer by people who wish to obtain a request , frequently related to health . Antoinist celebrations include Christian holidays and other three days that commemorate the founding couple and the dedication of the first temple . Registered as organism of public utility in Belgium and as religious association in France , the religion is directed by a college composed of the most active members called desservants . It is financed by anonymous donations and do not ask for money from its followers . In France , the cult classification of Antoinism in the 1995 Parliamentary Report was criticized by the sociologists who studied the religious group , and many people involved in the anti @-@ cults fight did not report cultic deviances .

= = History = =

= = = 1846 ? 1912 : Founder Louis Antoine = = =

= = = = Childhood and professional activities = = = =

Louis @-@ Joseph Antoine was born on 7 June 1846 in Mons @-@ Crotteux , at a place called " In the Chapel " , the youngest of a large family , which belonged to the Roman Catholic Church . His mother was Catherine Castille , born in 1797 . He was raised in the Priesse street and attended

primary school in Mons . From the age of twelve , Louis was employed as a coal miner , following in the footsteps of his father . One day , while working at the mine , his lamp went out without apparent reason , which he interpreted as a divine sign that he should abandon this work . He worked for two years in the mine , then was a steelworker in the Cockerill factory in Seraing . He was enrolled in the militia of Belgium in 1866 , and filled his military obligations in Bruges . During the Franco - Prussian War , he accidentally killed a comrade ; although there was no legal action , this event led him to question the meaning of life . After marrying Jeanne Catherine Collon on 15 April 1873 , while he was a hammerer , he became the father of a son , Louis Martin Joseph , born in Hamborn , Prussia on 23 September 1873 , and baptized five days later in the Catholic Church of St. John . Then the family went to Belgium in August 1876 , where Antoine bought a horse and became a vegetable vendor . In 1878 , he began to suffer from recurring stomach aches . In February 1879 , he returned to Poland where he was hired as hammerer chief by Mr. Pastor in the Pragua steelworks ; there his wife ran a school canteen . Five years later , the family moved to Jemeppe - sur - Meuse (Belgium) , where he built twenty houses for workers . On 5 February 1886 , Antoine was sentenced to a fine of two francs on the grounds of physical violence on Denis Collon on 10 October 1885 . Until 1900 , he was a portier and a collector of Lexhy factory .

= = = Influence by Spiritism = = =

Though young , Antoine showed great piety , which the historian Pierre Debouxhay described as a " devotion of a rather scrupulous formalism " . Despite his strong faith , Antoine was unsatisfied with his religion . He began to be influenced by the writings of Allan Kardec and , through his friend Gustave Gon , was initiated in 1884 in Spiritism in attending Spiritist meetings to Tilleur , alongside his wife and his nephew Pierre Dor . In Jemeppe - sur - Meuse , with friends , he started a Spiritist movement called " The Vine Growers of the Lord " (" Les Vignerons du Seigneur ") . Often ill , his son attended evening school in Jemeppe , then worked at the Society of Belgian Northern Railways (Société des Chemins de Fer du Nord Belge) ; At his death on 23 April 1893 because of a phlebitis , Antoine and his group definitively broke with Christianity ; moreover , after participating in Spiritist meetings , parents believed that their deceased son was reincarnated as a pharmacist in Paris . Antoine published in 1896 a book entitled Little Spiritist Catechism (Petit catéchisme spirite) to explain his own doctrinal views ; shaped on the Catechism of the Catholic Church , this writing was successful and was translated into Spanish . Antoine organized public meetings of Spiritism the first Sunday of each month at his home , and the second and the fourth Sundays at Pierre Debroux 's home , people being invited to meetings through flyers . He then discovered the gifts of healing and by 1900 , he received many sufferers to heal ; thenceforth , he was known as the " healer of Jemeppe " . He distributed remedies learned from Spiritism and advocated vegetarianism , as well as temperance and avoidance of fatty foods .

On 8 November 1900 , the prosecutor of Liège , who had received an anonymous letter , asked doctors Louis Lenger and Gabriel Corin to investigate the healing activities of Antoine . On 14 December , the Commissioner raided the pharmacist Nizet , installed in Jemeppe , who received orders made by Antoine to heal the sick . Three days later , the prosecutor and the two doctors asked Antoine about his healing activities and attended several consultations . In his report , the prosecutor stated that Anthony was very cooperative , that his treatments were " simple " and that it was certain that he obtained many recoveries but only under suggestion ; he noticed his " absolute sincerity " , but also asserted his activities could be " a danger to public health " . Antoine appeared before the Criminal Court on 19 February 1901 ; Dr. Corin and three patients who reported having been cured succeeded at the witness box . Finally , Antoine was sentenced to a suspended fine of 60 francs , which did not prevent him to enjoy great renown . Meanwhile , on 25 December 1900 , approximately 180 people attended the inauguration of a new building located at the corner of Tomballes and Bois - du - Mont streets that Antoine had purchased earlier the same year , and then decorated with portraits of Allan Kardec , the cure of Ars and Dr. House .

