

# THE TRADITIONAL MARTINIST ORDER AND SACRED SCRIPTURES

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Visions of Ezekiel 1. Unknown artist, 1670, after an engraving by Matthäus Merian, *Icones Biblicae*, 1630. (Public Domain). (Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ezekiel%27s\\_vision.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ezekiel%27s_vision.jpg))

The mystical meanings of certain tracts of the world's sacred scriptures are discussed in the teachings of the Traditional Martinist Order. The student is encouraged to continue these explorations of sacred texts. One of the distinctive features of the mystical approach to sacred scriptures is that the written text acts as an assisting medium, or catalyst, leading to an inner comprehension and divine afflatus. As part of this process, it is important to have time to reflect and sift over passages.

A half hour on one verse or several verses can be helpful and greatly enriching. A passage can be contemplated before entering into the enlightening state of meditation. Also, a passage can be considered after meditation when one is in an ennobled state of mind. For quality of reading, the kind demanded for the mystical unfolding of sacred scriptures, the emphasis must be on a respectful and patient process, to allow our deeper nature, the Inner Self, to speak to the outer mind or self. The latter form of

learning, gradual as it is, is the most direct in the long run for spiritual seekers, known in Martinism as Men and Women of Desire.

### **Multiple Senses of Interpretation**

There were, traditionally, three to four levels or senses of Biblical interpretation or exegesis, depending on the classification system applied. A common classification of four levels was the literal (or historical), the allegorical, the moral (or tropological), and the mystical (or anagogical). The allegorical, moral, and mystical levels were sometimes referred to together as the spiritual.<sup>1</sup> In some classifications, there were, what can be referred to as, a cosmological and scientific level. This level shows the unity of science and spirituality that Martinism and Rosicrucianism actively advance.

An example of the four senses is found in the interpretation of Jerusalem in the Bible. Literally, Jerusalem was the geographic city, and historically, it conjured up a wealth of events of past memory and account that had taken place and culminated in this holy city of David, Solomon, and the mission of the Master Jesus. Allegorically, it signified the Church, or the collective body of spiritual aspirants and initiates. Morally, it represented the virtuous and 'faithful soul.'<sup>2</sup> Scientifically and cosmologically, it is the Heavenly Jerusalem as a model of the cosmos or a cosmogram with the twelve zodiacal gates in the four directions.<sup>3</sup> On the mystical level, it was the Heavenly City<sup>4</sup>, the abode of the spiritual elect and the experience of Cosmic Consciousness. These successive levels leading to the mystical sense require increasing maturity and responsibility to be aware of and to penetrate.

### **Origen, the Bible, and Inner Meanings**

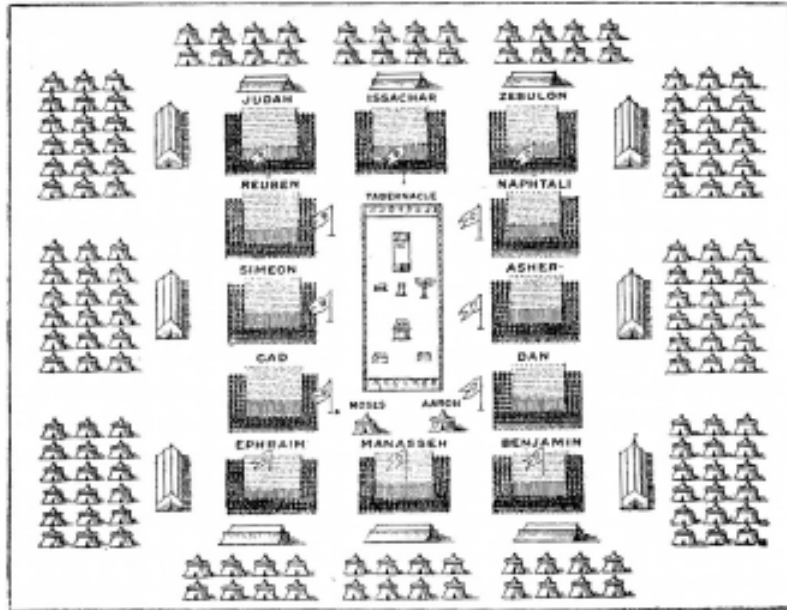
Notably, the founding Master of Martinism, Louis-Claude de Saint Martin, found the Biblical commentaries of the

