

The Life of Jean-Baptiste Morin

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Translated from the Spanish^[2] by Anthony Louis LaBruzza, copyright 2001.

Section 2. The Life of Morin^[3]

Today more than ever, on the eve of the Age of Aquarius, it is indispensable that authentic astrologers turn their gaze toward Jean Baptiste Morin de Villefranche and immerse themselves in his teachings. Without a doubt the seeds of future progress of our science can be found in any part of his major work *Astrologia Gallica*. Indeed, we are absolutely justified in stating that Morin was not only the greatest of all Western astrologers but also that he should be credited with the most extensive and profound conceptual reworking that astrology has ever experienced.

With the passing of the centuries, the life of Morin has taken on a legendary quality. It is Morin whom Cardinal Richelieu sneaks into the queen's bedroom secretly to be present at the birth of the future Sun King, Luis XIV. Such a man, such an astrologer! Of course this artifice by the Cardinal had no other purpose than to obtain the greatest possible accuracy for the natal chart of the heir to the French crown. But let us turn first to the astrological facts before recounting any additional biographical incidents.

Jean Baptiste Morin was born in Villefranche (in Beaujolais) on 23 February 1583 at 8:28:40 a.m. GMT (according to our rectification).

NATAL CHART OF MORIN

As Morin himself pointed out, the stellium in his Regiomontanus 12th house necessarily had to bring him sorrows and painful tribulations, as indeed occurred in abundance during his lifetime. In *Astrologia Gallica*, Morin erects his natal chart first utilizing the Regiomontanus house system and then using the equal house system to demonstrate the absolute falsehood of the latter procedure. Under the equal house system, the stellium in question falls in his 11th [equal] house and thus the discontents, griefs, and artful manipulations that he was destined to suffer would have been transformed into personal satisfactions arising from his profession, friendships, powerful protectors, happiness and well-

being for his parents, and riches for the native; *but all of this was resoundingly disproved by the facts of his life.*

It is fitting to note here that it seems strange that Morin erected his own chart using the Regiomontanus house system and that he did not later modify it using the method of Placidus, since the Placidus system enjoyed its preference during the greater part of his practice of astrology. Otherwise in *Astrologia Gallica*, Morin interpreted his chart and its revolutions [returns] as one would expect of him, that is, masterfully.

Jean Hiéroz (Jean Rozieres), the noted French astrologer and naval engineer, now deceased, published a translation into French of the original Latin astrological autobiography of Morin under the title *Ma Vie Devant Les Astres* (Ed. Cahiers Astrologiques, Nice, 1943). In reality, it deals with an extract of *Astrologia Gallica* and is worthwhile to read. A Spanish translation was published by the Spanish-language journal *Mercurio-3*.

A study of the work of Hiéroz (from which we have taken valuable data for the present publication) will be worthwhile for all astrologers. The now defunct journal *Astrologia* (in issue No. 28) published a brief biography of Morin, and the same journal dedicated issues No. 43 (edited by Francisco Aguilar) and No. 68 (a work of the present author) to the Theory of Astrological Determinations. Today we want to offer something more complete and profound, including, in addition to the best of that material, further biographical material, an introductory summary of the Theory of Determinations, and also a revised translation of the aphorisms of Morin regarding the interpretation of natal charts, revolutions [returns], directions, transits, and other topics -- all of which is of inestimable value to astrologers.

Also included will be Morin's invaluable Rules of Elective Astrology with some examples that I believe will be of great interest to readers. These aphorisms have been translated from the stupendous work of J.

Hiéroz, *La Astrologie selon Morin de Villefranche, quelques autres et moi-même* (Omnium Litteraire, Paris, 1962), another very valuable resource that we have used as a source of

information. Hiéroz supplemented his previously mentioned work in a second volume entitled *L'Astrologie Mondiale et Météorologique de Morin de Villefranche* (Ed. Leymarie, Paris, 1946).

There are other sources of enormous importance. The first of these is of course the autobiography of Morin, *Les Remarques Astrologiques ou le Fanal de l'Astrologie* (Retz, Paris, 1975; and a Spanish edition by Ediciones Obelisco). There are two English-language versions of Morin's celebrated Book 21 of *Astrologia Gallica*: the carefully done *Astrosynthesis* of Zoltan Mason and Lucy Little (Emerald Books, 1974) and the somewhat less recommended text by Baldwyn.