In 1901 , Antoine posted an advertisement in the Spiritist journal The Messenger (Le Messenger) , seeking doctors who would associate with him , but the attempt did not meet with success . At the

same time , he was deeply influenced by Léon Denis ' book In the Invisible . He began to give up his remedies , particularly because of his then recent trial , and gradually left Spiritism , as he was sometimes deceived by false mediums . In 1902 , his group The Vine Growers of the Lord , although solicited , did not participate in the creation of a Spiritist Federation , then in 1905 , the members did not attend the preparatory meeting of the Congress in Liège and refused the 0 @. @ 25 franc contribution . In 1905 , he consulted up to 400 patients per day . Around the same time , he published a four @- @ page leaflet which commented passages of the Gospels without reference to Spiritism .

= = = = Foundation of a new religion = = = =

In 1906 , Antoine discovered a spirituality he called a " new spiritualism " , which led him to definitely give up Spiritism , to decide to heal by faith alone and to perform only collective healing in a temple , and thus started to lay the foundations of a structured religious movement . That year , the followers of The Vine Growers of the Lord attended for the last time the national convention of Spiritists in Charleroi , which officially marked the end of their mutual support , and the following year , Antoine publicly abjured any practice of Spiritism . In addition , the moral dimension became more present in the doctrine , while the experimental disappeared . Given this abandonment of the Spiritist doctrine , the new religious group was criticized in Spiritist journals .

At that time , Antoine had a student named Martin Jeanfils , an employee at the Corbeau coal . A few years ago , Jeanfils was certain to get a gift of healing by treating knee and foot sprains of his wife and himself , and was then consulted by patients in Jemeppe . Antoine and him were sued on 16 January 1907 on the grounds of illegal practice of the art of healing . Jeanfils explained to the Court that he just wanted to do disappear the pain , and that he always sent his patients to doctors . For his part , Antoine told the judge that he simply put his hand on the forehead of patients and that he prescribed drugs ; he denied the charge , and all the witnesses heard testified of the altruism of Antoine , who distributed money to the poor . Antoine and Jeanfils appeared before the Criminal Court on 15 June 1907 , and the courtroom was entirely filled . Dr. Delville and the parents of a child cured by Antoine testified at the witness box , Mr. Dupret then pronounced the indictment . Adjourned , The judgment was adjourned and was finally , on 21 June 1907 , President Hamoir acquitted the two men , who were absent in court then . Following an appeal by the prosecutor , Antoine and Jeanfils appeared before the Court again on 16 October 1907 . The General Advocate Meyers made the indictment , analyzing the legislation of 1918 on the illegal art of healing , claiming that it was not what Antoine did . On 22 October of the same year , the acquittal was confirmed , and Meyers was deeply thanked by several faithful .

Mrs. Desart , a stenographer , transcribed the teachings of Antoine in a magazine , The Halo of Consciousness (L 'Auréole de la conscience) , published from May 1907 to April 1909 , while three books were successively published , works in which the new doctrine was developed and which contained the Antoinist creed , " The Ten Principles of the Father " . At that time , the temple was quickly filled every day and Antoine received daily about 250 letters or telegrams . Unlike today , some prozelytism was then performed by 70 hawkers wearing coats and hats and with briefcases . From May 1909 to Easter 1910 , Antoine did not appear in public , and lived alone to practice fasting and prayer , and the worship was assumed by one of his followers , Florian Deregnaucourt , who also published the Antoinist literature . On 15 August 1910 , Antoine announced that he would no longer do individual consultations , and consecrated the temple of Jemeppe @- @ sur @- @ Meuse , located rue Alfred Smeets and which cost about 100 @, @ 000 francs . Antoine presented his wife as his successor and appointed a council composed of followers to manage financial issues of the religion . At the meeting of 11 June 1911 , the council proposed the publishing of a newspaper titled The Unitive (L 'Unitif) which was released in September of the same year , with a printing of 400 @, @ 000 copies for the first issue , and 6 @, @ 000 subscribers . In the context of legal proceedings for the worship registration , secretary of the Antoinist committee Deregnaucourt wrote to the Minister of the Interior on 29 March 1910 and to the Minister of Justice and Religious Affairs on 19 April 1910 . A petition of 160 @, @ 000 signatures to demand official recognition of the Antoinist

religion was sent to the House of Representatives on 2 December 1910 , and forwarded to the Minister of Justice on 27 January 1911 .

Although his predictions were sometimes inaccurate , Antoine was then regarded as a prophet by his followers , and some of them said it could perform supernatural apparitions ; for his part , Antoine said nothing about the possible truthfulness of these phenomena . Named " The Father " by his followers , Antoine died ? " disembodied " in Antoinist doctrine ? on 25 June 1912 as the result of an attack of stroke . Then there were rumors that he would resurrect on the third day , but Debouxhtay believed that they emanated from " jesters " and that Antoinists did not believe this . The procession which took place at his funeral on 30 June 1912 was a great event in Jemeppe , and on this occasion , 100 @, @ 000 faithful came to pray over his body . Subsequently , Antoinists were allowed to move the body , initially in the pauper 's grave , to the town cemetery . In 1920 , Antoine 's widow asked the country 's Queen to allow her the carry the body in the temple garden of Jemeppe where a chapel would be erected , but this request failed .

