

A VIEW OF THE CITY:
THE URBAN LANDSCAPE AND ITS ARCHITECTURAL IMAGERY
IN THE ASHBURNHAM PENTATEUCH

by

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Abstract

Of the surviving eighteen folios illustrating the Genesis and Exodus narratives in the late antique manuscript, the Ashburnham Pentateuch (“AP”), all but a few pages are dominated by elaborate cityscapes. Indeed, as a work of art, the city defines much of the narrative space in the miniatures. It provides an immediate visual contact with the Pentateuch stories through a combination of framing the Old Testament figures within an urban perspective which displays both interior and exterior city views. This imagery of the city is arguably one of the most perplexing features of the AP. It does not reflect the pictorial conventions of cities in the art of this period, nor does it accurately represent the wilderness setting of the biblical text.

My thesis proposes that the distinct cityscapes in the manuscript represent what architectural historian William MacDonald calls the “urban armatures” of imperial Roman cities. These armatures (thoroughfares, passageways, and civic buildings) are the essential architectural components of imperial urbanism. Transferred onto parchment, the architecture not only guides the viewer’s navigation of the AP illustrations, it also highlights the “dominant images and functional associations” of the signs and spaces of the imperial Roman city. I argue that this juxtaposition between the Old Testament imagery and the material form and look of a city familiar to a contemporary Roman viewer constitutes a pictorial argument for a new Christian Roman culture in the manuscript. My interpretation positions the AP as part of an exegetical strategy, which sought to link the biblical past with the imperial legacy of Rome. In this sense, the AP was an ecclesiastical tool used by Roman popes to assert the Church of Rome as the Universal Christian church, and for Church fathers to reconcile the non-Christian, Roman pagan past with Christian Rome in late antiquity. This is vividly illustrated in the AP, where the past represented by the Old Testament is incorporated into the general history of the Roman Empire through the presence of the imperial cityscapes. The resulting effect is a powerful visual expression of Rome’s ordained role as the inheritor of the Christian tradition.

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Introduction

An elegantly-dressed young woman stands by an isolated brick well, her gaze cast back at a distinguished male visitor and her attention divided between greeting him and her chore (Fig. 1). Back-lit by a dark, moody and heavily inhabited landscape, she stands framed between the well, the visitor, his numerous pack animals and servants. Despite the outdoor setting of this scene, it is remarkable for the number of figures inhabiting it, which fill in the spaces of an otherwise architecturally barren and expansive plain. Pressing against the edges of this outdoor environment stands a gleaming, open cityscape; the woman from the well appears yet again just outside of its gate. This city is remarkable in its detailing: white buildings topped with red gabled roofs, ribbed domes, porticos, and arches proliferate across the cityscape, appearing at different angles and lending a sense of urban density to the scene.

All of these features, from ribbed domes to arched porticos, are distinctive of imperial Rome, an architectural style often associated with monumental imposition, a style also being registered here in the architectural structures of urban movements and connections. This encounter with a grand imperial Roman city is somewhat unexpected once the context of this scene is made clear: the ancient biblical story of Rebecca at the Well, as told in Genesis 24:11-67, which details the efforts of Abraham's trusted servant to find a suitable wife for his son Isaac amongst kindred in Mesopotamia. This narrative displacement is typical of most of the images found within the manuscript in which this scene takes place: the *Ashburnham Pentateuch* (henceforth denoted as AP).¹ Indeed,

¹ The AP, also known as the Pentateuch of Tours, resides at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Paris, Bibl. Nat. Lat. Nouv. Acq. 2334). The manuscript's origins, history, iconography and ownership have rendered it a focus of interest and controversy for centuries. The provenance of the AP is still being debated by scholars but many trace its earliest confirmed location to Tours (thus it is alternatively known as the

Rebecca's marked transition from pastoral setting to vibrant metropolitan space rehearses the temporal and spatial anachronisms latent in many of the images found within this manuscript. In this regard, the AP conforms to other such images from this period in that it depicts the biblical story as occurring in a contemporary setting.

However, no other artists from this era produced such grand scenic interior views as seen in the AP, which draws viewers and readers into the activities and intimate spaces of the biblical characters through an opening up of the cityscape. In contrast, parallel imagery in mosaic works from Rome in the fifth and sixth century shows architecture functioning primarily as enclosed backdrops. Thus, the AP is unique amongst extant imagery in its portrayal of an open, highly-detailed, interior-focused and interactive cityscape. My analysis of how these innovative cityscapes and their architectural forms function as an essential component in the retelling of the Genesis and Exodus stories in the AP comprises the focus of my thesis. In particular, I will consider how the architecture's multiple viewing perspectives (interior and exterior), and the illusions they suggest, made these stories particularly accessible to contemporary viewers and readers in ways that would facilitate a didactic function for this manuscript.

As perhaps the best known of the few surviving early illustrated codices from the late antique and early medieval periods, the AP presents a perplexing assortment of visual imagery. Originally, the AP consisted of 211 folios or pages and sixty-nine illustrated pages that accompanied a Latin translation of the first five books of the Old Testament of

Pentateuch of Tours) in the ninth century, where it remained, until it was stolen in the nineteenth century by Guglielmo B. T. Libri. It eventually was purchased from Libri by the Earl of Ashburnham in 1847, giving title to its common name, the *Ashburnham Pentateuch*. In 1888, the Bibliothèque Nationale obtained the manuscript from a German dealer, who had obtained the manuscript from the Earl. See Bezalel Narkiss, *Biblia de tours, también llamada, pentateuco de tours o de ashburnham* (Valencia: Patrimonio Ediciones, 2004-2007), 319-322.

the Bible (hence the title “Pentateuch”). What survives today is a fragment of the original codex, with only 142 folios and eighteen miniatures or illustrated pages remaining. The surviving folios include a full-page decorated frontispiece, six pages of chapter titles (*capitulas*) for Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, and eighteen folios illustrating the Genesis and Exodus cycles.²

The miniatures in these first two chapters are visually distinct; full page narrative scenes are organized in a complex arrangement of multiple settings and narrative moments with no sense of a grid or set pattern. The sheer complexity of the AP imagery is enhanced by its richness and attention to detail. Broad swaths of colour—dark blues, reds, greens and ambers—add an atmospheric backdrop to the dramatic events of the biblical stories. Not just visual complexity, but thematic complexity abounds in the book: domestic themes rarely found in early imagery of the Bible are emphasized with depictions of birthing, feasting and marital relations dominating many of the vignettes. Although these elements set the manuscript apart, they are overshadowed by what is arguably the most striking feature of the AP: the spectacular architectural setting of these scenes, specifically, in the depiction of the city and various cityscapes.

Indeed the city, as a work of art, defines much of the narrative space in the miniatures; even when it is juxtaposed to an outdoor setting as seen in the story of Rebecca, it activates the outside, turning it into a real space rather than just a blank empty zone. As such, the city provides an immediate visual context for the Pentateuch stories through a unique combination of framing the Old Testament figures within an urban perspective of both interior and exterior city views. Biblical characters are positioned

² Evidence for these statistics is based on codicological and textual reconstruction. See John Lowden, “The Beginnings of Biblical Illustration,” in *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, ed. John Williams (Pennsylvania: University Park, 1999), 45-48.

under elaborate structures throughout the miniatures. These interior renderings are predominantly set against cityscapes consisting of a density of buildings assembled around and above the figures, creating an illusion of a bustling metropolis.

And while much attention has been given to some of the eccentricities of the manuscript's iconography, a detailed study of the discrepancy between the elaborate visual settings of the scenes in the AP and the Old Testament narrative it is meant to represent has so far been neglected. The city imagery of the AP has in fact remained peripheral to scholarly interest and its meaning and significance has been almost completely overlooked.³ Historically, scholarship on the architecture of the AP has focused solely on a determination of its iconographical pedigree. Analysis has thus been limited to the stylistic qualities of the architecture, and has neglected any placement of these images within a cultural context. Because of this narrow scope, any focused study on the relationship of the architecture in the AP with the Old Testament text has likewise been ignored.⁴ As a result, these interpretations have failed to provide a holistic view of how these architectural cityscapes created meaning for their viewers.

³ Dorothy Verkerk, in her recent monograph on the AP, argues that the architecture, "unprecedented in contemporary art", has not been researched to the extent it deserves, and advocates further study by scholars. Verkerk suggests a possible link between the dramatic quality of the architecture and the high-scenic back walls (*scaenae frons*) and sets (*postscaenium*) of Roman stage design. I disagree with this assessment as the cityscapes in the AP do not reflect the static one-dimensional facades of Roman stage design. This is apparent when comparing artistic depictions of *scaenae frons*, such as the House of Apollo wall painting in Pompeii to the dynamic, multidimensional urban landscapes in the AP. See Dorothy Verkerk, *Early Medieval Bible Illumination and the Ashburnham Pentateuch* (U.K.:Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 197.

⁴ The architecture has typically been used as a supporting element in the larger controversy in studies on the AP over its origin and dating. For example, Narkiss argues the architecture's style is consistent with the development of traditional classical Roman art in late antiquity, an iconography that did not persist past the fifth-century, thus establishing the AP as a product before this period. See Narkiss, 422-424. Franz Rickert's article on the architecture, "Zu Den Stadt- Und Architekturdarstellungen Des Ashburnham Pentateuch," in *Actes du XIe Congres International D'Archeologie Chretienne. Studi di Antichita Cristiana*. 41 (Rome: Pontificio instituto di archeologia cristiana, 1989), 1341-1354, is a concentrated look at the walled cityscapes of Sodom and Gomorrah and the unique ribbed domes. Rickert's analysis debunks earlier scholarship which has suggested the architecture's unique characteristics, in particular the domes, indicate a Middle Eastern origin for the AP. He concludes that the polygonal townscapes of Sodom and

This neglect is due in large part to the ongoing debate over the manuscript's date and place of origin, the contention of which has been the focus of the majority of studies on the AP.⁵ Many complex factors are involved in situating the codex historically: its uniqueness in comparison to contemporary manuscripts; the lack of a surviving colophon, and therefore solid evidence of patronage, scribe and provenance; and the iconographic derivation from both Jewish and Christian references. However, recent publications by two AP scholars, Bezalel Narkiss and Dorothy Verkerk, have convincingly shown the manuscript to be a product of Italy, and in the case of Verkerk, more specifically as originating in Rome.⁶ While their dating differs by more than a century, with Narkiss suggesting the mid-fifth century and Verkerk the late-sixth to early-seventh century, their studies show that the production and dating of the manuscript can be situated with some confidence in the environs of Rome in the mid-fifth to early-seventh century.

With this new parameter in place, the architecture in the manuscript can now be analyzed as a product of the socio-political environment of Rome during the transitional period between late antiquity and the early medieval period.⁷ Indeed, the placement of the

Gomorrhah were consistent with city iconography in late antiquity in the east and west and that the ribbed domes actually point towards either bath and palace architecture, or baldachins, representations that were also present in both the western and eastern Roman Empire in late antiquity.

⁵ For a more comprehensive discussion on the complex scholarship surrounding the debates on the AP, see Verkerk, *Early Medieval Bible Illumination*, 4-18, 147-57.

⁶ Narkiss, 411-431 and Verkerk, *Early Medieval Bible Illumination*, 125-90.

⁷ The task of defining the AP as either a late antique or early medieval manuscript has proven difficult because its perceived date straddles the time between these two periods. Adding to the confusion is the lack of consistency in scholarship on when late antiquity ends and the early medieval ages begins. For the purposes of this study, I have looked to the work of historian Peter Brown, who in 1971 published the seminal book, *The World of Late Antiquity*, in which he first defined "late antiquity" as a distinct period beginning around 200 and lasting until the eighth century. This dating is further confirmed in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Post Classical World*, edited by G.W. Bowersock, et al. in 1999, in which it continues to be defined as the "period between around 250 and 800." This dating of late antiquity covers the time period in which the AP was most certainly created, thus I have used it to describe the period for which it originated. See Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity from Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971). *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, eds. G.W. Bowersock et. al (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1999), ix.

manuscript within a plausible place and time period presents new opportunities to approach the AP as part of the larger scholarship on illuminated manuscripts. My analysis is timely in that this larger body of scholarship has only just begun to consider, as John Williams observes, “early decoration and illustrations of biblical manuscripts as discrete responses to particular cultural contexts.”⁸ It is an addressing of the multidimensional complexities of the cityscapes that is the principal focus of my study; in particular, I will demonstrate how these architectural frames provide more than just a setting, and act as one of the fundamental organizational and ideological structures in the AP manuscript.

It is essential, therefore, that I first place these scenes of architectural expanse within their larger (and actual) urban context. The first section of my study will propose a connection between the architectural components used in the AP and their counterparts in the actual urban landscape of an imperial Roman city. The urban morphology of the imagery will be interpreted in conjunction with architectural historian William MacDonald’s study of what he terms the “urban armatures” of the imperial Roman city.⁹ According to MacDonald, urban armatures (thoroughfares, passageways, and principal buildings) are the essential architectural components that made up the core of imperial Roman cities. Just as important as monumental buildings themselves, these key architectural structures not only functioned to organize the urban flow of cities physically and visually, but also constituted the “physical counterpart of Roman rule, a mainstay of imperial urbanism and the bedrock of its architectural unity.”¹⁰ We see just such an emphasis on armatures in the AP illustrations. When transferred onto parchment, the

⁸ John Williams, introduction to *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, ed. John Williams (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 5.

⁹ William L. MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire II: An Urban Appraisal* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1986.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

components of the urban armature act to direct the viewer's navigation of the manuscript's complex illustrations. In this way, viewers re-enact their movements through the real city, facilitating a kind of embodied reading of the Old Testament narrative.

The fixed formula of architectural features as a structure for narrative order in the AP also raises questions about the visual conflation of Roman architecture with the Old Testament Scripture. What we see in the manuscript is a unified and dominant vision of the imperial Roman city in an era when the actual city of Rome was being eroded by degeneration, continuous warfare, famine and disease, introducing an element of nostalgia in the images. The joining of Old Testament narratives to idealized Roman cityscapes can be seen as a response to this tenuous urban atmosphere; it asserts an image of the permanency and authority of Rome through its association with the venerable Jewish past. Indeed, by inserting the (Roman) city in various desert settings, the Christian Roman Empire is grafted onto the Genesis and Exodus stories, resulting in the linking of Jewish history, Roman Imperial tradition and Christian Church as contiguous narrative.

This conflation and implicit narrative extension will be the focus of the second section of my study, which explores how the illustrations are representative of the ongoing Christianization of the Roman Empire during a particularly turbulent period in Roman history. In particular, I will show how these cityscapes call up the ancient mythology of an "eternal Rome," a belief that was undergoing a Christian translation and that was placing the Church and popes of Rome at the center of this tradition. The connection of the biblical past to Roman political interests was an important exegetical tactic that cannot be overestimated: it was fundamental for the authority of the papacy to

assert the Church of Rome as the Universal Christian church. As such, it was necessary for Church fathers to reconcile the non-Christian, Roman pagan past with the Christian Rome in the present. The past represented by the Old Testament was, in this way, incorporated by the AP artist into the general history of Rome through the presence of distinctive cityscapes, giving the images the illusion of a biblical sanction to the Christian Roman Empire. As a result, the AP provides a Christian historical understanding of Jewish history on the one hand, while on the other hand it expresses a visual reinforcement of Rome's ordained role as the inheritor of this Jewish tradition.