We should also mention the great German works of Erich Carl Kühr, *Psychologische Horoskopdeutung* (Segunda edición, R.Cerny, Wien, 1948-51) and of Sindbad (Friedrich Schwickert)-Weiss, *Die Bausteine der Astrologie* (Tercera edición, O.W. Barth, München, 1950), which drew their inspiration directly and explicitly from Morin. There is a very well known Spanish edition of the book by Sindbad-Weiss entitled *Astrología Racional* (Kier, Buenos Aires, 1965). Returning to the life of Morin, let us say that at 12 years of age he already began to suffer severe tribulations, for then his father became gravely ill with fevers and his mother died in childbirth without giving him her final blessing, and she also disinherited him over a trivial matter. From the ages of 16 to 46, the life of Morin was, in his own words, was veritable “permanent slavery”. During this period he served sixteen masters in succession, and he had to abandon each one in turn, but not without suffering harm because of that. Some of them he left because he could not endure the arrogance of their wives (he has Venus and the Moon in his 12th House, indicating misfortune at the hands of women). Others he left, in his own words, because of unforeseen circumstances (he has Uranus occupying and ruling the 11th House so that he was not able to avoid abrupt changes in his professional activities or in the attitudes of his friends). This slavery of thirty years is a consequence of none other than the clustering of planets in that “valley of sorrows” which is the 12th House, to quote the exact and bitter words of the Master himself.

As Morin himself observed, on account of the Moon and Saturn, it was not unusual that some of his patrons were plebians (notaries, agents, and scribes). Thanks to Jupiter, others were of an intermediate status (functionaries, priests, and bishops). Yet others, because of the Sun, were from the ruling class, including the Duke of Effiat, the Duke of Luxemburg, and also the Duke of Desdiguieres, whose life Morin saved as a physician (the great astrologer had received his doctorate from the University of Avignon in the year 1613). The “*enormous ingratitude*” of this last duke caused Morin to abandon him, but not without first predicting that duke’s death two years hence, a fact that came to pass with great accuracy.

From 1614 to 1621 Morin was employed by Claude Dormy, the Bishop of Bologne. He resided in Paris as the bishop’s physician and attendant and he was later sent to Germany, Hungary, and Transylvania. Apparently his work there consisted of visiting mines and studying metals. However, his primary service to the Bishop was the use of his astrological talent. It was precisely Claude Dormy who in 1614 introduced Morin to our astrological science.

Morin's next employer was the Duke of Luxemburg with whom he remained until 1629. During that period Morin published a defense of Aristotle (1624) and took up the study of optics. Without setting astrology aside, he collaborated with Gassendi on astronomical observations.

A good part of Morin's misfortunes, as he himself admits, had their origin in his vengeful and quarrelsome [rowdy, troublemaking] character and in his lustful temperament. These comments do not detract from the greatness of the noted Doctor and Teacher, Professor of Astrology, Mathematics, and Medicine at the College of France, famed author on different subjects and eminent philosopher. On the contrary, they help us even more to appreciate his scientific objectivity that did not waver even in declaring his own shortcomings.

Even a cursory analysis of his natal chart reveals the reason for these characteristics. Morin himself clearly explained it by pointing to the presence in his 12th House of the Moon and Venus, the ruler and co-ruler of this 1st House. The dangers that this brought to him continuously during almost every year starting with his adolescence were dispersed thanks to various factors, the most important of which were Venus and Jupiter present in and ruling the 12th House, thereby guaranteeing his triumph over his cunning enemies.

In spite of the above-mentioned facts, Morin pointed out that he had always been a man of ardent faith and he said, "*only the Goodness of Providence could have saved me from so many ambushes.*" The presence of such grave risks is confirmed for us by the presence of Pluto, ruler of Scorpio (intercepted in the 7th), being posited in the 12th and in square to its dispositor Mars (in his Fall). There were threats of imprisonment and secret attacks by patrons who hated him, including a Cardinal and a Duke Mariscal of France. In addition, he suffered from poverty, illnesses, various hurts, misfortunes, and several mortal dangers. All of this was especially notable from 21 to 37 years of age. It is precisely in relation to these facts that Morin states categorically that only an astrologer of weak intellect could pretend, using the system of "equal houses," that the benefics and the luminaries in the 11th House could have produced so many grave misfortunes in his case. Thus with an iron club he demolishes the absurd equal house system, utilizing his implacable logic and his ingeniously creative talent (Mercury conjunct Uranus in Aquarius in the 11th sextile the Ascendant). In this way he also destroys the absurdities of the Campanus house system, whose pretences he fulminates against in the most lucid manner.