As legacy , a street in Spa was named " Father Antoine Street " (" Rue du Père Antoine ") after a decision by the Liberal Party of the city in 1931 , and a 1952 painted plaster bust of Antoine is exhibited at the Museum of Walloon Life (Musée de la Vie wallonne) in Liège .

= = = = Splinter groups = = = =

When Antoine was alive , a minor split group was led in Verviers by a man named Jousselein . A more important schism from Antoinism was initied by Pierre Dor (born 15 May 1862 , Mons @-@ Crotteux) , Louis Antoine 's nephew , and was named " Dorism " . He first participated in the Spiritist circle of his uncle , " The Vine Growers of the Lord " , but decided to splinter off , as he believed he had himself gifts of healing . He tried to heal sufferers , but did not achieve success and returned to the group of his uncle . However , he accompanied one of his patients in Russia , where he enjoyed success since he healed about 7 @, @ 000 people per week , but came back to Belgium after complaints from doctors . In Roux @-@ Wilbeauroux , he built a hall called " The Moral School " (" L 'École Morale ") where he healed the sick and dispensed roughly the same teachings as that of his uncle . He explained his theory in two books respectively published in 1912 and 1913 , entitled Catechism of the Restoration of the Soul (Catéchisme de la restauration de l 'âme) and Christ Speaks Again (Le Christ parle à nouveau) ? as he identified himself to Jesus Christ , and Antoine to John the Baptist ? which Debouxhtay considered as a potential plagiarism of Antoine 's writings . Dor encouraged a diet of vegetables boiled in water and chastity before marriage . In 1916 , he was convicted of illegally practicing the healing art . Thereafter , he moved to Uccle , and his movement disappeared following his death on 5 March 1947 . As Antoinism , Dorism was criticized by some Catholic clergy members .

= = = 1912 ? 1940 : Wife Catherine as successor = = =

The illiterate wife of Louis Antoine , Catherine (born 26 May 1850 , Jemeppe sur Meuse ? died 3 November 1940 , Jemeppe sur Meuse) , called " The Mother " by the followers , was designated by him as his successor , but received no advice from him on how to manage the religion . In December 1918 , then in September 1919 , she sent letters respectively to the King of Belgium and the Minister of Justice to obtain legal recognition of the Antoinist worship ; in the month of March of the following two years , Secretary of worship Ferdinand Delcroix sent two letters in the same purpose , which resulted in 1922 in the recognition of public utility of the religion .

To seek to prevent any misappropriation of the charism of Antoine within the movement after his death , the Antoinist journal L 'Unitif published articles which presented Catherine as the legitimate successor and also redefined precisely the limits of the healers ' role . To avoid a succession crisis and to ensure the continuity of the religion , Catherine decided to promote a centralized worship around the person of her husband and thus established various rules between 1925 and 1930 . For example , she placed , in the temple before the high platform , the photograph of her husband with the mention " The Father is making the Operation " , then added her own portrait . She also

authorized the desservants ? the members the most involved in the religion ? to perform the General Operation from the higher platform , but wanted that the ceremony would be preceded by a statement that it is the Father who performs the Operation and that the faith must be placed in him to obtain satisfaction . She insisted that the desservant installed in the platform would be sat during the reading of Antoine 's writings . She also organized the Father 's day , on 25 June , and rituals such as baptism , communion and marriage , which transformed the group into institutionalized religion . She ordered that nothing should be changed in her husband 's writings and in 1932 closed reading rooms in which followers gave personal teachings . However , unlike the writings of her husband which can be sold by anyone , changes and rules established by Catherine are recorded in books only available to the desservants , thus remaining confidential . From 17 June 1930 , a faithful named Narcisse Nihoul replaced her to perform the General Operation at the platform of the temple .

= = = 1940 ? 2016 : Continuity of the worship = = =

The history of Antoinism was very quiet after 1940 . In Belgium , Joseph Nihoul , the President of the Antoinist Council , then his successors , led the religion until their death , alongside the members of this body . The authority of Catherine was challenged just after her death by the Belgian branch of the movement , which has withdrawn the religious changes she made : removal of photographs in the temples , deletion of baptism , marriage and communion , opposition to the translation of Antoine 's works ... However , a Belgian group who , claiming to be faithful to the true Antoinist tradition , opened a temple in Angleur on 1 April 1943 , preferred to keep the portraits of the Antoinettes in the temple . In France , the Antoinists wanted to be faithful to all requirements provided by the founding couple . In spite of these differences , the two branches show each other support and tolerance . Thus , after the death of Catherine , there were two forms of Antoinism , which still remain different today : one in Belgium , and one in France .

In Belgium , the growth of the religion quickly began to slow down , even to decline , as indicated by the fact that no temple has been built since 1968 and that several of them are currently unused because of a lack of dressed members and / or money . In contrast , the constructions of the temples in France has been continued until 1993 , when a new temple in Toulouse was opened .