Thus, the pastoral circumstances of Abraham and his descendents as dwellers in tents, for example, have been replaced by a rather powerful vision of the Roman imperial city. This displacement has a profound impact on how the story of Abraham is viewed. The traditional Abraham narrative as a community of Jews whose covenant with God is the central theme is co-opted in the imagery of the AP to Christian ends. Obedience, faith and virtue—the cornerstones to maintaining the purity of the Jewish lineage and a community of believers (and that which guarantees the promise by God that a great nation will come from Abraham)—becomes, through conflation, an extension of papal ambitions. The last section of my thesis will explore how the artist's treatment of architectural motifs and other visual means is able to make these ancient views of community, values and nation building—each so essential in Jewish history—relevant to contemporary Roman viewers and the imperatives of the late antique Church of Rome.

By placing the actions of the Jewish protagonists of the Old Testament within an interior space, where images of their everyday lives play out against a metropolitan backdrop, the AP artist has effectively created a visual reminder of the civic aspects of a

Christian life. That this is the focus of the imagery is in keeping with the generally held view that the manuscript, with its proliferation of illustrations and instructive *tituli*, was used as a teaching manual.¹¹ I will demonstrate how these images of architecture are likewise didactic in function, and direct the viewer towards making important links between how the architecture frames the behaviours and actions of the biblical characters and how it communicates certain lessons on the moral responsibilities of Christian citizenship.

In many ways, this can be seen as part of the ongoing strategy of Christian exegetes interpreting Old Testament writings in light of the coming of Christ and the Christian Church (which was seen as its fulfillment). Franz Rickert was the first to notice the visual references to Christian cultural elements in the AP's scenes of the Deluge, while Verkerk has clearly demonstrated the Christian character of the manuscript, particularly in the way some scenes incorporate typological references to Christian Easter liturgy.¹² The cityscapes are another element in the AP which call this same exegetical strategy to mind, suggesting it is the Church and the Roman papacy that was carrying out this new covenant and preserving the Roman Empire. As a result, the incorporation of the

¹¹ There is no concrete evidence to indicate who was the intended audience for the manuscript, however, Narkiss and Verkerk have both put forward their own theories on the possible patronage for the AP. Narkiss suggests it was commissioned by Galla Placidia (390-450 C.E.) for the religious instruction of the Empresses' young son, the future Roman emperor, Valentinian III (423-455 C.E.) in the mid-fifth century. Verkerk, on the other hand, argues that the iconography points toward a clerical audience, in particular, it may have been commissioned to train new deacons on church history, the liturgy and the "right order of their lives and their constituents." Neither theory is conclusive, but one could argue that Verkerk's argument bares more weight in that the manuscript, albeit extravagant in its illustrations, does not in fact resemble the opulence of an imperial manuscript, as it lacks the characteristic gold and silver scripture and purple parchment often seen in these types of codices. What is evident in the manuscript, however, and apparent in both scholars' arguments, is that it most likely was meant to appeal to a young audience with its cartoon-like figures with their exaggerated gestures, bright colours and proliferation of instructive *tituli* all of which have a comic book resemblance. See Narkiss, 438-440 and Verkerk, *Early Medieval Bible Illumination*, 186-190.

¹² See Rickert, "Studien zum Ashburnham Pentateuch" (PhD diss., University of Bonn, 1986), 204-225. See Verkerk, "Exodus and Easter Vigil in the Ashburnham Pentateuch," *Art Bulletin* 77.1 (March 1995): 94-105.

material form and look of a city familiar to a contemporary Roman viewer presents an ideological basis for a new Christian culture in the AP illustrations, a symbolic motif also present in the apse mosaics of such early Roman churches as Santa Maria Maggiore and Santa Pudenziana.

The AP's innovative mixture of different cityscapes engages with the evolving Christian re-conceptualization of the city of Rome, its community and empire in late antiquity. To fully comprehend the manuscript's illustrations and their broader implications, one needs to understand the architectural structures and urban landscapes of Roman cities in late antiquity: what they convey and how they work within the manuscript. The pages to follow will consider how the incorporation of the urban armature in the AP provides a strong association with a stable and permanent imperial Rome, its Church and the moral framework for which a new society of Christians was being built.

The “Urban Armature”

There is not one architectural structure that predominates in the pages of the AP; rather, a series of different building types interconnect to form the cityscapes. Typically, the skyline is populated with domed structures, covered porticos, arched gateways, red-gabled buildings with decorative pediments, and four-squared dwellings with flat roofs. The architecture is displayed at different scales and angles, with covered porticos jutting forward and upward, or cutting horizontally across the cityscape. An abundance of arches creates an illusion of spatial depth, hinting at each building’s interior space and bringing a transparency and fluidity to the architecturally dense landscape. The overall effect is one of urban ambience and vibrancy not seen in other depictions of cities in this period. Indeed, the standardized image of the city in late antiquity in various media was typically rendered as depopulated and partially hidden behind fortified walls, giving it a rather static and remote appearance.¹³ This ideogram of the city can be seen in antique coins (Fig. 2) and, more famously, in the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore, where the jewelled walls of Heavenly Jerusalem are juxtaposed with more profane enclosed earthly cities (Figs. 3-4). This urban imagery was essentially a fixed representation of a city type and had little relation to the real world dynamism of actual cities. The cityscapes in the AP work against this conventional view. The diversity of its architectural forms, the absence of city walls, the addition of figures moving within the architecture, and the unique layout of its buildings points to a more dynamic role for the city in the illustrations.

¹³ Chiara Frugoni, *A Distant City: Images of Urban Experience in the Medieval World*, trans. William McCuaig (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991), 12-13.

While many of the cityscapes at first appear to be surreal, almost like dreamscapes, there is cohesiveness in how they are laid out and how the artist has consistently used a core grouping of architectural structures. Each page presents a different schematic of cityscape arrangements, but they all have in common a distinctive grouping of building types and urban forms. In many cases, this appears to be the artist's attempt at organizing and formatting the structure of the narrative along the lines of an urban framework. In fact, certain architectural features in the manuscript, unusual for city imagery, can be seen as working to organize the idiosyncratic layout of the scenes much in the way they are used within a real urban context. For example, stairs, porticos and platforms are used as basic organizational structures for navigating the illustrations, giving a dynamic flow to the narrative. The emphasis on these urban forms suggests that the creation of an ordered and stable world within the illustrations was an overall goal for the artist. These architectural forms also signify what MacDonald calls the "common imagery of cultural and political allegiance" to imperial Rome.¹⁴ In this way, the cityscapes with their prominent urban elements incorporated in the manuscript can be seen as serving both practical and ideological purposes. The paragraphs to follow will consider the practical applications of the architecture, in particular the importance of the urban armature as a critical organizational element of the AP illustrations.

As noted earlier, the work of MacDonald on the urban context of classic Roman architecture (see *The Architecture of the Roman Empire II: An Urban Appraisal*) comprises the definitive study of this subject.¹⁵ MacDonald's analysis of Roman

¹⁴ MacDonald, 48.

¹⁵ While MacDonald's study focuses primarily on the built environments of imperial Roman cities before the fourth century, thus pre-dating the AP, his observations still remain valid for an analysis of the manuscript imagery. Many of the urban landmarks he discusses continued to be the same core structures of

architecture is particularly interesting because he takes a “city-oriented” approach towards the design of classical Roman architecture through a rethinking of its role within the urban context. Importantly, MacDonald does not treat Roman architecture as isolated individual monuments. Instead, he discusses them as part of a network of buildings and urban structures that are the essential backdrops to the everyday proceedings of the Roman city and the experiences of its residents. In seeking to discover the architectural essence of the Roman city, MacDonald observes that Roman cities, empire-wide, shared similar urban structures that made up the backbone of each city. It is this combination of buildings he refers to as the “urban armatures,” those definitive components which identify a city as truly Roman.¹⁶ These armatures consisted of main thoroughfares and essential public buildings (civic, commercial and religious), which were linked together via porticos and colonnades (passageways) that stretched between the city’s gates. In this expanse of urbanity, arches, gateways and plazas were interspersed to create a directional and continuous movement between main streets and gates. By looking closely at how the combinations of buildings and urban forms came together, MacDonald is able to assess how they functioned to create the flows and rhythms of city life and facilitated the movement of people through the imperial Roman city.

Early Christian representations of the city—such as illustrated in the Byzantine manuscript the *Vienna Genesis* (Fig. 5) and the mosaics at Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (Fig. 6), both from the sixth century—show the urban armature as a cluster of different buildings and structural entities grouped together but always enclosed behind

the late antique city and, therefore, they would have had the same spatial, visual and contextual relevance. Furthermore, many of his descriptions of the representations of armatures in Roman art are taken from late antiquity, thus establishing the basis of the image of the armature as part of city imagery in late Roman art.

¹⁶ MacDonald, 5.

city walls. Likewise the apse mosaic at Santa Pudenziana in Rome from the fifth century (Fig. 7) features the same cityscape motif, albeit in this example enclosed behind a walled (and visually obstructing) portico. While these kinds of imagery convey the architectural essence of a city, these representations do not effectively capture the interconnections that are essential to the function and meaning of the urban experience. This is because the typical walled city motif presents an image of enclosure: it alienates the viewer by denying visual access to the heart of the city. This can be seen in the most obvious barrier, the city wall, which tends to exacerbate this sense of disconnection.

Furthermore, the various viewpoints used in Roman art to depict the city—the frontal view where the city is seen at eye-level or at an angled view seen from a distance—does not bring the viewer any closer to the city center.¹⁷ As Chiara Frugoni describes in *A Distant City*, until the early medieval period the city is “either miniaturized in the background—and in this case all our attention is concentrated on the personages or figures that fill the page—or else as a large zone encompassing like a frame the vignette that defines the place of the action.”¹⁸ In this way, the city image appears not so much as a replication of urban reality as it does a mere backdrop for the scenes it reflects.

The illustration of Rebecca at the Well, discussed earlier, is also found in the *Vienna Genesis* (folio 13r; Genesis 24:15-20)—a manuscript particularly relevant to the AP, being both roughly contemporaneous and illustrative of similar Old Testament narratives. Here the city is portrayed as distant, inaccessible and located in the background (Fig. 5). This small walled-in town seen from above (and relegated to the far right of the folio) represents Nachor, Rebecca’s home. She is portrayed leaving the town

¹⁷ Ibid, 16.

¹⁸ Frugoni, 12.

on a descending and winding path lined with columns that eventually lead her to a stream. On the way to the well she encounters a classical personification of the spring (as nymph), lounging on the water bank. She is subsequently depicted in the hospitable act of providing water to the thirsty servant of Abraham and his camels, sealing her fate as the future wife of Abraham's son, Isaac. The schematic layout of the scene is appropriate to a story focused on the continued lineage of Abraham, which is facilitated here at the location of the well. It is this vivid moment of meeting, far removed from the city, which captures our attention. The city provides a basic backdrop for Rebecca's home, but contrary to what we saw in the AP, no action is taking place within the city. Aspects of the city—the gabled roofed buildings and covered colonnade—can be seen from above, beyond the brick masonry and turreted walls. However, the only hint of city life is Rebecca's departure from it; it is otherwise a distant, fixed and remote image of urbanity, mainly there to highlight the fact that the meeting between Rebecca and the servant of Abraham took place at the well outside the city.

In contrast, the AP artist has multiplied his depictions of the story of Rebecca at the Well, dramatically juxtaposing the outdoor and interior scenes, while still locating the key episode (at the well) in the centre of the illustration (Fig. 1). The city of Nachor is portrayed in the upper left, not only without the fortress wall, but with the buildings themselves opened up so that figures and the actions can be seen within. Greetings and negotiations about the marriage are being carried out in the upper register, while the protagonists are celebrating with a meal below. The lower section of the AP illustration sets up an interesting reversal of time and space. The camels now head in the opposite direction returning to the home of Isaac and Abraham, where Rebecca meets Isaac and is

welcomed into the house. The similar manner in which the two cities are depicted (though Nachor is the more extensive of the two) creates a visual parallel that underscores the kindred relationship between the two families despite their supposed distance. Furthermore, the image of the home of Abraham (as a city) is a departure from its description in the biblical text, which specifically stated that Isaac, “brought her into the tent of Sara his mother (who had died), and took her to wife” (Genesis 24:67).

In other images of the city from this period, as seen in the depiction of Classe in the northern nave mosaic of Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, the city is shown from a frontal perspective that highlights the dominant feature of the wall (Fig. 6). Once again, we see how the wall becomes the backdrop for the action that occurs outside of it, as opposed to the interiorized view presented in the AP. This mosaic is a pictorial replication of the port city in Ravenna identified by the inscription that reads *Civitas Classe* above its main gate. However, any real sense of Classe is limited to a skyline, with its lower half cut-off from view by the familiar fortified wall with turrets overwhelming the mosaic surface. The town’s identifiable features are still visible and instantly recognizable—a covered colonnade, red-gabled buildings, domed structure and an edifice resembling a coliseum—behind the horizontal band of the wall structure. A number of these motifs resemble city features seen in the AP. However, because the view of Classe is blocked in the head-on perspective, any representation of inhabitation is presented on its periphery.

In a related image, the apse mosaic of Santa Pudenziana includes figures within and around (what is in this case) highly symbolic architecture (Fig. 7).¹⁹ The mosaic depicts Christ enthroned surrounded by apostles, framed by a seemingly circular portico,

¹⁹ The mosaic has been much restored, but the cityscape was part of the original intention.

enhanced by the concave apse, over and above which one can see the shapes of numerous buildings and a large cross on a mound. Wendy Pullen has argued that the circular portico may be intended to represent the mausoleum over the Tomb of Christ in Jerusalem, while the jewelled cross that of the monument on the mound of Golgotha.²⁰ The imperial-looking buildings located behind the portico-barrier represent the city of Jerusalem. While these figures are portrayed within an open-air architectural setting, they are placed in front of (rather than interact within) the structures. The cityscape is again a backdrop beyond a wall.

The three preceding examples are characteristic of artists' treatment of the city motif in late antiquity. The city is usually obstructed (often fortified) and set apart from the narrative action and although it can sometimes recall a specific city, as in these illustrations, it still takes on the appearance of an ideogram of a city because of its shared and standard iconography. The different viewing perspectives—distant or close-up—in these instances do not mitigate the dominance of the city wall and in the case of the Sant' Apollinare Nuovo mosaic, the frontal view even enhances its fortified presence. While the armature is still visible and representative of a Roman city, the walled enclosures make the city less interactive with the characters that stand in relation to it; thus it becomes, as previously stated, an ideogram and not—as it is in the AP—a narrative player.