Indeed, according the Campanus system, Morin's 9th House would fall in Capricorn and he would be subject to the cold skepticism of Saturn, ruler of Capricorn, rather than to the proper fervent religious attitude of Jupiter

already mentioned, which accompanied him his entire life. Even Scorpio, according to Campanus, would have ceased to be intercepted in the 7th House and that would have distanced this illustrious native from the mortal risks that befell him in his days.^[4] Morin even added to the other reasons an argument that will give many astrologers pause for reflection. With reference to the Regiomontanus house system and Morin's religious fervor, he stated: "Finally, the cusps of the 1st and the 9th Houses are in a partile trine." The surprise here resides in Morin's notion that the house cusps are *active* factors in the chart. Let us leave this idea for polemics and, above all, for judicious and methodical observation of the facts.

Yet while it is not his major credit, one of Morin's most significant achievements was his treatment of the unsightly remains of a venerable Astrological Tradition that he received exactly in the form that corresponded, separating with both genius and thoroughness the wheat from the chaff. In medieval Europe the fanciful excesses of the Arab astrologers had lead to a grotesquely "enriched" astrology full of every conceivable imaginary element. *This is a problem that we must confront anew in our own era. At the dawn of the Age of Aquarius we must purify astrology of the immense foolishness that has been added by some whose desire was to become famous overnight.*

The great Morin did not lose his composure because of this and, in accord with realizing the encyclopedic task of restoring the original tradition as much as possible in all its purity, he enriched it with his conceptions in such a wonderful way that before his labor of prodigious gold mining the statement of authorities of the stature of Sindbad and Weiss, for whom at its side the work of other astrologers is no more than the work of paving, has full validity.

It is understandable, though not justifiable, that in our time the immense labor of more than one contemporary astrologer remains unknown, *for the lazy inertia of the human mind as well as human arrogance and envy are well known.* But considering that four centuries have passed since the birth of Morin, it is a shame (for all of us astrologers) that silence and unfamiliarity weigh upon his work. Morin's opus has been rescued from almost total oblivion by the few talented individuals already mentioned. If the proliferation of astrological recipes and other foolishness is added to this, it is not surprising that astrology still knocks at the doors of the universities that had to abandon it after the unfortunate decree of Luis XIV, instigated by Colbert in 1666. Let no one doubt that soon those doors will be reopened, following the example of Oxford (Ingrid Lind) and of Clermont-Ferrand (Gauquelin) and in the future that awaits us and for which we must prepare there is no room for foolishness, superstition, and other undesirable things.

Here MORIN outlines some questions of fundamental importance to astrological interpretation. Speaking of the combustion, he does not hesitate to fully take issue with those who assert that a planet combust the Sun lacks effective action in the sublunar world. On the contrary, Morin affirms: I have Venus and Mercury combust [the Sun] and their rulers, Saturn and Jupiter, are also combust, and certainly each one of them has worked with full effectiveness.

Next Morin enumerates the multitude of weighty reasons that substantiate his statement in the characteristic discursive style of *Astrologia Gallica*. Clearly patterned after the canons of scholastic philosophy, his masterwork follows a rational-deductive model starting with a system of axioms and postulates that we will briefly review later. (Perhaps soon some publisher with a vision of the future will want to make this immense opus from the past available to everyone.) The conclusion is rendered irrefutable in light of the facts of his own life: the combust planets are not private in their own strength, at least in an influential sense, that is, that which results from the determination by the Houses of the radical chart. Who better than Morin, with his brilliant talent and the four planets that are combust in his nativity, to pass judgment in this regard? Indeed, Mercury gives him the clear intelligence that is reflected in his works (made ever clearer by its conjunction with Uranus in the Domicile of the latter). Venus being combust entangles him in a hundred amorous flings that carry in their wake many other misfortunes, including two nearly fatal stabbings in 1605.

At last his glory arrives. Not without efforts on his behalf, the honor of Professor Real of Mathematics is granted to him, thanks to the support of the Queen Mother María of Médicis. He served in this position until his death. He also received the sum of 4.000 pounds coming from two Mecenas to publish their works.