= = Beliefs = =

= = = Theology = = =

Antoinism believes in a dualistic universe composed of a spiritual world governed by the law of God or consciousness , and of a corporal world , governed by natural laws , in which matter is an illusion perceived by the imagination generated by intelligence . The man combines in himself both worlds , as he has a physical body and a divine consciousness . In Antoinist views , the importance of human laws and science is weakened as they are based not on consciousness , but on intelligence . The view of the matter is , however , not considered a sin , but an error that causes suffering .

The religious movement believes in a moral progression through reincarnation after death : the transmigration of the spirit in a human body only reflects the degree of spiritual elevation . The reincarnated person has no recollection of the past lives , and can again make progress in his spiritual course that allows him , at the end , to reach the divine state which releases him from the cycle of reincarnation . The harm caused by disease and by people is seen as a beneficial cure , as the pain can increase one 's spiritual progress and thus contribute to one 's salvation . The silent prayer is also considered as a way to connect the spirit to consciousness . Antoine , who suffered from disease and demonstrated asceticism and dedication throughout his life , is regarded by followers as a role model to attain salvation .

Antoinist doctrine provides another interpretation to the original sin in the book of Genesis : Adam began to follow Eve , who had placed her confidence in a serpent , symbol of matter . By imagining

the materiality of the physical world , he abandoned the divine consciousness in which he lived and produced the ideas of good and evil . The " tree of knowledge of good and evil " in the Bible is redefined as " the tree of the science of the sight of evil " . Antoinism claimed to not be an atheist religion , but has a particular conception of God : this one does not exist outside of humans , and they do not exist outside of God . Therefore as God would live in every human , it is highly recommended to love one 's enemies . In addition , the doctrine of the Trinity is not accepted .

Flexible and little binding , Antoinist beliefs are close to the contemporary belief , as followers can choose the beliefs they wish and interpret events as they want . The religion attaches great importance to freedom of conscience and free will , which renders it attractive and promotes a diversity of beliefs among the followers who can refer simultaneously to other religious traditions . Some believers see Antoine as an incarnation of God ; others , who continue to practice Catholicism , consider him a prophet equal to Jesus Christ ; others , who adhere to New Age doctrines , perceive him as a spiritual figure . The movement rejects indoctrination of children and proselytism , even towards people who visit the temple , tolerates other religions as they teach the faith and prayer and thus detach people from the material world , and considers tolerance the highest virtue to practise . The religion does not provide any prescription on issues such as divorce , abortion and sexuality , has no political purpose and do not use honorary titles , considering all people equal . A periodical directed by writer Louis Pauwels summarized the main purposes of the religion as being the " mutual aid , spiritual and human solidarity , availability and hospitality " .

= = = Fluids = = =

Fundamental principle of the cosmos , the fluid is a recurrent theme in Antoinism . Thoughts , words , human actions and social ties are considered as fluids . As their quality depends on the moral progress of a person , there are " spiritual " and " heavy " fluids . They can be transmitted , perceived by the intelligence and purified through meditation . A good fluid is supposed to be acquired by love and prayer , and has various uses : it can act as a divine power that regenerates the whole person , destroy evil and heal . It is believed that Antoine can transmit the good fluid and that the temple platform is the place of the most number of fluids .

As good fluids are supposed to be transferable , the Antoinist dress used during the worship is often placed on the bed of a suffering person to help his recovery ; similarly , some faithful put a request on a paper in a box under the platform so that the wish happen , others buy a photo of Antoine at a ceremony to be protected . To prevent negative fluids to enter the temple , several rules were established : for example , those who perform the worship are not allowed to wear jewelry or makeup in the building .

= = = Healing = = =

Although focused on healing , Antoinism does not propose any diagnosis nor prescription , and does not practice the laying on of hands ; the faithful may also resort to traditional medicine . In the books of the temple , it is stated that desservants are not allowed to discourage them to consult a doctor and they should pray that they find an " inspired " doctor . Generally , consulting an Antoinist healer is merely a supplement to allopathic medicine . Because of its healer doctrine , the religious group is almost always compared to Christian Science ; however , in spite of several similarities with this religion as well as with Friedrich Hegel 's works , Belgian historian Pierre Debouxhay rejected the idea that they could have been potential influences on Antoine 's doctrines . According to him , it is possible that Antoine was influenced by Doukhobors .

When Antoine was alive , many observers thought that the healings he obtained resulted to suggestion only , and Dr. Schuind , who wrote two articles in *The Meuse* (*La Meuse*) on the subject at the time , criticized the lack of control and vague diagnostics surrounding these healings . Sociologist Anne @-@ Cécile Bégot considered the Antoinist healing of the first decades a form of protest against (1) the efficiency of medicine , (2) the traditional representation of disease ? the real healing can be attained only through a new approach to the disease , which is never considered

a particular misfortune and thus is not reduced to its biological dimension ? and (3) the management of disease ? sick are always responsible for their own illness . However , she concluded that this protest has evolved throughout time as (1) the disease is now represented on an endogenous etiological model , which indicates a process of individualization of the religion , and (2) the personal real @-@ life experience is more presented as the cause of the disease than the relation to the global society .