Indeed, the exposed interiors of the townscapes in the AP function to direct the movements of the various biblical characters. This architectural direction invites viewers inside the city's gates and thus the city becomes more than a representation of urban

²⁰ Wendy Pullen, "Jerusalem from Alpha to Omega in the Santa Pudenziana Mosaic," in *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art*, ed., Bianca Kühnel (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Journal of the Center for Jewish Art 23/24, 1998), 405-17.

experience, but also facilitates an embodied reading that allows readers to re-enact the way they would move within the actual city. This kind of affective reading of the manuscript, enabled as it is by its unique portrayal of open and articulated cityscapes, leads the viewer to link the city in the manuscript with the imperial Roman city. Stairs, platforms, and gateways, which function to interconnect the vignettes thematically and structurally, are particularly active in this regard.

Strategically located throughout the Roman city, MacDonald defines these architectural elements as “connective architecture” (thoroughfares, stairs and terraces) and “passage architecture” (arches and gateways), both of which direct and manage the flow of traffic through its main sections.²¹ In real urban landscapes, the architecture of connection functioned by fixing the location of buildings, adjoining them and highlighting their visibility,²² while the fundamentals of passage architecture identified significant areas of the city and transitional points in the cityscape.²³ According to MacDonald, their forms maintained the urban rhythm of the city and produced cohesive public environments. These same principles of urbanity in actual cities are mimicked in the depiction of cityscapes in the AP (but here more often with a focus on the interior movements rather than the public spaces), in that its architecture functions as the primary organizational element. In each illustration where such motifs are present, they direct the flow between the narrative action within a single image, between different vignettes on the same page and even link scenes thematically throughout the manuscript. Thus, the depiction of urban architecture guides the viewer towards understanding the complicated links between the different Old Testament scenes.

²¹ MacDonald, 32-110.

²² Ibid., 32.

²³ Ibid., 74.

This organizational principle is especially noticeable on folio 22v, which follows the story of Rebecca and her twins, and Jacob and Esau (Fig. 8). Four distinct vignettes are separated by different architectural settings and given emphasis through the addition of certain architectural features—a *cryptoportico* (an underground passageway), stairs and raised platforms. These structures in real imperial urban cityscapes enhanced the visibility and importance of certain buildings by raising their height. It has a similar effect in the AP where the architecture on folio 22v stands out amongst all the other cityscapes because of the incorporation of these forms. The specialized treatment of the story illustrated on this folio is appropriate to its subject matter: the birthright and lineage that characterize the story of Abraham in the Old Testament. The vignettes depict key moments in the Genesis text, beginning with the prophetic revelation of Jacob's destiny to Rebecca, and ending with Esau, the firstborn, selling his birthright to his younger brother Jacob for a mere meal. The birth of the twins Esau and Jacob to Rebecca and Isaac is one of the most important events in Jewish history, as it introduces the figure of Jacob, the future father of the chosen people of Israel.

The first scene, located in the upper right corner of the top register, illustrates Rebecca seeking counsel from God over the twins struggling in her womb (Genesis 25:22-23). A steep set of stairs leads to the inner sanctum of an elaborate building complex identified by Narkiss as resembling a Christian basilica, with its arcaded aisle, altar and a domed apse to the far right.²⁴ Inside the basilica, Rebecca is presented with her servants kneeling before an altar praying. Here she receives the prophecy from God, which states that: "Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be divided out of thy womb, and one people shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis

²⁴ Narkiss, 351.

25:23).²⁵ The scene to follow, located to the left of Rebecca in the basilica, does not replicate a specific event in the biblical narrative. According to Narkiss, it depicts Isaac, portrayed as the Patriarch sitting on a stool, gesturing to his servant who points back towards Rebecca in the previous scene. The servant is informing Isaac of Rebecca's inquiry of God and the prophecy of the twins' reversal of birth order.²⁶

Directly below this scene is the next vignette, where a dwelling-type structure elevated on a brick platform with a set of stairs ascending to a wooden door sets the scene for the graphic visualization of the twins' birth. The image is remarkable for the level of detail provided of Rebecca's labour, where she is depicted seated on a birthing stool while giving birth to the twins; servants hold her down while a midwife positioned at her feet prepares to receive her sons. The vividness of the birthing scene—which may have angered subsequent viewers (as the scratching marks on the parchment suggest)—accords with the rather dramatic account of the story in Genesis. With this depiction, the artist confirms the birth order, which establishes the basis for the eventual reversal of Esau's rights as firstborn, which according to the Genesis account states, “he that came forth first was red, hairy like a skin: and his name was called Esau. Immediately the other coming forth, held his brother's foot in his hand: and therefore he was called Jacob” (Genesis 25:25).

In the lower right corner of the page, a flat-roofed dwelling positioned on a raised terrace provides the setting for the final scene of the cycle, where Esau sells his birthright

²⁵ All quotes from the Old Testament bible are cited from the English translation of the Latin Vulgate text at <http://www.latinvulgate.com/verse>. There is no specific mention of a place of worship in the Genesis text. Narkiss argues the depiction of the basilica-type structure in the AP may reflect the mention of Rebecca going to a Holy Place to pray in a Syrian translation of the Jewish Midrash or Syrian commentary in the *Mingana Genesis Fragment*. See Narkiss, 398.

²⁶ Ibid., 351.

to Jacob. The events of Genesis 25:29-34 are revealed: Esau famished from hunting, has asked Jacob for a serving of the pottage (lentil stew) that he boils, which Jacob will only proffer after Esau frivolously agrees to sell him his birthright. The moment of transaction is recorded, with Jacob and Esau gathered around a rustic kitchen table. Esau sits on a stool, similar to Isaac's (in an earlier scene), signifying the authority of his birthright, while Jacob prepares him a serving of pottage. Laid out on the table before Esau are a bowl of lentil stew, a drinking vessel and bread, about which a *tituli* reads "here is Esau eating lentils." The moment of reckoning for Esau occurs after the fact (and outside the kitchen environment): Esau and Jacob are next seen to the far right, and exterior to the dwelling. The climax of the narrative is depicted at the top of a flight of stairs, with Jacob carrying a document symbolizing the birthright he has just received from Esau, who holds out an empty hand.

Connective Architecture

The adoption of stairs and platforms in the preceding vignettes dramatically impacts the visual perception and cognition of the scenes they contain, giving them a degree of visibility that underscores their symbolic importance.²⁷ Temples are a famous example of how this works in real imperial landscapes: their high podium and prominent stairs lead up to a portico on one end, the raising of which indicates its significance.²⁸ This visual strategy is replicated (but made Christian), on folio 22v, in the depiction of Rebecca praying in the basilica, a scene that is very rarely illustrated in art; the rather grand stairs leading to the basilica are steeper than those approaching the other scenes,

²⁷ MacDonald, 66-73, 135.

²⁸ Ibid., 119.

which is appropriate for its level of religious importance, but much more developed than the biblical passage, which merely states “she went to consult the Lord” (Genesis 25:23). The artist here has taken the opportunity to call attention to the significance of the church as the site for consultation with God, something an ecclesiastical patron might wish to assert. The illustration of Isaac and his servant in the top left vignette—where Isaac hears that Jacob will acquire firstborn status over Esau—is singled out as being less central than the other scenes for the opposite reason. While it still has an elaborate cityscape as a backdrop, stairs have not been added and the height of its raised platform is noticeably smaller, and distinguishes it as secondary to the other scenes.

The vignette of Esau selling his birthright (lower right corner) likewise features an unusual urban structure of elevation that functions to highlight the importance of the scene. The basement of the house, with four arched street-level windows, resembles a *cryptoportico*: covered corridors, partially built underground and situated alongside streets, that supported raised terraces and major buildings, and which also acted as shaded ambulatories (Fig. 9).²⁹ Considering that Genesis 25:27 describes Jacob as “a plain man, (who) dwelt in tents,” the substitution of the *cryptoportico* and elaborate architecture for the (written) pastoral setting suggests that the connective architecture is not being utilized out of necessity, that is, to accurately depict the biblical stories. Rather, they are extra-textual elements which appear to be used for their structural and symbolic ability to raise awareness through their scale and practical function and to make the settings all the more familiar to a late antique audience.

Furthermore, the physical effect of these architectural additions is also responsible for organizing the scenes into a comprehensible whole, one which relays the thematic

²⁹ Ibid., 117.

lessons inherent to the biblical stories they frame. As the above description of folio 22v shows, the narrative does not follow a typical (modern Western) left to right reading, but is rendered, rather, in a more complicated pattern. Other manuscripts of the period typically arranged multiple scenes on a page in a grid pattern, for example, the fifth-century *Quedlinburg Itala Fragments*, the vignettes are laid out in an orderly quadrant with clear demarcations (Fig. 10). The artist of the AP, however, has chosen a fairly unorthodox approach, eschewing the grid for a less regimented formatting that does not conform to obvious organizational patterns. Verkerk has successfully argued that in order to understand the manuscript's distinctive arrangements, one must reject regular conventions of "narrative sequence" (nor should one hastily conclude the narratives are confused as has often been done in the past).³⁰ Rather, the layout of the AP is best understood as following an order based on moral and didactic connections, which are queued through the use of certain visual cues. For Verkerk, the scenes are organized and grouped through colour blocking, as well as various formal devices, such as the inclusion of animals or vegetation, which have symbolic meaning that relate back to the moral themes of the biblical text.³¹ It is my contention that the incorporation of open, articulated cityscapes performs the same tasks of ordering the narrative by providing a prop to assist the viewer's navigation through the multipartite scenes.

The connective architecture in the AP illustrations also has the effect of controlling the urban flow in the city's landscape. The organizing of vignettes in relation to the connective architecture of stairs and platforms relates to how these features in the Roman city were responsible for the "fashioning of urban rhythms" by moving people

³⁰ Verkerk, *Early Medieval Bible Illumination*, 31.

³¹ Ibid., "Moral Structure in the Ashburnham Pentateuch," in *Image and Belief*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, 1999). 71-88.

seamlessly through its main thoroughfares.³² Stairs in the landscape were, in particular, those components which facilitated movement, tempo and comprehension. As

MacDonald notes, they were:

Purveyors of changes not only of locale but of meaning—from the street to the temple forecourt . . . or from the street to the interior of the baths; they shift gears in urban transmission from one mode to another . . . they reinforce the sense of arriving or departing, of gaining a goal or of leaving it behind for another phase of activity.³³

Like their functional role in the ancient Roman city, where they guided and influenced the pedestrian traffic in the cityscape, the stairs of the AP direct the viewer through the complicated landscape of the manuscript's illustrations. They provide the visual "shift," cueing the viewer that there is a change in narrative flow, indicating where certain scenes begin and end, assisting the viewer in achieving the "goal" of comprehending the material. This in turn allows the viewer to follow the action without fear of getting lost, while also highlighting the significant sites along the way.

Once again, folio 22v, presents a striking example of the role of the stairs in the manuscript. Stairs are the formal mechanism that groups together the scenes in a way that underscores the thematic implications of the Esau and Jacob story. A synoptic view of the vignettes makes apparent the organizational principles at play on this page. The stairs physically link the top right scene (Rebecca praying) to the bottom left vignette (Rebecca giving birth), to the lower right scene (Esau sells his birthright to Jacob). The vignette in the top left corner of the folio (Isaac and his servant), which according to the Western

³² MacDonald, 74.

³³ Ibid., 71.

tradition of reading left to right should be the start of the narrative, is in fact blocked off by the stairs and is not interconnected to the other scenes. In this way, the stairs create a thematic and narrative unity to the three scenes it links, while isolating one scene as outside of this formal scope.

The reason for this arrangement can be understood in the context of Jacob's ascendancy to firstborn status. These three scenes architecturally linked on folio 22v are the cardinal moments in the early narrative, establishing Jacob's prophesized role as the future Patriarch of the Jewish people. Conversely, the scene depicting Isaac (upper left) is not linked to this narrative sequencing; it does, however, provide the counterbalance to it. This is formally rendered by the absence of stairs and the manner in which the architectural composition of the illustration disconnects it from the formal arrangement of the other scenes. The overall expansion of the stairs provides a vertical movement towards the other scenes in contrast to the horizontal solidity of the platform in the vignette of Isaac and his servant in the top left of the page. Considering the theme of the overall narrative of the twins, it makes sense that this scene would be set apart, because it foreshadows Isaac's favouring of Esau over Jacob as stated in Genesis 25:28 that "Isaac loved Esau. . .and Rebecca loved Jacob." The lack of stairs hints at the parental nepotism at the core of the twins' story, and thus it appears to be visually disrupted from the other Genesis events depicted, with their focus on Jacob's ascendancy over Esau. The stairs, in this way, are visual props, which organize the scenes in order of thematic importance and the emphasis placed on Jacob's prophetic role in the biblical text and Jewish history.

The stairs' trajectory leads the viewer through the narrative landscape and provides meaning, context and order for the stories unfolding along its path. In the last

scene on folio 22v, for example, the stairs appear to be an odd choice of setting to portray the transaction where Esau hands over his birthright to Jacob. It seems less odd when we remember the importance given to stairs in real landscapes, how they signify shifts in meaning and location, moments of transition, and gaining of goals.³⁴ Given this consideration, the stairs become a more than appropriate platform for this scene of lineage transaction and flux. Within the context of the narrative, the stairs indicate that there has been an important shift from one set of circumstances to another, with the transferring of birthright between the brothers marking not only a momentous occasion, but also the fact that Jacob has acquired his desired goal of rights to the firstborn title. For the viewer, the stairs lead the way to the next destination, where their descent continues beyond the page's border, indicating the continuation of the Esau and Jacob story at another location (the next illustrated page, folio 25r) where the story will have its denouement with Isaac's ultimate blessing of Jacob over Esau.

While folio 22v offers a striking image of this stair and platform motif, it is a formal element used sparingly in the manuscript. This motif also appears on folios 44r, 50r and 56r, but does not have the same visual impact as on folio 22v. This suggests the importance the artist has placed on these particular events in the Old Testament. Lineage and birthright were indeed fundamental themes in Jewish history, where prophetic evidence was given of its patriarchy as the foundation of the nation of Israel.

Passage Architecture

In contrast to the economical use of connective architecture, the artist has liberally incorporated arches and gateways into the majority of scenes, giving the different

³⁴ Ibid.

vignettes a sense of a continuous and unified flow. Arches are the dominant feature in the cityscapes. In many cases, they are identifiable as porticos or peristyles with their intercolumniations, while other structures appear to be single buildings perforated with arched openings. What is especially compelling about the arch is that in most of the illustrations an arched structure with a hinged door is located at the entry/exit point to each vignette. It is consistently depicted as an arched gateway adjoined to buildings within an architectural complex. While on occasion it is visualized with a fancy voluted pediment, it is typically depicted with a ribbed-dome. These peculiar structures comprise “the architecture of passage,” those highly visible armature components, such as gates and portals which “punctuated” the Roman city and marked out significant buildings and transitional spots in the city.³⁵

And while these passageways functioned to create divisions between different districts of the city, they did not impede urban circulation as their perforated structures allowed for easy transit from one side to the other. They are distinguishable as freestanding forms with an archway, such as monumental arches or city gates or portals within the city walls. It is the form and functional essence of these structures of passage, with their ability to create divisions and facilitate urban flow, which is recalled in how these architectural components appear to be used as visible markers in the AP. In many cases, their positioning provides the visual borders that signify the threshold between the urban civilized life of the city narratives and the wilderness scenes.³⁶ As discussed earlier, on folio 21r (where Rebecca is chosen as Isaac’s wife), the page is organized between urban and pastoral vignettes according to the biblical account (Fig. 1). At the

³⁵ Ibid., 74.