Christian mystic Origen of particular assistance. The scope of our undertaking, the contemplation of sacred texts, is alluded to in the following remark by Origen:

If one wished to obtain means for a profounder contemplation of the entrance of souls into divine things, ..., let him peruse, at the end of Ezekiel's prophecies, the visions beheld by the prophet, in which gates of different kinds are enumerated, which obscurely refer to the different modes in which divine souls enter into a better world [Ezekiel 48]; and let him peruse also, from the Apocalypse of John, what is related of the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and of its foundations and gates [Revelation 21]. And if he is capable of finding out also the road, which is indicated by symbols, of those who will march on to divine things, let him read the book of Moses entitled Numbers, and let him seek the help of one who is capable of initiating him into the meaning of the narratives concerning the encampments of the children of Israel; viz. of what sort those were which were arranged towards the east, as was the case with first; and what those towards the southwest and south; and what towards the sea; and what the last were, which were stationed towards the north. For he will see that there is in the respective places a meaning not to be lightly treated, ...: but he will distinguish in the encampments certain things relating to numbers that are enumerated, and which are specially adapted to each tribe, of which the present does not appear to us to be the proper time to speak.<sup>5</sup>

Strikingly, in this passage, Origen refers to the process of initiation and the instruction of the initiator through Ezekiel's visions and various sacred architecture or structures in the Bible. Note too that the master mystic Origen observed that he





The Encampment in the Wilderness, drawing in the *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta* (London, 1657).

could not reveal more in the public context of his text. However, Martinism allows the seeker to proceed along such edifying lines.

### Sacred Diagrams for Our Spiritual Development

For the spiritual aspirant working in service for the welfare of others, known in Martinism as the Agent of Omneity, the Bible has many fascinating and intriguing description of sacred structures such as Noah's Ark, the Tabernacle of Moses, the Encampment in the Wilderness, the Temple of Solomon, Ezekiel's vision of the Wheels, and the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Some of these, such as Noah's Ark and Ezekiel's vision of the Wheels, intrigue many from the days of their childhood. As we mature, our early Inner attraction to these structures and allegories can come into full fruition in realization and illumination. Each of these structures is a sacred diagram for interior contemplation and instruction<sup>6</sup>, a mandala-like psychocosmogram for initiation, and an instrument for effecting the maturation of the seeker and

the evolvement of humanity, the Reintegration of All Beings, a central theme of Martinsim.

### ENDNOTES

1. Harry Caplan, "The Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation and the Medieval Theory of Preaching," *Speculum* IV (1929), 283.
2. Caplan, "Four Senses," 282. Beryl Smalley, "Stephen Langton and the Four Senses of Scripture," *Speculum* VI (1931), 60.
3. Adrian Snodgrass, *Architecture, Time and Eternity: Studies in the Stellar and Temporal Symbolism of Traditional Building*, (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1990), I, 298ff.
4. Caplan, "Four Senses," 282. Smalley, "Stephen Langton," 60.
5. Origen, *Origen Contra Celsum (Origen Against Celsum)*, II-VIII in *The Writings of Origen*, II, trans. Frederick Crombie. Ante-Nicene Library, XXIII. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1872. VI.XXIII.
6. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1978), 35-56 is helpful on the mysticism of Ezekiel's Vision of the Wheels (Ezekiel 1:1-2:2). Grover A. Zinn, Jr., "Mandala Symbolism and Use in the Mysticism of Hugh of St. Victor," *History of Religions* 12 (1972): 317-341 is quite insightful on the mystical meaning of Noah's Ark (Genesis 6-9). Hugh McCague, "The Mystical Interpretation of Sacred Scriptures," Rosicrucian Podcast, July 1, 2007, [http://rosicrucian.org/podcast/2007\\_07\\_01\\_rosicrucianorder\\_archive.html](http://rosicrucian.org/podcast/2007_07_01_rosicrucianorder_archive.html).



The Heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21) by Beatus of Facundus, illuminated manuscript, c.1047. (Public Domain). (Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beatus\\_of\\_Facundus\\_253v.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beatus_of_Facundus_253v.jpg), <http://publicdomainreview.org/2012/04/09/the-beatus-of-facundus/>)