= = Practices = =

= = = Worship = = =

The Antoinism worship takes place in temples . A dressed member welcomes anyone who enters the temple by calling them " brother " and " sister " , even if they are just visitors . The service is very unceremonial and informal , as there is no liturgy , singing , or pre @-@ set prayers , and lasts from 15 to 30 minutes . Attendance at worship is not required and many people come sporadically . According to sociologist Régis Dericquebourg , " the Antoinist worship is a ritual of intercession . (...) It is a time of big emotional intensity with an intimate aspect " .

The service is composed of two practices :

" The General Operation " (" L 'Opération Générale ") : Established by Antoine in 1910 , it begins and ends with three strokes of bell . It is briefly announced by a dressed member . After meditating in a room on the back of the temple , a desservant climb to the highest platform , and the dressed follower goes to the other platform . Both are standing and pray for a few minutes to transmit the fluid to the churchgoers . Then , if the reading of the sacred texts is scheduled just after , as it is the case in France , the desservant whispers to the dressed follower to perform the reading . Originally Antoine practiced this form of worship only on holidays (except Sundays) and on the 1st and 15th days of each month , before extending it to the first four days of the week . It was in 1932 that the General Operation was performed in all Antoinist temples , and no longer only in the one of Jemeppe ; furthermore , on 3 December 1933 , Catherine decided that the ritual would be also perform every Sunday .

" The Reading " (" La Lecture ") : It lasts twenty minutes and consists of the reading of Antoine 's book L 'Enseignement by the dressed follower . The reading ends when he thanks the audience .

There are few differences in schedules between the services in Belgium and that of France (see the table) .

= = = Consultations by a healer = = =

After the service , some people ? regular faithful or visitors ? may ask to consult a healer in one of the small rooms of the temple ? although the desservant who lives in the apartment adjacent to the temple is always available to receive suffering persons . During these consultations , both are standing before Antoine 's image : the patient expresses for a few minutes the request that he wishes to obtain , and the healer prays , sometimes while touching the consultant 's shoulder or hand , presumably to convey the fluid . The healer 's work is said to put again the consultant in the love of God that will allow him to find himself the spiritual journey leading to healing . For this purpose , the healer has to discover the origin of the consultant 's problem , which is , in Antoinist beliefs , always linked to a person 's own history , and to understand that he should bear the consequences of what was done in a preceding life .

A 2001 survey reported by Dr. Axel Hoffman showed that an Antoinist healer had received 216 patients over a period of twenty days , that the reasons to consult were related to physical (47 %) , psychological (19 %) , sentimental (13 %) and professional (13 %) issues , and that most of these people also consulted a doctor . The Antoinist healing process does not include a doctrinal teaching nor a psychological manipulation . It does not necessarily imply the end of the problem or illness , and can be divided into three phases : the relief provided by the healer through listening and

intercession with God , then acceptance of the problem which requires the recognition of one 's responsibilities , and finally the inner peace that results . Whether immediate or gradual , healings are never considered as miracles in the religion because they are supposed to occur inevitably when all necessary conditions , including the faith of the patient , are met . Even after several consultations , the consultant does not necessarily become a follower . Several sociologists deemed the Antoinist healing as " exorcist " as well as " adoracist " .

= = = Marriage , communion , baptism and funeral = = =

Catherine established rituals such as baptism of infants , blessing of couples and communion of young people . They simply consist of an " elevation of thought " that take place after the services in a consulting room of the temple . These rituals have no particular meaning in the religion and are not considered sacraments ; they are performed only at the request of followers , including young people , who want to provide a religious dimension to the important moments of their lives . Funerals are also performed at the request of the concerned person , unless the family asks for rituals of another religion . The procession always takes place at the cemetery or the funeral home , and the deceased person is never brought to the temple . Desservants read the " Ten Principles of the Father " , then an Antoinist text on reincarnation , to help the soul to come off the body to be reincarnated . Sociologists note that many people who never attend the Antoinist services asked for funeral rites of that religion .

= = = Holidays = = =

As Antoine decided to model Antoinist holidays on Catholicism , followers celebrate Christian holidays , including All Saints , Christmas , Easter , Easter Monday and Ascension ; these days , appropriate portions of Antoine 's works are read during the services . There are also three special days in Antoinism , and attendance at worship is generally higher at these moments : (1) 25 June , the Father 's Day . It was established by Antoine 's wife shortly after his death . At first , from 1913 , all the temples except the one in Jemeppe were closed that day in the purpose that followers came to attend the ceremony in that city . So many Antoinists performed a pilgrimage to Jemeppe @-@ sur @-@ Meuse to participate in a procession through the city which outlined the main events of Antoine 's life . The procession was withdrawn in 1937 and the pilgrimage seems to be no longer organized . That day , the faithful pay homage to the founder in the temples . (2) 15 August , the consecration of the temple 's Day , which commemorates the consecration of the first temple . In 1911 , on that day , the General Operation took place at the temple , then the ceremony continued into a public hall , which shocked followers ; therefore , the following year , the whole ceremony took place exclusively in the temple . (3) 3 November , the Mother 's Day , as anniversary of Catherine 's death .