³⁶ Ibid., 18.

boundaries of these settings, an arcuated domed structure with a hinged door held ajar creates the trajectory for the directional flow of the scene. This can be determined in how the figures are moving towards or away from these portals, creating a continuation of the narrative from one scene to the next. As such, it is an additional feature that calls attention to the uniting of these two houses.

In other circumstances, the gateways delineate the different sections of an architectural complex, such as on folio 50r where the top register is divided into two vignettes separated with an arched doorway (Fig. 11). The upper scenes in the top register of the page are envisioned as one sprawling cityscape, with two passageways defining the different vignettes. These scenes illustrate separate moments in the story of Joseph in Egypt after the death of his father Jacob (whose funeral in Canaan occupies the bottom middle and right of the folio). The top left illustration depicts Joseph (on the far right wearing a green tunic) asking permission of the Pharaoh (sitting in regalia on a throne) to bury his father in Canaan (Genesis 50:4-6). The adjacent scene occurs after the events of Jacob's burial in Canaan. It depicts Joseph (elevated on a pedestal) holding court in front of his brothers, who plead with him to have mercy on them for selling him into slavery in Egypt (Genesis 50:15-21). The breaking-up of the scenes through the two arched portals—one with a dome and the other with a voluted pediment—not only connect the vignettes as a continuum in the Joseph cycle, but importantly signal to the viewer that they are different temporal moments in the narrative that share the same general location in Egypt.

Structures resembling passage architecture are used in a similar fashion throughout the AP manuscript in order to separate individual scenes into recognizable

vignettes. Whether this occurs within the same architectural complex or between different illustrations, they generally function to organize the various scenes into a comprehensible whole. In this way, as in the actual Roman city, their structures represent “pauses” in the city’s landscape, moments when pedestrians’ movements are interrupted. These architectural breaks in the urban rhythm significantly mark out moments of narrative shifts in the AP scenes, giving the viewer a moment to reflect and recognize a change in the story.

The door, in particular, provides an indication of these transitions. In a paradoxical sense, the door can also function as a divider, while also inviting cohesion and participation. Typically pictured ajar, the door is easily assimilated by the eye in the jumble of architectural forms and thus acts like a funnel leading the viewer into the interior space that it borders, opening up the scene to view. In contrast, the lack of a door suggests a visual barrier that should not be crossed, as exemplified in the contained cities of Sodom and Gomorrah on folio 18r (Fig. 12) where the lack of city gate denies entry into the doomed cities. A closed door is another way in which the artist clearly shows the “shut-off” state of a city as in the case on folio 65v, where the Israelites are protected behind locked doors from the horrors of the Tenth Plague being visited upon the Egyptians by God (Exodus 12:28-31) (Fig. 13). What predominates in the illustrations, though, is the combination of door and arch fused together, a mechanism that effectively works to organize the narrative flow in the manuscript, by providing a passage into and between various scenes.

As presented in the AP, the application of urban components—connective and passage architecture—creates a dynamic visual landscape not seen in other manuscripts

from the period. Losing the barrier of the city wall—so prevalent in depicted cities in other works—opened up the view into the city; this technique allowed the artist to detail the rhythms and flows of urban life in the late antique Roman city. The focus on stairs, platforms, and portals within the manuscript raises the interesting question of why the artist emphasized these particular elements when illustrating the cities in the Old Testament stories. Placing the more commonly depicted features of porticos and Roman buildings with less commonly imaged items, such as stairs, *cryptoporticos* and arched gateways, provide the full symbolic and functional impact of the imperial Roman city, one which guides the viewer through the complicated biblical material and illustrations. The reader thereby internalizes the symbols of imperial Rome (via its architecture) on a more personal, affective and even embodied level.

My focus in this section has so far been limited to analyzing the functional similarities between real and representative armatures, and in how this allows AP viewers to engage with the imagery as active participants in the Old Testament stories. Armatures were, however, not only innovative ways of shaping space; they were also objects of knowledge. In this way, imperial cities were “arguments in stone,” muscular examples of *romanitas*, in brick and mortar.³⁷ As MacDonald states, they were always:

Recognizably Roman, these robust objects were instruments of architectural colonization, symbols of the claims and ways of Rome.

Bound together by the architecture of connection and passage, they were the anchor points of the loose and unschematic frames forming the cores of imperial cities and towns, the cores of mind and memory, of dominant

³⁷ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 30.

images and functional associations . . . and like monumental arches they spoke unambiguously of the ultimate fact of life under the empire, the binding of authority of Rome.³⁸

What is important to note in MacDonald's description is how the armatures work in an "unambiguous" manner on the level of consciousness. It is notable that the imagery is of a sanitized and idealized version of this imperial urbanism, one which is made all the more potent because it recalls the lived version of it. Michel De Certeau has described how the citizen is formed through the everyday navigation of the space and symbols of cityscapes.³⁹ In a very similar manner, the inclusion of the armature in the AP creates an affective experience through calling up "dominant images and functional associations" of the signs and spaces of the imperial Roman city.⁴⁰ Transferred on to parchment, it not only manipulates how the viewer moves through the images, it signifies the "claims" inherent in their forms, that is, as MacDonald stresses the authority, stability and permanence of Rome in the empire.⁴¹

Thus, beyond its objective function as the key architectural element, the presence of the armature serves another important purpose in the illustrations, suggested through its symbolic relationship with imperial Rome and its legacy. The sprawling, prosperous cities depicted in the AP are very much at odds with the urban reality of Rome in the fifth and sixth centuries. Ruins and destruction, which were common features of the cities during this period, are not represented in the manuscript illustrations, which instead depict cityscapes reflecting the earlier affluence of Rome, and the imperial urbanism

³⁸ MacDonald, 132.

³⁹ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁴⁰ MacDonald, 132.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

mentioned previously. In the section to follow, I will explore the discrepancy between the reality of the Roman Empire in late antiquity, and the depiction of the empire in the manuscript illustrations, which clearly alter the meaning of the Genesis and Exodus stories within the AP biblical text. Such an examination will demonstrate how the portrayal of imperial Roman architecture in the illustrations attempted to link a declining Rome to an emerging (Roman) Christianity through associating the imperial Roman cityscape with Jewish history. This potent association with the fallen Empire was a powerful tactic adopted by the Roman papacy in order to establish and promote the Church of Rome as the “true” Church of the known world. It was an attempt, in short, to “re-mythologize” Rome making it Christian.

Re-mythologizing Rome

The AP illustrations comprise an ideal model of reference rather than a realistic depiction of the decomposition and depopulation of Rome in late antiquity. At the time, Rome and many other cities in the western empire were not only under siege by continuous civil wars and foreign invaders, many were being decimated by remarkable natural disasters, such as the plague, floods, famine and fires. As St. Jerome wrote at the time of the fall of Rome in 410 C.E., it was “when the brightest light on the whole earth was extinguished, when the Roman empire was deprived of its head and when, to speak more correctly, the whole world perished in one city.”⁴² Jerome’s hyperbole taps into rhetoric which was pervasive in panegyrics, patristic writings and papal decrees from republican times to late antiquity: that the decline of Rome meant the end of civilization. By the fourth century, the ancient pagan past and its mythology of an “eternal Rome” had been incorporated into the Christian notion of salvation. Thus the decay of Rome not only foretold the imminence of the apocalypse, it also challenged the lingering cultural and political pretension that portrayed Rome as the “hub of the civilized world and the queen of cities.”⁴³ As the destruction became more pervasive, and the authority of Rome declined, the physical survival of the eternal city arose as a major concern for its rulers.

In particular, the need for a strong image of Rome and its Church became an important goal during this period of great uncertainty, which challenged the unity and continuity of Rome and the empire. As Peter Brown notes, people looked to the papacy in late antiquity because it “still carried with it reassuring overtones of stability and correct

⁴² St. Jerome, as quoted in Theodor Mommsen, “St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of *The City of God*,” in *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed., Dorothy F. Donnelly (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995), 353.

⁴³ Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 38.

order.”⁴⁴ Considering the state of Rome and Italy by the pontificate of Gregory the Great in 590 C.E., a stabilized image of the city through the papacy would circumvent any notion of crisis in the city or in the empire. Indeed, it was the papacy that offered the most consistent and stable voice to the people. The popes filled in the political vacuum left behind when the emperors left Rome for Ravenna in the early fifth-century and when the Western empire collapsed in 479 C.E.. It was Ravenna, not Rome, which became the bastion for an Orthodox Catholicism under the Eastern emperor Justinian, whose army re-conquered Italy in 540 C.E. and drove the heretical Goths from the country. When Justinian failed to unite the empire into a Holy Commonwealth after defeat by the Lombards (who, in 568 C.E., conquered Northern Italy), the administrative and political control of the Western Empire was left to the popes. Not only did this ongoing instability present a political opportunity for the popes to become “proxy” emperors in Rome, there was also a strong ecclesiastical basis for the primacy of the popes in early church doctrine, a basis that provided an authoritative voice to the Church of Rome.

The pagan conception of the myth of eternal Rome, reinvented as Christian theology, only added to papal authority during this period. The patron saints of Rome—apostles Peter and Paul—replaced the pagan heroes of antiquity—Romulus and Remus—to become the new fathers of the city.⁴⁵ The pagan notion of a rebirth of Rome (*renovatio urbis*) as the centre of the civilized world, based on the antique past, was reinterpreted by Christian exegetes as a tale in which Rome was to be resurrected as the terrestrial centre of Christianity. As a result, an intersection between Rome and Christianity was developed, placing the city and its Church at the centre of Roman tradition.

⁴⁴ Brown, 114.

⁴⁵ Krautheimer, 41.

In describing this reinvention, Frugoni writes that “Rome, the eternal city, which through its imposing ruins, and as the centre of the Christian religion, transformed the myth of empire into that of spiritual magisterium.”⁴⁶ It is the notion of the “magisterium” of the Church that is called forth in the illustrious architectural imagery in the AP. The incorporation of cityscapes—as representation of imperial Rome—within the Old Testament bible suggests the linking of the Church, the city of Rome and the Jewish patriarchs. This connection circumvents the ancient pagan past with the implicit assertion that it is the Roman Catholic Church in Rome (as the new dynasty) that has the authority to determine spiritual truth in the empire. The lynchpin of this new mythology is the idea of Rome as the eternal city, an ancient concept the papacy reinterpreted in order to position the city as Christian, and as the centre of the religious and political life of the empire and Christendom.

One of the more insightful analyses of how this transpired is provided by Hannah Arendt, who has described the reliance on the myth of the eternal city in Roman politics. In the essay *What was Authority?*, Arendt explains how from the beginning of the Republic to the end of late antiquity and the imperial era, Roman political culture was based on a trinity of religion, tradition and authority.⁴⁷ This overall ideology was reliant on Romans’ confidence in the “sacredness of foundation,” a concept where authority was derived from an association with Rome’s “sacred” past. For those seeking power, their leadership was authenticated through the continued perpetuation and “augmentation” of the foundational myth of Rome’s origins. Thus, for Romans, “to be engaged in politics

⁴⁶ Frugoni, 4.

⁴⁷ Hannah Arendt, “What was Authority?,” *Authority*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), 102.

meant first and foremost to preserve the founding of the city of Rome.”⁴⁸ In other words, in the minds of Romans authority became inextricably linked to a tradition of keeping Rome “eternal.” And by the beginning of the fourth century, the prevalence of this belief in Rome’s “sacred” past and “eternal” destiny had begun to define a clear position for the city within Christianity. In fact, Rome was responsible for what Arendt calls the “politicization” of the founding of the Church.⁴⁹ The establishment of the Church became “so ‘Roman’ and adapted itself so thoroughly to Roman thinking in matters of politics,” argues Arendt, “that it made the death and resurrection of Christ the cornerstone of a new foundation” by making it an historical event.⁵⁰

Eusebius (ca. 263-339 C.E.), the court-bishop to and biographer of Constantine I was arguably the person who conceived of an alternative theory to this “foundational ideology” by inserting biblical history into the political history of the Roman Empire.⁵¹ In effect, he invented a new Christian ecclesiastical historiography with eternal Rome at its heart. Eusebius amalgamated two coterminous moments in history: the *Pax Romana* of Augustus, achieved through his founding of a “universal” empire, and the birth of Christ, who was prophesied to bring peace to all mankind. According to Theodor Mommsen, Eusebius “believed himself capable of adducing proof from the Scriptures that those events [Christ’s birth and Augustus’ rule] were long before predicted by God”⁵² and that Eusebius “strongly stressed the coincidence of the birth of Christ and the reign of Augustus, for [he] saw the counterpart of the religious summit in the erection of

⁴⁸ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 103.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Mommsen, 363.

⁵² Ibid., 364.

the ‘eternal’ Roman empire and in the establishment of the ‘universal’ *Pax Romana*.’⁵³

This conflation of prophetic biblical Scripture and imperial Roman history was designed to establish a religious argument for a universal Christian Roman empire. Eusebius envisioned divinely ordained order, peace and progress in the Roman world through the rule of the Church and the Christian emperor.

This legacy was taken up by the popes in Rome, starting with Damasus I (r. 366-384 C.E.), who further enhanced it to assert the primacy of the Church of Rome as the head of the Universal Christian Church over the Eastern emperor. Pope Leo the Great, the bishop of Rome from 440-461 C.E., became the strongest advocate of expanding this concept, by seeking papal authority through the doctrine of Petrine Supremacy (the Primacy of Peter) in order to give universal jurisdiction of the Roman bishop over the entire Church.⁵⁴ The doctrine of the Primacy of Peter is based on the idea that Peter was given authority and power over the disciples. In early exegesis, the Petrine supremacy had been interpreted as the mandate that also gave special status to the Church of Rome and the Roman bishop. As the successor of Peter, the bishop of Rome is thus provided the same status and power over the entire church and all the bishops. In his inherited role of the see of Rome, Pope Leo clearly engages with this tradition when he proclaims the primacy of Rome through the Holy See of Peter in his Sermon to the people of Rome during the feasts for the apostles Paul and Peter:

⁵³ Ibid., 368.

⁵⁴ The Petrine supremacy, or the Primacy of Peter, was based on the gospel passage in Mathew 16:16-19, which describes Jesus giving “primacy” to Peter over the other apostles in pronouncing him as the one who will hold the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is Peter alone who is addressed by Jesus and singled out as the one to receive the promise to be the “rock on which the church will be built.” See Veselin Kesich, “Peter’s Primacy in the New Testament and the Early Tradition,” in *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church*, ed. John Meyendorff (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 53.

For these are the men, through whom the light of Christ's gospel shone on you, O Rome, and through whom you, who wast the teacher of error, wast made the disciple of Truth. These are your holy Fathers and true shepherds, who gave you claims to be numbered among the heavenly kingdoms, and built you under much better and happier auspices than they, by whose zeal the first foundations of your walls were laid: and of whom the one that gave you your name defiled you with his brother's blood. These are they who promoted you to such glory, that being made a holy nation, a chosen people, a priestly and royal state and the head of the world through the blessed Peter's holy See you attained a wider sway by the worship of God than by earthly government.⁵⁵

In this sermon, Leo effectively establishes a new role for Rome: he counters its pagan history by asserting the status of the Romans as the chosen people of God through the ministries of Peter and Paul. The Roman Church's incontestable power as the head of the world Christianity is confirmed through the apostle Peter, who preached in and was martyred in Rome. Moreover, it is clear from this sermon that Leo is using the Petrine and Pauline apostolicity to divinely augment Rome's traditional role over the "earthly government" of the Eastern emperor and thus the Eastern Orthodox Church.