After many fights against his enemies, Morin succeeded in achieving one of his grand discoveries, the measurement of geographic longitude using astronomical techniques. This won him a prize and a pension, but he had to wait until after the death of Cardinal Richilieu to receive them. The sinister prelate, distanced from Morin, did as much as he could during his lifetime to deprive Morin of the honor he so deserved. And so the fame and renown of Morin finally spreads to all of Europe. Nevertheless, he continues suffering his misfortunes, deriving from the radical 12th House, and because of that Morin asserts that the relative weight in life of a House occupied by several planets is much greater than that of the remaining Houses. Morin points out that it is essential to keep in mind the planets of a stellium that are in their dignities or that have a natural analogy with the house that they

occupy. These will have a greater weight than the other occupants of the House, and they will sound the keynote for the evolution of the matters signified by that house.

Here between the lines one can find Bailey's doctrine of accidental dignities. One must also go back to Morin to find the true discoverer of derived houses (already known in a seminal form to the Arabs), of the meaning of the superimposition of the Houses of a return chart upon the Houses of the nativity, of the power of realization of the parallels of declination when the bodies in aspect have the same declination with the same sign. Morin insisted on measuring aspects on the great circle that joined both planets and not solely on the ecliptic, a useful teaching that was set aside because of the labor involved. Thus, the opportunity to control in the effective directions the character of the radical linking of the intervening stars was lost. Let us point out that the astrological program *PRIMA* by Vladimir Bogdanov affords the opportunity to control these aspects and to analyze multiple other data of interest (in particular the antiscions) with great simplicity.

The precise observations that Morin made about the action of planets in matters signified by the House opposite to the one the planet physically occupies (determination by polarity or opposition) is worthy of attention. If a planet is found in one of its dignities (Domicile or Exaltation) in one House, it will always act *unfavorably* in relation to the opposite House. Here we must refer to our writings about the Kybalion. Thus, Morin himself, with Jupiter on his throne and Venus in her exaltation, and both in the 12th House protecting him against illnesses and numerous secret enemies, at the same time suffered a symphony of problems with his servants [ruled by the opposite 6th House], which he had to change almost monthly.

I would refer those interested in more details about the life of Morin to the already cited book by Hiéroz: *Ma vie devant les astres*. Nonetheless, I want to mention here two anecdotes about this famous astrologer. First is the event that brought him renown in the eyes of the powerful Cardinal Richelieu, who later called Morin into his service as his personal astrologer. The Duke Henry d'Effiat, a favorite of King Luis XIII, consulted Morin about his destiny. Unfavorably impressed by the arrogance of the Duke, Morin does not hesitate to tell the duke about the violent and dishonorable nature of his demise.

This carries weight, as Sindbad-Weiss note well, because the nobleman has Jupiter, the Sun, and Mars in his 8th House – factors that could tempt the novice to predict a heroic death in battle. When d'Effiat mentions this prediction with monumental disdain at a banquet, everyone laughs uproariously, except for Richelieu who remains stoic and calm as always. Three years later events transpire exactly as Morin had predicted. Richelieu remembers Morin's prophecy and contracts for his

services. In reality, however, the story is more complicated. Behind the back of the King, the Cardinal himself orders the decapitation of both d'Effiat and de Thou for conspiring against him (1643). But as Morin knew nothing of the machinations of the cunning Cardinal, the credit for such a surprising prediction belongs entirely to him.

Around 1638 Morin engaged in a polemic with Descartes and vehemently criticized his philosophy. This certainly earned him a new quota of enmities and an estrangement from certain academic circles.

In the end, on the 6th of November, 1656, at 2 in the morning Morin dies like an authentic grand astrologer. Fifteen days earlier while Morin is still healthy, a chiromancer announces his impending death and Morin, without alarm and as his only comment, responds that he is already well aware of it and that the following month will be fatal for him without fail. Nine days later he is overcome with fever. The doctors despair in their attempts to save him, while Morin, smiling, requests that they not toil, for he has already seen his death in the stars. It was impossible to stop the blow and Morin knew it! We have included for their analysis the solar and lunar revolutions [returns] corresponding to his death in Paris. Finally, we mention here that a plaza in Paris currently carries the name of the illustrious Morin in the 12^e. Arrondissement.