= = = Religious clothing and symbols = = =

Wearing Antoinist religious clothing indicates an intense involvement in the religion by the person who makes this choice . Although not mandatory , it is devoted to faithful who perform the worship , celebrations and other tasks in the temple ? all of them are called " moral work " , as they are expected to participate in the moral elevation of followers . It was in 1906 that Antoine wore a special clothe for the first time , and it was the case of the faithful in 1910 . Entirely black , the dress for men was designed by Antoine , and that for women by Catherine , who precisely codified their dimensions in their writings . There are also dresses for young people of both sexes , but they are never actually worn . Historically , the wearing of the dress was the subject of a debate among the first Antoinists , some of them refusing to wear it , and even generated a scandal so that Antoine had to justify himself on this subject , saying it had been revealed by inspiration . In the past , the dress was also worn in the street , and that was how the followers were immediately identified by the public . Currently , it is generally only worn in the context of worship , and it is put and removed in

the locker room of the temple . Clothing for men is composed of a dress which resembles the one worn by Catholic clergy in the monastery , and closed by 13 buttons , plus a cashmere top hat . Clothing for women is a wide dress accompanied with a cape and a bonnet with a veil . In the Antoinist view , the collar is important as it is believed that the fluid resides here .

The only emblem of Antoinism is the tree of science of the sight of evil that features on the facade of the highest platform in the temple . It has seven branches which represent the seven deadly sins (although sin is rejected in the religion) , two eyes which symbolize the view of the sins , and the tree roots which are the symbol of the intelligence which links man to matter . In the branches the mention " Culte Antoiniste " (" Antoinist worship ") is written .

= = Organization = =

= = = Status = = =

In Belgium , the religion was organized as an association without lucrative purpose (absl) in 1922 and was immediately registered as organism of public utility on a request of the Department of Justice . It is not recognized as a public worship , because there is no worship of a deity in the ceremonies . Currently headed by a college of desservants , the religion is legally registered as religious association in France . It was published in the Journal Officiel de la République Française of 9 February 1924 , and the last modification of the statutes appeared in the JO of 3 August 1988 . Antoinist worship has been exempt from property taxes on the public part of its buildings since 1925 in Belgium and in France since 1934 .

= = = Places of worship = = =

The temples are Antoinism 's only place of worship . They are financed with anonymous donations and patronages , and often members participate in the construction . They are all consecrated prior to their use for worship , which means that , at a ceremony , they received a " good fluid " by one of the founders when they were alive or by a duly authorized follower .

The exterior facade displays an architecture which can be variable according to the temples , but always includes the words " Antoinist Worship " (" Culte Antoiniste ") and the year of the building consecration . At the entrance , there is a porch where various writings of the religious movement , the internal regulations (in France only) , the list of the places of worship and the holidays , as well as photos of the Antoine couple and of the various temples , are exhibited behind display windows .

The inside walls are always painted in green , as symbol of reincarnation . There is no decoration , and small papers on the walls indicate to visitors that they should not speak in the temple . Several rows of wooden benches separated by a center aisle are devoted to the faithful and visitors . They are facing a two @-@ floor platform where the worship is performed , and a text called " The Halo of Consciousness " (" L 'Auréore de la Conscience ") which is written on the back wall . In France only , the highest platform is adorned , from left to right , with a representation of the " tree of science of the sight of evil " , the Antoinist symbol , then a photo of Antoine and another one of Catherine ; the photo of the Father is slightly higher than the other two . On the left and the right , side rooms of around 15 m ³ are used as consulting offices whose walls are orned with five tables ; the most impressive of them is Antoine 's image . There is also a cloakroom and , adjacent to the temple , a small apartment continuously occupied by an Antoinist healer .

The movement is also owner of reading rooms , but no worship is celebrated in these places . As of 2011 , Antoinism counts 64 temples : 32 in Belgium , 31 in France and 1 in the Principality of Monaco . It has also opened reading rooms in Belgium , Metropolitan France , Réunion , Guadeloupe , Australia , Brazil , Italy , Congo and Luxembourg . A reading room in Egypt was quickly closed in November 1913 .

= = = Publications = = =

The Antoinist literature is mainly composed of Antoine 's writings , which are considered as sacred by followers and should not be modified . They include three doctrinal books grouped into two volumes which are sold in the temples and read during the worship : Revelation of the Father (La Révélation par le Père) , The Coronation of the Revealed Work (Le Couronnement de l 'œuvre révélée) and Development of the Teaching of Father (Le Développement de l 'Enseignement du Père) . According to Debouxhtay , " the writings of Antoine do not shine by their qualities of style " , a view shared by other observers . Many statements from the Antoinés are gathered into 14 books called Tomes , which remain only accessible to dressed members . From May 1907 to April 1909 , the religion published the journal The Halo of Consciousness , then from September 1911 to August 1914 , The Unitive . In 1936 , Belgian writer Robert Vivier published a hagiographic biography ? although based on real facts ? of Louis Antoine , which is also used by Antoinists to strengthen their faith , and thus sold in the temples .