It is within this theological tradition of upholding the primacy of Rome through its Church that the illustrations in the AP can be interpreted. Verkerk, as noted earlier, has established that the manuscript is not only Roman, but also was likely made within the orbit of the Church of Rome. While her argument is not wholly conclusive, her point that

⁵⁵ Pope Leo, "Sermon 82" in *New Advent*, ed. Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360382.htm> (accessed on March 6, 2009).

the extra-biblical elements in many of the AP illustrations are derived from the Roman Church's liturgical ceremonies offers the most exhaustive and convincing analysis to date on the Christian elements in the illustrations.⁵⁶ She argues, for example, that the scene of Moses Reading the Covenant (folio 76r) depicts a combination of pictorial cues that are characteristic of Italian liturgical practice (Fig. 14). The book of the covenant that Moses holds, which represents the Tablets of the Law, has a form very similar to a diptych—a prominent hinged-plaque used in the recital of names during the ceremonies of the Mass. The combination of the diptych with a brick altar displaying the implements of the Eucharistic offerings—bread and chalices of wine—rather than the ancient Jewish animal sacrifice, point to the association of the recital of names with the offertory procession during Mass in the early Italian church.⁵⁷

Verkerk argues that these details should be seen as Roman because of the seven young men dressed in white robes surrounding the altar, whom she identifies as Roman deacons. For Verkerk, their white long tunics recall the liturgical vestments of deacons, and the fact that they number seven in total is a further distinction of the Roman diaconate.⁵⁸ She also notes how the artist has rendered the Pillar of Fire and the Pillar of Cloud that guided the Israelites out of Egypt—rather than a literal depiction of the Exodus text, the artist has drawn a paschal candle. While their right marginal location makes them difficult to see in their respective scenes—the Tabernacle scene on folio 76r and the Crossing of the Red Sea on folio 68r—they are pictured as lightly sketched white

⁵⁶ Verkerk, *Early Medieval Bible Illumination*, 159-162.

⁵⁷ Ibid., "Exodus and Easter Vigil in the Ashburnham Pentateuch," 94-105.

⁵⁸ See Lawrence Nees's book review of Verkerk's *Early Medieval Bible Illuminations and the Ashburnham Pentateuch*, for criticism on Verkerk's localization of the manuscript in Rome, in particular, her interpretation of the connection between the manuscript and Roman liturgical practices. Lawrence Nees, *The Catholic Historical Review* 91, no. 1 (January 2005): 135-38.

cylinders with plumes of flame, as kinds of white flags with hands shown grasping their base (Figs. 14-15). This unique rendering of the paschal candle, replete with two hands, recalls the Easter vigil in the Roman rite, where the deacon carries a candle followed by the bishop and candidates for baptism into the baptistery. For Verkerk, the cues discussed here—the paschal candle, Roman deacons and the diptych—all point to a regionalized practice of the liturgy in Rome during late antiquity. They also establish a strong link between the AP's illustrations of ancient Jewish history to the contemporary Church of Rome.

This association is likewise supported by the way the forms and functions of the AP cityscapes depict an overt connection to Rome. As noted earlier, the presence of the imperial Roman architecture in the manuscript signifies the “symbols of the claims and ways of Rome.”⁵⁹ These “symbols and claims” of the cityscapes in the AP were made during a time when the moral and political authority of the popes was being fore-fronted. The incorporation of Roman architecture within the Old Testament manuscript can therefore be seen as visually and conceptually creating a strong lineage between the Church and the Jewish Patriarchs. In this case, eternal Rome is bolstered through the ecclesiastical association between the Church of Rome and Jewish history. God's chosen people are framed in Roman architecture providing a theological link to the future chosen people of Rome and its Church, as Pope Leo stated so assuredly in his sermon. The presence of Roman deacons performing the liturgical rights of the Roman Church in the Old Testament further supports the papal claims of being the inheritor of the Jewish tradition. In this way, the strong identification of the Church of Rome with the Old

⁵⁹ MacDonald, 132.

Testament can be interpreted as the Roman destiny of Christianity, as foreseen by divine providence.

This strategy had been used elsewhere in Roman church decoration in the fifth-century. The triumphal arch mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore with its symbols of Roman power incorporated into its Christological imagery is the most famous example. Scholars have described how key symbols of Roman history are interwoven with the biblical subjects in the arch mosaic.⁶⁰ For example, the temple in the Presentation of Christ scene, normally thought to represent the Temple of Jerusalem has been identified by Ranier Warland as having features of the *templum Urbis* (the temple of Venus and Roma in Rome). The crowd around the temple is described as Romans being led by the figure of St. Peter, depicted with his hand outstretched, leading the group towards the baby Jesus to the left of the scene (Fig. 16).⁶¹ The triumphal arch mosaic is preceded by a procession of Old Testament figures (Abraham, Moses and Joshua), pictured in the nave and symbolizing the progression of chosen people from the Israelites, to Christ and the Roman people.

Warland suggests that the addition of these Roman components to Christological scenes makes the mosaic's salvific program an historical hybrid. The *templum Urbis* symbolized the "historical continuity...and the superior cultural heritage of Rome"; and the Roman characters presented with St. Peter in the arch represent St. Peter's conversion of the Romans and the founding of the Church of Rome.⁶² In this way, the imagery conjures up the claim that "Empire and Church, Roman history and Christian faith are

⁶⁰ See Ranier Warland, "The Concept of Rome in Late Antiquity reflected in the Mosaics of the Triumphal Arch of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome," in *Rome AD 300-800: Power and Symbol—Image and Reality*, ed. J. Rasmus Brandt et al. (Rome: Bardi Editore, 2003), 127-41.

⁶¹ Ibid., 130.

⁶² Ibid., 132.

joined inseparably together.⁶³ The resulting effect is one that Lawrence Nees describes as representing an image of Rome in late antiquity that is “consumed with the relationship between religious and political authority.”⁶⁴ Rome is placed at the center of the mosaics, and the concept of eternal rule, represented by the *templum Urbis*, is sanctified by its association with Old Testament figures and the birth of Christ and St. Peter.

This specifically Roman perspective of Christianity highlights the central role of the Church of Rome in late antique art. This is apparent in the new Christian foundational myth of the eternal city established during this period through the exegesis of the popes, and which was reflected in artistic programs, such as the mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore. The AP follows this tradition by also using a potent architectural symbol to align theologically with Christian beginnings. Rather than the birth of Christ, it is to the Old Testament characters with whom Rome is linked in the illustrations. This creates a new religious lineage that connects the first chosen people of Jewish history with Christ’s chosen people in Rome.

This re-mythologizing of Rome in the manuscript recalls Bronislaw Malinowski’s writings on invented belief. In explaining the role of myth on belief systems, he writes that “myth acts as a charter for the present-day social order; it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief, the function of which is to strengthen tradition and endow it with greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events.”⁶⁵ We see how this applies in the AP illustrations, and how the artist was likely influenced by papal ideology in the new

⁶³ Ibid., 138.

⁶⁴ Nees, *Early Medieval Art* (Oxford, U.K: Oxford University Press, 2002), 94.

⁶⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, quoted in M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 308.

belief in Roman tradition as an extension of Christian and Jewish history. Indeed, the artist isn't just influenced by this invented belief: the programmatic layout of the AP functions to support it. It provides a new "foundational myth" for Rome and its Church, one which circumvents the pagan past in favour of a "better" and more "supernatural" history. As described, the urban armature, with its familiar Roman imperial structures, is the illustrative vehicle which acts as the symbolic framework for perpetuating and establishing this new Christian myth within the manuscript. It is also the reassuring symbol of the stability, authority and permanence of Rome and its Church.

In the section to follow I will explore how the cityscape performs another important function within the manuscript. As noted above, Malinowski argues that myths provide a "retrospective pattern of moral values"; in the AP illustrations, this is shown in how the Jewish people are adopted by Church fathers as role models for the teaching of proper Christian behaviour in late antiquity.⁶⁶ One of the more striking features of the manuscript—the manner in which the interior views highlight the private activities of the biblical characters—can be seen as the framework in which the artist highlights the moral issues inherent to the Old Testament narrative. Christian lessons are taught through the actions of these figures as their covenant with God is acted out in the open interior spaces of the illustrations.

This creates a strong identification between the viewer and the first chosen people—the forerunners of Christians—which is made even more dramatic through the absence of the city wall and the resultant visibility of the city. By placing the action of the figures within an interior space, with the sprawling city as a backdrop, the artist has

⁶⁶ See Daniel Anlezark, "An Ideal Marriage: Abraham and Sarah in Old English Literature," *Medium Aevum* 69, no. 2 (2000): 187.

effectively created a visual context for an interface between the private and public lives of the biblical characters. This juxtaposition between interior and exterior cityscapes, I argue, conveys the civic aspects of a Christian life, one which communicated to the contemporary Roman viewer a powerful link between Christian behaviour and civic responsibilities.

A Tale of Two Cities

The visual cues in the cityscape imagery offer moral lessons and demonstrate the extent to which the AP illustrations served the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church as it sought to expand its religious authority in the face of a declining Rome. In effect, the motifs appear to educate and persuade the viewer to be a Christian, living according to the moral guidelines of the Church. The pictorial innovation of the AP, that is, the juxtaposition of interior and exterior spaces, is what augments the viewer's personal investment in the domestic dramas unfolding in the Genesis and Exodus chapters of the manuscript. Issues concerning marriage, sexuality and hospitality are adapted through the different architectural and visual motifs used by the artist. As a result, an overall message emerges which communicates that the private actions of citizens have very public consequences for the health of the community.

Indeed, the correlation between the correct behaviour of the citizens in their homes, and civic peace, was a fundamental tenet of the highly influential *City of God*. In this text, Augustine of Hippo (354-430 C.E.) argues that the citizens' role in the *civitas* is an essential prerequisite to the establishment of a society of believers living according to the faith.⁶⁷ For Augustine, the notion of the household as the site of morality and order, particularly as realized through marital concord, reflected a larger cultural tradition whereby domestic stability translated into equal returns in more public spaces.⁶⁸ The AP illustrations clearly address the blurring of the boundaries between individual behaviour and social responsibility, and the moral issues therein. Indeed, the artist has used the

⁶⁷ St. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998).

⁶⁸ Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 1996), 5.

innovative incorporation of different perspectives of the city to convey the Old Testament's powerful lessons on the effects of sin.

This is particularly apparent in the seven narrative scenes detailing the life of Abraham on folio 18r (Fig. 12). Analysis of this sequence demonstrates a compelling case for how the cityscapes function to work with the Old Testament text in communicating theological and Scriptural teachings on domestic order. The illustrations on this folio represent some of the more vivid imagery in the manuscript, in particular, the striking architectural anomaly of Sodom and Gomorrah, which are depicted with the conventional walled-city motif rather than the open cityscapes used elsewhere in the illustrations. This visual juxtaposition between different urban typologies reveals how the open cityscapes appear to represent scenes of ordered domestic harmony, while the walled cities of Sodom and Gomorrah signify, through their walled occlusion, the antithesis of this order. In this shift from full visibility to complete visual closure, the walled and doomed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are made to stand in opposition to the open Romanized (and prosperous) cityscapes of the biblical characters. Through such an opposition, the AP structures a didactic scenario between just (and unjust) life, and the consequences of that life. Just how the visual cues of the cityscape motifs, such as the juxtaposition between the walled cities and their representation of sinful behaviour and the more idealized open cityscapes, teach the viewer how to be a moral Christian citizen will be explored in this section.

In many ways, this follows the teachings in the Pentateuch, which explicates the consequences and obligations of the Israelites upon their entering into a relationship with God. Its stories, in particular, focus on community relationships and the behaviours of the

Jewish people in the desert, specifically with the maintenance of the purity of the Jewish lineage. The lessons which it conveys would have been understood by a contemporary Christian viewer in much the same way as the Old Testament characters understood it: that one's private actions had an impact on the public well-being of the community.

Augustine's writings on the city, marriage and sexuality were the most profound and influential theological addition in late antiquity on these matters. Indeed, in the *City of God*, Augustine asserts a rather secular and masculine stance on civic peace:

A man's household, then, ought to be the beginning, or a little part, of the city; and every beginning has reference to some end proper to itself, and every part has reference to the integrity of the whole of which it is a part. From this, it appears clearly enough that domestic peace has reference to civic peace: that is, that the ordered concord of domestic rule and obedience has reference to the ordered concord of civic rule and obedience. Thus, it is fitting that the father of a family should draw his own precepts from the law of the city, and rule his household in such a way that it is brought into harmony with the city's peace.⁶⁹

It is important to note the stress Augustine has put on paternal rule and obedience in the domestic realm, with marriage being described as the "natural bond of human society."⁷⁰ For Augustine, marital accord brought city peace. The incorporation of the cityscapes in the manuscript creates a visual framework for this societal theology within the Genesis and Exodus narratives. Their interiors are the spatial structures which depict domestic

⁶⁹ St. Augustine, Book XIX, Chapter 17 in Dyson, 945.

⁷⁰ Mark Ellingsen, *The Richness of Augustine: His Contextual and Pastoral Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 140.

relations and the distribution of social positions and roles in scenes that have high dramatic and pictorial context.

While the artist closely follows the biblical text in illustrating the scenes on folio 18r, (the life of Abraham), there are certain extra-textual elements and motifs that have been used to convey a vision similar to that described in Augustine's description of domestic peace. Specifically, there are many ways in which the artist has worked the notion of proper sexual conduct into the biblical scenes on folio 18r and throughout the miniatures. The issue of lust is at the core of much of the sexual anxiety in the Genesis stories. Lust in all its forms (incest, sodomy and infidelity) is notably rendered as impotent in these scenes.

For example, in the top left corner of folio 18r, the story of Lot is depicted in a way which glosses over the sexual taboo of incest (Genesis 19:30-35). The artist has presented a scene completely devoid of any hint of licentious behaviour. We see Lot and his daughters in the cave after fleeing from Sodom and Gomorrah. Inside the cave, Lot sits on a stool with his feet on a white billowy bed-type form. In the background, one of the daughters approaches him with a drink in her hand. This is the moment in the biblical text where the daughters believing "there is no man left on the earth" scheme to get their father drunk in order to conceive with him (Genesis 19:31-32). The inscription matter-of-factly states "Lot where he is drunk and slept with his daughters." Despite this description, we are not privy to the moment the daughters sleep with their father, but rather, to the moment of Lot's intoxication. Indeed, when compared with the way incest is illustrated in the same scene in the contemporary manuscript the *Cotton Genesis* (late 5th century), in which Lot and his daughter are depicted lying in bed engaged in the

incestuous interaction, the AP comes off as somewhat prudish (Fig. 17). Thus, by choosing to depict a moment of daughterly fidelity rather than focusing on the sexual act, the AP's illustrator seems to suggest that the incest, which was needed to continue the lineage of the Jews, was an act of duty rather than one of lust. This reading is further reinforced by the womblike cave carved into the hillside, a visual suggestion to the daughter's act as one of necessary (and moral) procreation rather than prohibited (and amoral) sexual encounter.