= = = Hierarchy and financial issues = = =

The organization , which is the most reduced as possible , is slightly different in France and Belgium :

In Belgium , a General Council was organized in 1911 by Antoine to manage all material issues . It is currently composed of nine members including a chairman , a treasurer and a secretary . The function of the First Representative of the Father was abolished in 1971 , and there are no internal regulations in the temples . In France , the movement is led by a religious association called " Culte Antoiniste " (" Antoinist Worship ") . All the desservants are part of a College of Desservants which manage the material issues , and whose decisions are implemented by an Administrative Committee . Within the college , a Moral Secretary is elected and serves as legal representative of the religion . Locally , the desservants nominate auxiliaries among the dressed followers so that they perform reading during worship and / or serve as healers . A Council of Local Interior composed of seven members including desservants is used for issues related to the temple on which it depends . Women as well as men can be chosen as ministers , as Catherine promoted gender equality in the worship . In all cases , Antoine , although deceased , remains the leader of the religion , which led Debouxhtay to compare him to the Pope in the Catholic Church .

Antoinist healers are always dressed members , and are not paid . They do not attend specific training or receive any initiation rite . Those who want to access this function must feel spiritually " inspired " and obtain the desservant 's approval . They must also promise to respect Antoinist rules including nondisclosure of confessions by consultants and not discouraging traditional medicine . Before receiving consultants , no kind of asceticism is required , but mental preparation includes prayer and meditation . Regarded as mere intercessors , healers have a " charisma of function " as they reproduce that of Antoine , which does not prevent some healers from becoming very popular among consultants .

Worship is practiced voluntarily , and desservants and dressed followers are not paid , neither for worship , nor for consultations . The religion sold nothing , except the sacred books , and refuses any form of contribution and any will made by a person who still has a family . When the founding couple was living , donations were rejected when the religion had enough money in its treasury . Only anonymous donations and bequests are accepted , and they go to the " Antoinist worship " ' s treasury . In Belgium , the finances , which have been published in Le Moniteur Belge every year after the Council meeting , are on the decline and show a minimal activity of the religion .

= = = Membership = = =

There are four categories of Antoinists : desservants who perform worship , people who wear the religious clothing , regular faithful who attend the service every week , and occasional members or visitors . As its aim is to heal and comfort through faith , Antoinism does not seek to convert new people . The number of followers is difficult to assess as there are no statistics established by the

religion . After a period of rapid growth in Belgium , the number of followers is currently on the decline in the country and some temples were forced to close due to lack of money or faithful ; for example , in 2003 , Human Rights Without Frontiers counted less than 150 worshipers in the country . In France , however , the religion remains active and counts about 2 @, @ 500 regular members . Estimates of the worldwide membership vary from few thousand to 200 @, @ 000 . The future growth of the number of followers , however , can be affected by certain rules of the group . As it does not practice proselytism , Antoinism suffers from a lack of social visibility and many people are unaware even of Antoinist temples in their neighborhood . Moreover , because of the availability required for worship and the absence of income in the religion , dressed members and desservants are often old @-@ age retired people .

Mainly composed of 40- to 50 @-@ year @-@ old people and a majority of women , the membership is almost the same as that which was attracted by Spiritism in Belgium in the 19th century . The followers have mostly modest social status , such as miners and artisans , and are generally people interested in spirituality , but who are at odds with the Catholic Church or display a skeptical attitude towards traditional medicine . Antoinists are also sometimes Jews , Muslims , Buddhists , adepts of reiki , yoga , or t 'ai chi ch 'uan , or former Catholics . An accurate depiction of Antoinists of Northern France was made by writer André Thérive in his 1928 novel *Without Soul* (*Sans âme*) . In 1945 , Debouxhtay described followers as " very kind , very charitable and very obliging people " .

= = Reception = =

= = = Growth and criticism = = =

When Antoine died in 1912 , there were fewer than a thousand followers and thousands of supporters ; in the 1920s , the number of followers rose to 700 @, @ 000 , including 300 @, @ 000 in Belgium . During its first decades , Antoinism spread so fast that even American newspapers published coverages about the religion , one of them stating that it " [was] attracting considerable attention in Europe " . Author Françoise d 'Eaubonne considered that the physique of Antoine , which she found attractive , may have contributed to his success . According to Bégot , the success of Antoinist healing in the early 20th century can be explained by the fact that " it offered an alternative to the legitimate institutions of control of body and soul " , i.e. the Catholic Church and medicine . She added : " Carrier of a social protest , it is nevertheless a way of socioeconomic integration " . French historian and sociologist Émile Poulat stated that the religion " has always appeared calm and beneficent " .

As it disapproved that the group of Antoine turned away from Spiritism , journals from Spiritist circles criticized Antoinism in its beginnings , and the president of the Belgian Federation of Spiritist (*Fédération spirite de Belgique*) Chevalier Clement Saint @-@ Marcq considered the religion as one of the " parasitic stems came on the healthy and strong tree of Spiritism " . From a philosophical standpoint , Antoinism was criticized by René Guénon in an entire chapter of his 1923 book *The Spiritist Fallacy* (*L 'Erreur spirite*) , noting , to his point of view , " the nullity of [Antoine 's] " teachings " which are only a vague mixture of spiritualist theories and Protestant " moralism " " . As for Theosophists , they displayed a strong fellow feeling to Antoinism in their journals .

The religion received little opposition from the Catholic Church , which has sometimes criticized it but only on doctrinal issues , considering it heretic . For example , in 1918 , priest of Liège Hubert Bourguet published a 50 @-@ page brochure in which he expressed concerns on the doctrines , qualified the sacred texts of Antoinism as " gibberish " and concluded that Antoine would have suffered from paraphrenia . In 1925 , Father Lucien Roure considered Antoinism " a doctrine of anarchy and amorality " , with " negative teachings " , confused and incoherent writings , and " credulous and docile " followers . In 1949 , author Jacques Michel blamed Antoine for having substituted himself for Jesus Christ and deemed Antoinism a " demonic " faith . Later , in 1953 , Maurice Colinon , then in 1954 , the Father Henri @-@ Charles Chéry , published books which

analyzed non @-@ conformist groups , including Antoinism . According to Debouxhtay , Protestants were concerned about the Antoinist expansion in the 1930s , and several pastors published writings on this subject (Giron @-@ Galzin , 1910 ; Rumpf , 1917 ; Wyss , c.1924) . More recently , the religion was studied from a Protestant perspective by pastor Gérard Dagon .

= = = Classification = = =

In France , the Antoinist worship was classified as a cult in the 1995 parliamentary reports which considered it one of the oldest healer groups . Books published by Belgian and French anti @-@ cult associations and activists sometimes included Antoinism in their lists of cults , such as Cults , State of Emergency ? Better know them , better defend oneself in France and worldwide (Les Sectes , État d 'urgence ? Mieux les connaître , mieux s 'en défendre en France et dans le monde) , published by the Centre Roger Ikor , and others . However , on 27 May 2005 , the 1995 annex of the French report and cult classifications in which the Antoinist worship was listed , were officially cancelled and invalidated by Jean @-@ Pierre Raffarin 's circulaire . In addition , in a 1984 letter , the French Minister of the Interior wrote that the movement was considered , from an administrative point of view , as having for exclusive purpose the exercise of a religion , thus complying with the 18th and 19th Articles of the 1905 French law on the Separation of the Churches and the State . He added that antoinism had always been allowed to receive bequests or donations , which meant that its religious nature was never challenged . In the early 2000s , membership of an Antoinist mother in Valenciennes was used by her former husband to remove from her the custody of their son ; the decision received attention from media and was criticized by the French sociologist Régis Dericquebourg as being unjustified .

When heard by the Belgian commission on cults , philosopher Luc Nefontaine said that " the establishment of a directory of cult movements (...) seems to him dangerous , because it would also give a bad image of quite honourable organizations such as (...) Antoinism " . Eric Brasseur , director of Centre for information and advice on harmful cultish organizations (Centre d 'information et d 'avis sur les organisations sectaires nuisibles , or CIAOSN) said : " This is a Belgian worship for which we have never had a complaint in 12 years , a rare case to report " . Similarly , in 2013 , the Interministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combatting Cultic Deviances (Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires , or MIVILUDES) made this comment : " We have never received reporting from Antoinists . They heal through prayer , but as long as they do not prevent people from getting proper treatment by legal means ... " In addition , the Renseignements généraux stopped monitoring the religion given the absence of any problem . In 2002 , the national service " Pastoral , sects and new beliefs " (" Pastorale , sectes et nouvelles croyances ") , which analyses new religious movements from a catholic point of view , wrote about Antoinism : " Although listed among the cults in the 1995 Parliamentary Report , it has no cultish feature . " Similarly , Dericquebourg , who deeply studied the religious group , concluded that Antoinism is not a cult : it " has no totalitarian influence on its members , and do not dictate their behaviour to get in the world ; it is not exclusive [and] shows no hostility towards social systems " . According to Bégot , the group is a " cult " in the sociological language (not to be confused with the pejorative word " cult ") , characterized by a mystical experience , a break with the dominant religious tradition , and primacy of the individual on social issues ; it has both magical and ethical dimensions .

Although it does not refer directly to the Gospel , Antoinism is often considered a Christian based new religious movement . In 1970 , British sociologist Bryan Wilson classified Antoinism in the category of " thaumaturgical sects " . Secretary of the French episcopate for the study of cults and new religious movements Jean Vernet also deemed the group a " healer church " and " a new religion of Spiritism , Theosophy and elements of Christianity " . Le Protestant Liégeois , a Belgian Protestant periodical , said that the group , although listed as a cult in the 1995 parliamentary report , was " rather a philosophical and religious movement " . In an encyclopedia about sects , the journalist Xavier Pasquini qualified Antoinism a " genuine Theosophical religion " , and stated that it " does not ask for money from its followers , and does not practice excessive indoctrination " .