The preservation of the natural order and the same checks on desire are rendered in the other major scenes on folio 18r. These illustrations are represented in three vignettes on the bottom register of the page which pictorialise the key moments in Abraham and Sarah's journey to Negeb (Genesis 20-21:12). In these scenes infidelity is made appropriate through different gestures and extra-biblical elements being added to the illustrations. For example, the King Abimelech narrative depicted in the lower left vignette reveals the moment that Sarah's chastity and the endangerment of the Jewish matriarchy is saved through God's intervention (Fig. 18). For safety reasons, Sarah has been posing as Abraham's sister in their travels. This lie puts Sarah in an awkward and dangerous situation with the king, who captivated by her beauty, has summoned her to him. The scene illustrates God's interference in this matter, showing his appearance in Abimelech's dream, where God cautions him that he is about to commit adultery with Sarah (Genesis 20:3). This celestial warning against infidelity by the Lord, pictured as a hand hovering above the king, is further supported by the presence of the queen at the bottom of the bed. She is the figure to the left identified as the queen of Gerar through the *tituli* located above her which reads "REGINA," the term for queen in Latin. Her role is

affirmed in the way she is depicted possessively gripping the king's bed-frame. Barriers are also constructed to separate Sarah from the king and queen. Sarah, shown wearing a veil, is positioned at a distance to the right and behind the queen. There is also what appears to be a brick wall added to the base of the bed. This barrier presumably provides concrete proof that Sarah did not have carnal relations with Abimelech.

These small, but significant additions to the scene, so different from any other biblical illustrations, reveal how the artist perceived the relationships amongst the different figures. A hierarchy has been established between the queen and Sarah through the queen's gestures and the positioning of figures in the illustration. Moreover, the incorporation of the queen is an innovation of the artist. She is not mentioned in the Pentateuch text, and as Narkiss observes, it is a scene which is not depicted anywhere else in early Christian or Byzantine art.⁷¹ Thus the image has been manipulated to overtly communicate the upholding of the marital contract between the king and his wife, and of Sarah and Abraham.

In the architectural setting to the right of this vignette, we see the same theme being replayed with Hagar and Ishmael being rejected by Abraham (Genesis 21:9-13) (Fig. 12). The illustration addresses the messy outcome of Abraham's adultery with his servant, Hagar. While their actions were deemed acceptable in terms of the necessity of procreation (Sarah's approval that Abraham seek-out Hagar as a surrogate was based on her inability to have children at the time) the marital bond of Abraham and Sarah nevertheless remains the focus of this scene. Indeed, the illustration depicts the events that occurred after Sarah, having given birth miraculously to Isaac at an old age, pleads with Abraham to "cast out this bondwoman and her son" from their household (Genesis

⁷¹ Narkiss, 347.

21:10). Sarah and Abraham gesture towards one another, most likely to convey their discussion about Hagar, but also to visually bind them together as a pair. Hagar is meanwhile positioned behind Sarah and appears diminutive in comparison to Sarah and Abraham. She wears a dark cloak as opposed to the white robes worn by the married couple, further establishing the right hierarchy and natural order.

These portrayals of the lives of the ancient biblical people counteract the complicated issues around sexuality and marriage which characterizes much of the story of Abraham. The illustrations reveal the effort on the part of the artist to reconcile their sexual shenanigans to one which emphasizes the moral tenets of marital harmony, obedience and faith. Tales of incest and adultery inherent to the Genesis stories have been modified to resemble in many ways late antique exegesis on these matters. Early Church fathers either ignored or reinterpreted the sexual misconduct of the Israelites to uphold the Jewish patriarch and his family to a high moral standard in order to promote them as exemplars of Christian faith.⁷²

Daniel Anlezark's work on the early exegesis of the Abraham story in Anglo-Saxon texts describes how Augustine's writings navigate around this difficult issue. According to Anlezark, Augustine upholds Abraham and Sarah as the ideal married couple by rationalizing their adultery and issues around lust by describing their behaviour as one of "obedience to the higher law demanding procreation and the preservation of the natural order rather than lust."⁷³ These views on the Old Testament characters' sexuality are apparent in Augustine's early treatise, *The Good Marriage* (401 C.E.), where he argues that marriage is the only respectable container for lust. He states that "carnal or

⁷² Anlezark, 190.

⁷³ Anlezark basis this interpretation on Augustine's rebuttal to the Manicheans in his *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*. 190.

youthful incontinence, even if it is bad, is turned to the honourable task of begetting children, so that marital intercourse makes something good out of the evil of lust.”⁷⁴ Later in the text he uses these same principles of procreation to justify the ancients’ infidelities: “It was indeed permissible among the ancients to have another woman with the consent of the wife, from whom common children might be born by the union and the seed of the husband, by the privilege and authorization of the wife.”⁷⁵ However, he is also quick to point out that it is not relevant to contemporary situations, as he stresses: “There is not the need for procreation which there was then, when it was permissible for husbands who could have children to take other women for the sake of a more copious posterity, which certainly is not lawful now.”⁷⁶ In these passages, Augustine expresses a kind of procreation clause for the Old Testament characters. Their sexual habits are deemed appropriate only if they are enacted out of the necessity to propagate, rather than from sheer desire or lust. This clause is allowed because it is for the higher good of the community. In this way, Augustine works around the prickly sexual issues inherent in the stories and creates a moral framework in which the Israelites are commended for their obedience to God.

In a very similar manner the artist has worked a comparable vision of marriage and sexuality into the illustrations. Such treatment of the Abraham story not only safeguards the ideal of marriage and society, but it also emphasizes the importance of purity in the lineage of the Jewish people. The threats to or compromises of the characters’ virtue are corrected or played down. Marital bonds are reinforced and lust is

⁷⁴ St. Augustine, “The Good Marriage,” in *St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality*, ed. Elizabeth Clark (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 46.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 56.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

banished from the sexual equation. The greater good of the Jewish community is highlighted through these visual correctives and small manipulations. Sexuality, in this way, becomes part of a just society and resembles Augustine's ideal of an "ordered concord of domestic rule." Essentially, putting Abraham's house in order equates to civic peace. This is the moral of the Abimelech story: God threatens death and destruction to the king and his family if Sarah is not returned to Abraham; obedience to God and the restoration of marital harmony brings peace to the kingdom. In this way, the scenes reflect an overall strategy in the manuscript to create a sense of order with the imagery, one which highlights the importance of authority, devotion and faith in the community.

This issue of community was particularly relevant to Church fathers in late antiquity. Theological interpretations on the concept of community were being explored, with ancient Roman (i.e. pagan) ideas of community being redefined along the lines of Christian models, such as the Old Testament stories. Popes, Church fathers and emperors in the years after Constantine struggled with the question of how to build a united society of Christians in the empire. Once again, Augustine's apologetic *City of God* represents the most influential study of this subject. Written in 426 C.E., this work responded to and rejected the pagan accusations that the fall of Rome in 410 C.E. was caused by the Christians' dismissal of the traditional pagan deities from Rome, and focused on the issue of how Rome (and the empire) would be restored as a Christian entity. The *City of God* can be seen as a manifesto towards this objective, and became what Johannes Van Oort states was Augustine's "proclamation of the Christian idea of community."⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Johannes Van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine on the Two Cities* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 107.

The two different types of communities portrayed in the *City of God* are mirrored in the two distinct city motifs in the AP—the walled cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the idealized open cityscapes of the remaining illustrations. This image and the outstanding artistry behind it stands-out in the manuscript. The illustration brings life to Augustine’s two famous archetypes, the Earthly City and the City of God, which divides society between sinners and believers. The Earthly City is described as a community of non-believers who oppose Gods’ “authority by their vice”⁷⁸ and “live according to the flesh and to man.”⁷⁹ Its’ antithesis is the City of God; the true community of worshippers which is the “perfectly ordered and completely harmonious fellowship (*societas*) in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God.”⁸⁰ The antinomy between cities in *City of God* was an exegesis of the cities of apocalyptic tradition, Jerusalem and Babylon, two communities whose opposing morality accorded them different fates. The destiny of these cities taught Christians loyalty to God in simple terms: Babylon, where the citizens put their faith in impure acts, was destroyed; whereas earthly Jerusalem, where the citizens put their faith in God, was saved and restored. With the physical decay of Rome and the fracturing of the empire in the fifth and sixth centuries, this message could have cast Rome as Babylon. Indeed, Pope Gregory saw the outcome of the ruin of Rome in eschatological terms, when he lamented that “once the world held us by its delights. Now it is so full of disasters that the world itself seems to be summoning us to God.”⁸¹ But as Augustine observed a century earlier, Rome continued to stand, while such cities as Babylon and Sodom were destroyed.

⁷⁸ St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XII, Chapter 3 in Dyson, 501.

⁷⁹ Van Oort, 130.

⁸⁰ St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book 19, Chapter 18 in Dyson, 947.

⁸¹ Brown, 213.

The reason for Rome's continuation can be understood in its association with the holy Church, which Augustine believed was the City of God on earth, where a united community of citizens congregated to receive the Scripture and the promise of eternity in the heavenly Jerusalem. The first City of God is, however, closely associated with the doctrine of salvation in the Old Testament. The Church is foreshadowed by the Old Testament figures in the desert, which was the first society of believers, and whose covenant was with God as the chosen people—the precursor to the future chosen people who live according to the faith.⁸²

The moral dichotomy drawn by Augustine between different types of societies is reflected in stark terms in the AP. Here, different city motifs are juxtaposed between the open, gleaming cityscapes and the closed, dark fortified cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The image of these doomed cities creates a foil to the moral and societal order portrayed in the open cityscapes that frame the first community of believers. As a result, the viewer is presented with a vivid lesson on the consequences of sin. In the Old Testament, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-25) serves as a stunning example of God's moral judgment. One of the main moral lessons presented by the stories of Sodom and Gomorrah concerns the sexual malice of the Sodomites: they defied the conventions of hospitality revered by the ancients and chose lust and desire over procreation. Indeed, as Robert Alter writes, “this story of the doomed city is crucial not only to Genesis but the moral thematics of the Bible as a whole . . . because it is the biblical version of anti-civilization.”⁸³ Thus the causal nexus between the sins of the Sodomites and their punishment shows how one event inexorably leads to another. Sin equals the destruction

⁸² St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book 18, Chapter 48 in Dyson, 894-95.

⁸³ Robert Alter, quoted in Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Day in Mamre: Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J Brill, 1995), 253.

of civilization through the total judgment of God, as the biblical text describes: “he destroyed these cities, and all the country about, all the inhabitants of the cities, and all things that spring from the earth” (Genesis 19:25).

The visual ideology of Sodom and Gomorrah as presented in the AP illustrations represents a strong portrait of this warning. Without reading or understanding the biblical text, the formal traits alone would suffice in creating meaning for a viewer about morality and the merits of righteous living. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are illustrated in the top left vignette on folio 18r and are identified by *tituli* above them, with Sodom on the left and Gomorrah on the right (Fig. 19). Both towns are completely enclosed with a brick fortified wall with turrets. Sodom has eight towers, while Gomorrah has seven. Within the city walls, a hint of what is left of civilization is discernable in the one remaining portico in Sodom; otherwise the buildings are unrecognizable. There is a veil of black blocking out the interior spaces. Above the cities a canopy of fire and sulphur rains down from the upper frame of the page. It comes from outside the boundaries of the scene, giving it the effect that indeed the destruction comes from Heaven above, a place not of this world. Disembodied human heads with faces turned up and eyes closed float on top of the buildings in what appear to be the death masks of the Sodomites and Gomorrahans. There are no gates leading into or out of the cities.

Together, they are an image of enclosure, the opposite pole to the undefended vulnerability of the open cityscapes. The architectural associations elicited by references to the urban armature with their gates, interiors and domes represent a metropolitan world of advancement, peace and civility. The image of enclosure behind the bricked fortified walls of the doomed cities is a visual sign of fear and moral corruption. The effect of the

walled city in contrast to the open cityscapes recalls Augustine's exclamation: "Or do you imagine, brothers, that a city is defined by its walls, and not rather by its citizens?"⁸⁴ Indeed, it is the actions and character of the citizens rather than the walls which will protect them from God's punishment. As Frugoni notes, the reduction of the city to the status of a fortress in fourth and sixth-century Italy was seen by contemporary voices as the decline of *civilitas*.⁸⁵ That is, the image of the city as a fortress succeeding or not succeeding to protect its citizens from death and destruction had usurped the lives and deeds of its inhabitants, which had been a hallmark of *romanitas*.

There is a visual affirmation of the duality between "right and wrong" in the wall motif on folio 18r, reflected in the contrasts between dark and light, chaos and order, and closed and open. Each works to emphasize the theological divide erected between the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah and the protagonists of the Abraham story. Moreover, the viewer is placed on the protagonists' side in relation to the different architectural viewpoints. For example, the wall enclosures around Sodom and Gomorrah and Segor have the effect of placing viewers in the same position as Abraham and Lot, aligning them with these characters rather than those in the doomed cities. Because of the city walls, the perspective of Sodom and Gomorrah gives an excellent view of the cities, which are tilted slightly, giving the effect of looking down upon them from a distance, while they are being destroyed. This gives the illusion of the same "outsider" perspective as Abraham, who is shown shielding his eyes as "the ashes rise up from the earth as the smoke of a furnace" (Genesis 19:28), and who stands at a safe distance on the hill.

⁸⁴ St. Augustine, as quoted in Frugoni, 31.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 30.

The imagery of Segor functions similarly. Located below Sodom and Gomorrah, it is the place of refuge for Lot and his daughters during the destruction of Sodom. However Lot, still fearing the city, leaves to find sanctuary in the hills. The role of Segor can thus be seen as the moral “middle ground,” a role reflected in its architecture. Rather than being opened up to the viewer and occupied by figures as in the other cityscapes, Segor is located behind city walls much like the doomed cities above. However, the walls in this case are not turreted or bricked, erasing the fortified or embattled look of Sodom and Gomorrah. Rather, in the illustration, Segor shares the same white marbled façade and open gate of the open cityscapes and in this way it represents the ambivalent role it has in the biblical text—not doomed, but not entirely safe either. Thus Segor is closed off from the characters by its walls, placing the viewer outside the city with Lot and his daughters as they move forward on the narrative path to the cave in the hills.

The architectural motifs, and the innovative way the artist has used both the common walled-city image and the unique open cityscapes, work to assist the viewer in becoming personally invested in the Old Testament stories. They create a striking visual context for a Christian moral order, one where the viewer is guided through the illustrations to relate more intensely to the Jewish characters in the interior spaces, rather than to the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. Furthermore, a sense of intimacy is promoted through the absence of the city wall in the idealized scenes, which enables a closer examination of the communal and everyday life of the biblical people. The use of the two city motif is part of the artist’s strategic use of architecture to format the idiosyncratic scenes into a comprehensive image, one that has a strong cognitive impact.

As this suggests, the use of architecture as a formal component to inspire the engagement of the viewer is one of the more important aspects of its role in the AP. The different motifs, and the juxtaposition of walled cities with open cityscapes, are a striking example of how the cityscapes teach the viewer about the repercussions of sin and the benefits of obedience. As discussed earlier, certain urban features, such as stairs, platforms and arches, are used as organizational structures throughout the miniatures, leading the viewer through the complicated arrangements of scenes. In addition to these components, there are other characteristics, such as columns and colour blocking, which create a visual perspective that promotes a further connection between the viewer and the illustrations. These features, in particular, are worth a closer look because they bring a unique illusion of depth and space to the imagery, a phenomenon which recalls Alois Riegl's "subjective surface" of late Roman art. This is the three-dimensional surface that Riegl argues was an innovation introduced in the art of the late Roman Empire, one which emancipated space on the picture plane and thereby created a link between perception and experience.⁸⁶ Riegl's writings on this artistic period prompts a deeper consideration of how the architecture in the AP functions on the level of perceptual experience, and suggests that it is not a mere iconographic curiosity, but rather has an essential role to perform.

Based on his analysis of the evolving structures of perception in art from antiquity to the late Roman period, Riegl describes how in antique art the "rhythm" (the formal components of an object which create a unified composition) is always "restricted to the

⁸⁶ Alois Riegl, "The Main Characteristics of the Late Roman Kunstwollen," in *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, ed. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 2000).

plane.”⁸⁷ In other words, the viewer is continually made aware of the surface because the rhythmic compositions are created as two-dimensional structures “beside one another and on top of one another, but not behind one another.”⁸⁸ The perceptual effect of this restriction is one where objects are isolated against the picture plane. This highlights the form’s materiality and emphasizes the flatness of the surface, thus negating any illusion to depth or demarcation of space. Viewing these objects was a phenomenon that Riegl described in terms of tactility or near perception. The lack of illusion to spatial depth was thought to instigate a sensory experience that brought the beholder near to the surface instigating a tactile rather than optical perception of its materiality. Because touch is immediate and “substantial,” it provides solid evidence of the real surface of the art form, and thus for Riegl does not require subjective analysis and therefore he terms them “objective surfaces.”

In contrast, late Roman art facilitated a different perceptual experience, one which Riegl describes as the optical view or distant perspective. Certain elements, such as colour, light and shadow are introduced to the formal components of an object in these art forms, creating “colouristic rhythm,” which Riegl argues creates a “subjective surface.”⁸⁹ This is where representational forms now emphasize space on the picture plane as something other than infinite, empty or impenetrable.⁹⁰ Form breaks free from the plane and starts to create an illusion of three-dimensionality and a perception of depth for the viewer. As a result, space on the surface becomes perceptible and penetrable. Attention now shifts away from the materiality of the surface or of forms as real, to one that

⁸⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 88.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 87.

engages the viewer's subjective perception or impression—that is, how one sees the object or experiences the object.⁹¹

The architectural innovations in the AP create the same phenomenon of the optical view, where the effects of the imagery create an illusory deception of surface depth. In order to achieve this affect, the artist has used certain techniques similar to Riegl's colouristic rhythm theory. Colour and shading are added to the compositions throughout the miniatures. The contrasts between the colours are what provide the illusion of surface depth. With its bright white facades, the architecture pops-out against the coloured parchment. Furthermore, because the cityscapes have been opened up to view, the proliferation of columns and arches in the foreground provide openings in the cityscapes. These openings, which dominate the interior and exterior scenes, have been filled-in with different shades of colours, creating a vivid contrast between the white architecture and the surface.

The artist has also added shading to the archways throughout the illustrations, which is most pronounced on folio 22v, where dark purplish black has been added to the inner archways creating an illusion of an interior space vis-à-vis these shadowy effects (Fig. 8). This shading gives the impression of ceilings and walls to the structures. This luminosity between shadow and light distributed throughout the architectural settings is an illusionary effect whereby the plane recedes into the background creating the “subjective surface.” Thus, the viewer is brought into a perceptual relationship with the object based on the optical view through the mediating experience between the architecture on the page and the viewer. As Angela Dalle Vacche notes this “emphasis on

⁹¹ Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 139.

subjectivity” in late Roman art provides an “overall frame of mind, a general sensation, atmosphere, or mood...[and]...a gradual increase in sense of coherence, unity, and self-awareness of the beholding subject.”⁹² Through a comparison with another manuscript from the period, the *Vienna Genesis* mentioned earlier, we can see how the difference in spatial perceptions changes the experience and outcome for the viewer.

As described, the use of open cityscapes in the AP—with their archways and columns, colours and shadows—is a rhythmic organization against the flat plane, which allows for space to emerge as an object of perception. While the *Vienna Genesis* does have hints of three-dimensionality through its overlapping figures, the compositions are essentially composed in such a way as to emphasize the surface.⁹³ For example, the scene of the Temptation of Joseph is fairly representative of this scenario (Fig. 20). Divided into two registers the action of the figures stand isolated against the surface. The colonnade representing the palace of Potiphar is a solid classical form with no illusion of an interior. There is little differentiation between the surface and the forms.

In the majority of scenes in the *Vienna Genesis*, the background consists mostly of large swaths of “empty” surface space intermittently broken up by figures or a single architectural structure depicted in a rather linear style. This resembles Riegl’s “objective surface,” where the lack of illusion to space instigates a closer tactile perception of its materiality. What is interesting to point out about this reading of the *Vienna Genesis* is that its materiality particularly mattered in its reception. The manuscript has purple parchment and silver ink, luxury items which indicate it was most likely commissioned

⁹² Angela Dalle Vacche, *The Visual Turn: Classical Film Theory and Art History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 6.

⁹³ Emmy Wellesz, *The Vienna Genesis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 6-7.

for an imperial audience.⁹⁴ Thus the tactile effects of the materiality of the manuscript surface were featured to appeal to imperial tastes. The AP, on the other hand, is as Verkerk writes a “workhorse of a manuscript,”⁹⁵ one which was meant to teach students the Scripture. Thus, the illusion of the three-dimensional space can be seen as didactic structures of perspective that bind the viewer to the biblical text.

This is representative of the way in which the imagery, in particular, the formal components of the architecture, functions as an instrument for instructing the viewer on Christian matters important to the Church during this period. The architecture, with its diverse forms and structures, is what holds the audience’s attention. It assists the viewer in making the proper moral connections being communicated by the biblical characters acting out their exodus drama within the context of these spectacular architectural complexes. As described, the unique interior scenes create a realistic domestic setting in which to highlight Christian values around issues such as sex and marriage, which the artist has manipulated to conform to the teachings of Church fathers. The emphasis on domestic order in the cityscapes relates back to how as a whole, the cityscapes introduce an element of stability and order into the AP. Whether considering their use as organizational components or in a more symbolic manner as conjuring up the authority of the Church of Rome, the architecture conveys a sense of reassurance in the way it places the focus on the morality and devotion of the Old Testament characters. This makes a direct impression of social harmony that would relate personally to a contemporary Roman viewer in late antiquity.

⁹⁴ Lowden, 17.

⁹⁵ Verkerk, *Early Medieval Bible Illumination*, 185.

Conclusion

The cityscapes are arguably the most compelling artistic feature of the AP. The domes, arches, gateways and gabled-roofs occupy a significant position, suggesting the importance placed on them by the artist, as he conjured up specific cultural connections to assist in the translation of the theologically complicated stories of the Pentateuch text. The main objective of this thesis was to explore and analyze how the cityscape and its architectural forms enhance the meaning of the Genesis and Exodus stories in the AP, and how they reveal the political, religious and cultural environment of Rome in late antiquity. My analysis was driven by the desire to view the architecture as more than mere backdrop, or decorative feature to the illustrations, but rather as an essential component to the manuscript's didactic function.

In examining the role of the architecture in the AP, I have taken an urban perspective, arguing that the grouping of certain buildings and forms resemble the urban armatures of the Roman imperial city. These armatures not only reflect the appearance of a city, but mirror how the city's forms and structures function within the urban landscape. Moreover, certain architectural features make important scenes more visible and assist the viewer's negotiation through the complicated maze of illustrations. In this manner, the cityscapes act as an integral organizational feature of the AP. They are also the conduit for a more intimate reading of the Old Testament narrative; one that encourages an embodied experience for the viewer by drawing them physically into the open cityscapes. That is, the architecture in the images is translated into a different kind of experience for the viewer, where their movements through the real city are reinterpreted in the narrative. Not only does this give some reality to the biblical stories, but it also

prompts the viewer to access the manuscript's narrative through navigating the same architectural forms (stairs, arches, gateways) that they encounter in their everyday navigation through the imperial Roman city.

These traditional building typologies of the cityscapes, which relate contextually to the urban morphology of imperial Rome, were also shown to be the forms that signify a new ideology of Roman history as Christian in the manuscript. As argued, this Romanization of the Pentateuch text through the cityscapes effectively unites Jewish history with Roman mythology, in order to establish a Roman-oriented Scriptural tradition. This strategy is apparent in the establishment of a new foundational myth of Rome in late antiquity through the exegesis of the papacy. The linking of the ancient myth of eternal and universal Rome with Christ's miraculous birth and the Apostolic See of Peter created a new hierarchy of religious and political authority for the popes and the Church of Rome. An authority anchored within the biblical past and ancient Roman mythology was a necessary inference for the assertion of the Church of Rome's power over the Christian community and the empire.

What was found to be particularly interesting about the architecture in the AP's illustrations is that although it represents the conventional signifiers of imperial Rome, it does not recall a specific building or monument. Rather, through the grouping of its forms, it creates cityscapes that recall the enduring history and "eternity" of Rome. As a result, the ability of architecture to evoke a sensory experience by the viewer is as important as the identity of the architecture itself. Oleg Grabar suggests that this type of utilization of architecture in late antique and early medieval illustrations was how "precision of depiction is needed for them to be buildings, but the specificity of that

precision is secondary to their power of evocation.”⁹⁶ This evocativeness of the architecture was the “feeders of a dream:” they do not ascribe a specific identity for the buildings utilized in images, but rather they are “intimations” of something else. This role held by the architecture was a main consideration in this paper. That is, the architectural features do not intimate the fabric of a singular public building, but instead display a network of buildings and structures that provide the formal essence that call to mind associations to imperial Roman cities, such as stability, permanence, authority, civility and community.

Many of these issues were explored in the last section of the paper, where the use of certain urban motifs by the artist to communicate the notion of civic responsibility in a Christian Roman Empire was discussed. Here I noted how imagery was manipulated in the Abraham story to uphold the honourable character of the Old Testament figures. That is, how the juxtaposition between the idealized interior spaces with the walled cities of Sodom and Gomorrah emphasize social harmony through their ability to highlight correct behaviour as it pertained to the lives of the biblical characters. Overall, the formal components of the cityscapes are the visual binds that tie the viewer to the elaborate imagery and the message on morality being conveyed in the Genesis and Exodus stories, ones that make these stories more present to the late antique viewer.

Previous studies on the AP have overlooked the connection between the turbulent period of the Christian transition of the Western Roman Empire in late antiquity and the manuscript imagery. They have also ignored the manuscript’s discrepancy between the

⁹⁶ Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 191.

Old Testament pastoral setting and the elaborate Roman architecture. By examining the incorporation of such distinctive and innovative cityscapes within the AP, I have sought to shed light on the purpose and meaning of the architecture itself, as well as the ideology (political, cultural and religious) it served to promote and mythologize. In the end, the architectural forms and settings within the AP suggest a different interpretation of Old Testament scripture than is implied from a direct translation of its text. The distinct cityscapes that are displayed, the Christian cultural elements and references in the illustrations, and the juxtaposition of the imperial Roman legacy with Old Testament writings, together, combined to offer Roman viewers an appealing message of continuity. One that gave them the visual means for supporting a relatively new Christian culture organized through the Church of Rome.

Figures

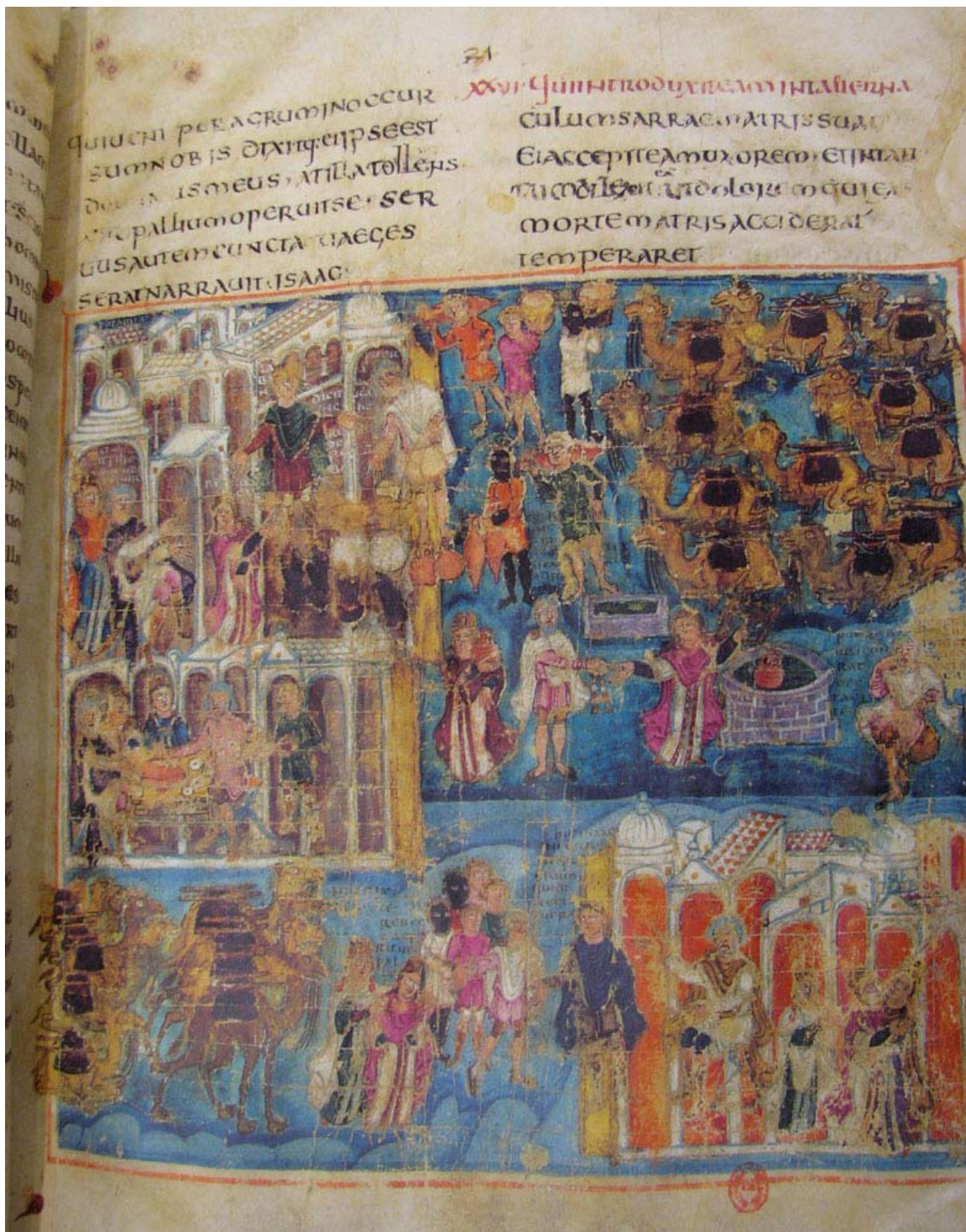


Figure 1. *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, Isaac and Rebecca, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, Fol. 21r. (Photograph reproduced from the Patrimonio Ediciones Facsimile by permission of UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections).

Figure 2. Silver Argentus of Constantine the Great, Roman, AD 306-7, London, British Musuem, cm 1852-11-26-1. (Photograph © the British Museum). Image withdrawn due to copyright.

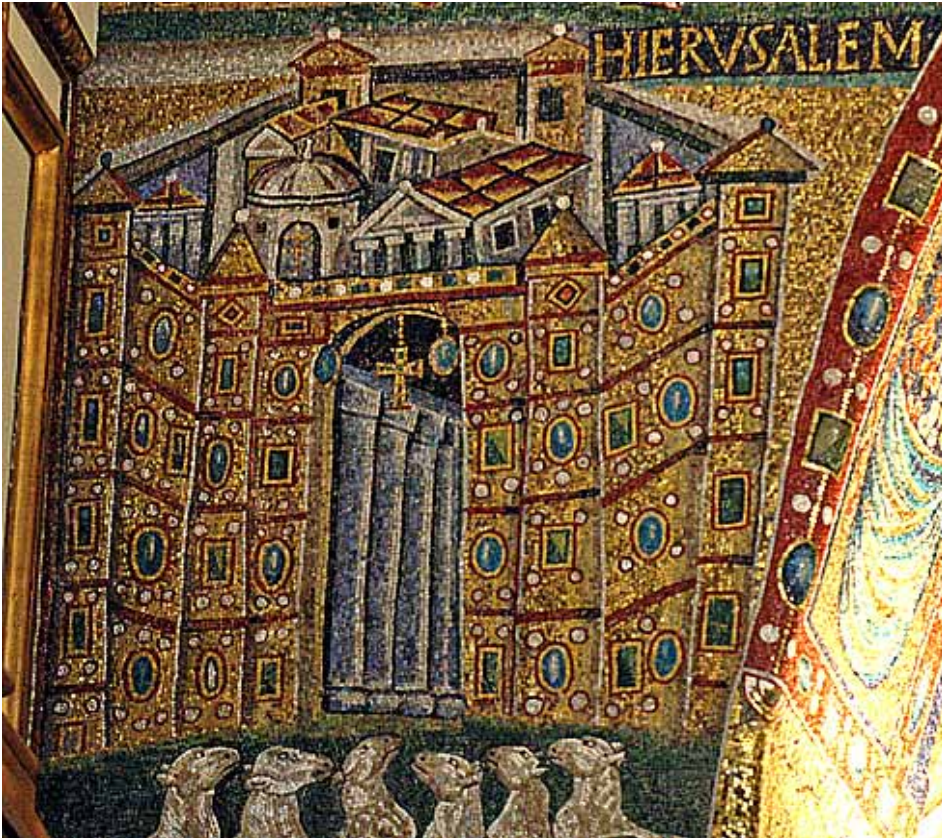


Figure 3. Santa Maria Maggiore, Triumphal Arch with the Scene of the Heavenly Jerusalem, Rome. (Photo © Adrian Fletcher, www.paradoxplace.com).



Figure 4. Santa Maria Maggiore, Triumphal Arch with the Scene of the Magi Visiting Herod, Rome. (Photo © Adrian Fletcher, www.paradoxplace.com).

Figure 5. *Vienna Genesis*, Rebecca at the Well, Vienna, Early 6th Century, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. Theolo. Gr. 31, Folio 7v. (Photograph provided by ARTstor, <http://www.artstor.org>). Image withdrawn due to copyright.

Figure 6. Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, The City of Classe, Nave Mosaic, Ravenna, 6th Century (with alterations after 527). (Photograph provided by ARTstor, <http://www.artstor.org>). Image withdrawn due to copyright.

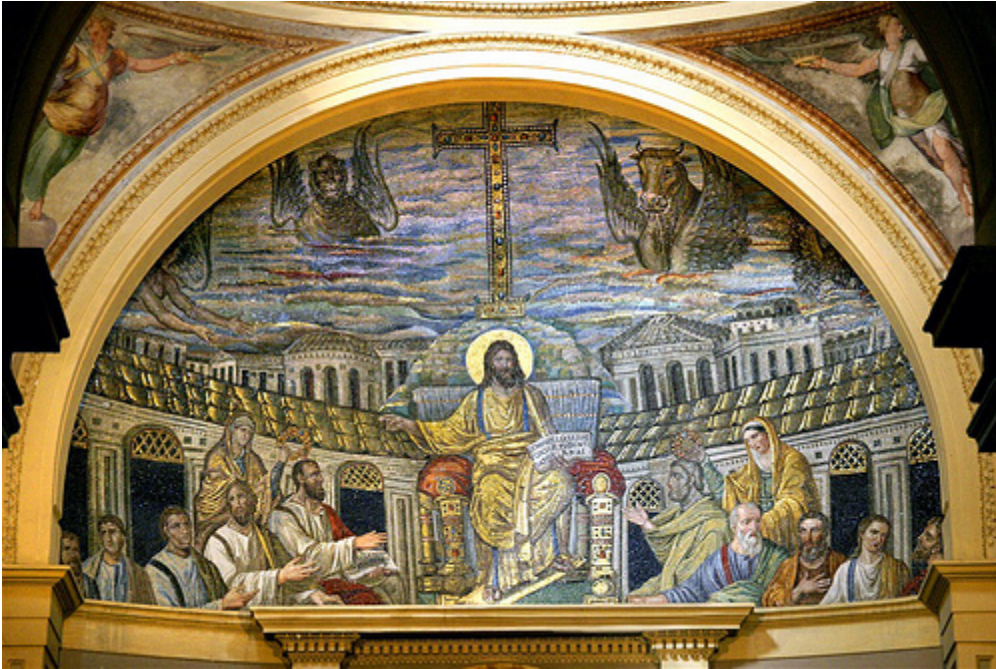


Figure 7. Church of St. Pudenziana, Christ Enthroned, Apse Mosaic, Rome, ca. 390.
(Photo © Adrian Fletcher, www.paradoxplace.com).

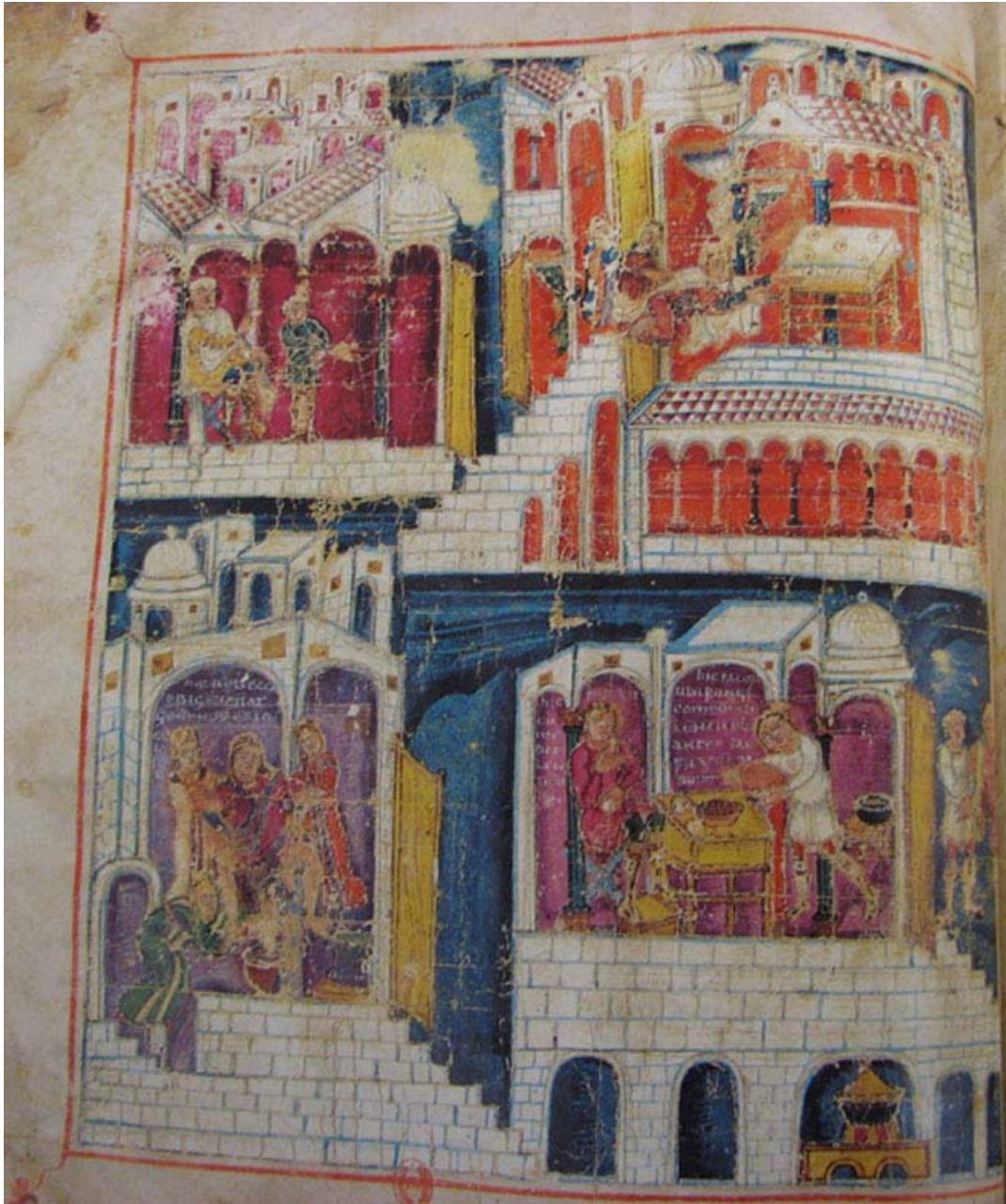


Figure 8. *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, Rebecca and her Twins, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, Fol. 22v. (Photograph reproduced from the Patrimonio Ediciones Facsimile by permission of UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections).

Figure 9. *Cryptoportico*, Hadrian's Villa, AD 118-137, Tivoli, Italy. (Photograph provided by ARTstor, <http://www.artstor.org>). Image withdrawn due to copyright.

Figure 10. *Quedlinburg Itala Fragments*, Scenes from Chapter 15 of 1 Kings, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Cod. Theol. Lat. Fol. 485, Fol. 2r.
(Photograph at <http://www.historyofscience.com/G2I/timeline/index.php?category=Book+Illustration>).
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

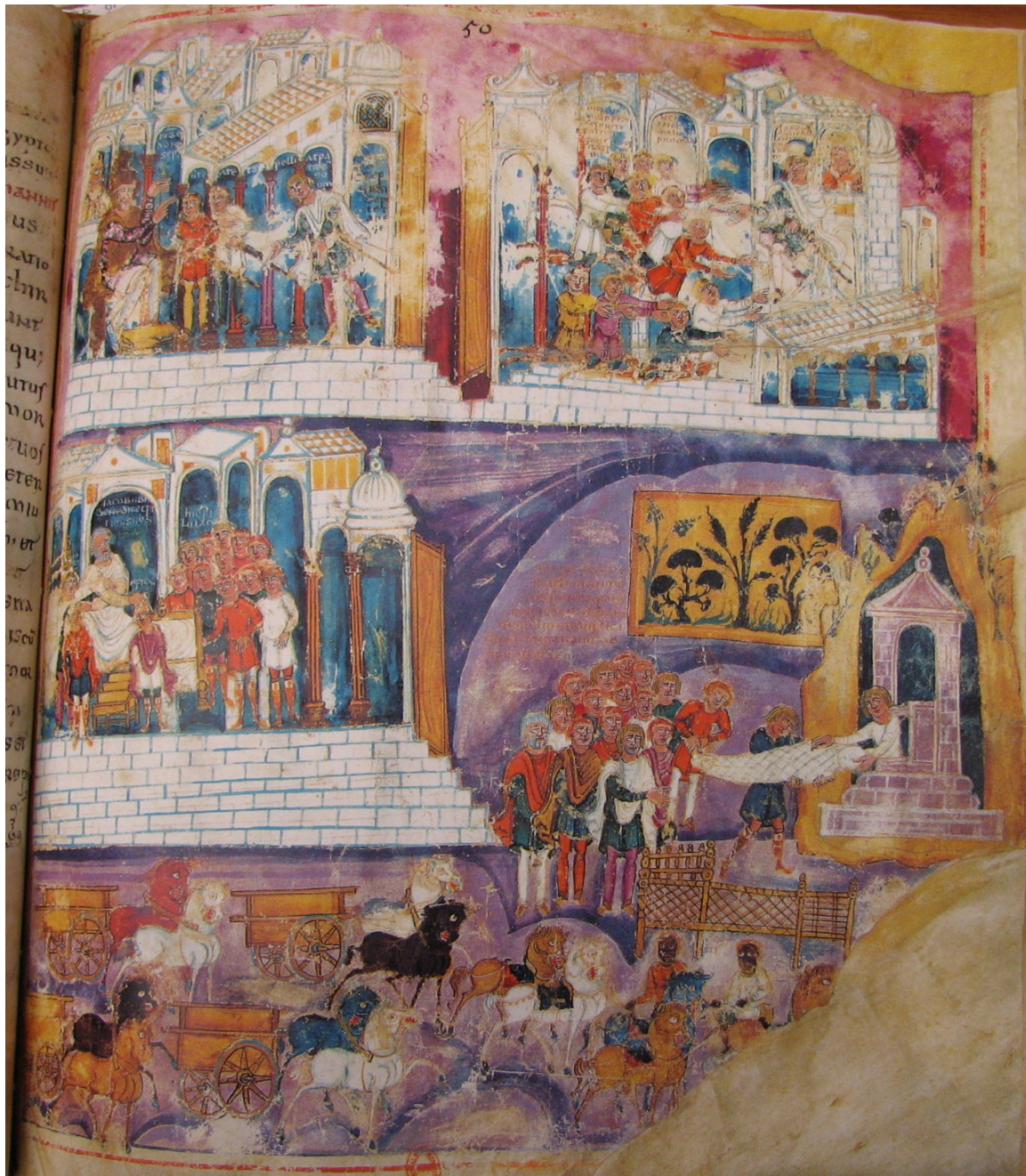


Figure 11. *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, Jacob's Burial, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, Fol. 50r. (Photograph reproduced from the *Patrimonio Ediciones Facsimile* by permission of UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections).



Figure 12. *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, Sodom and Gomorrah, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, Fol. 18r. (Photograph reproduced from the Patrimonio Ediciones Facsimile by permission of UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections).

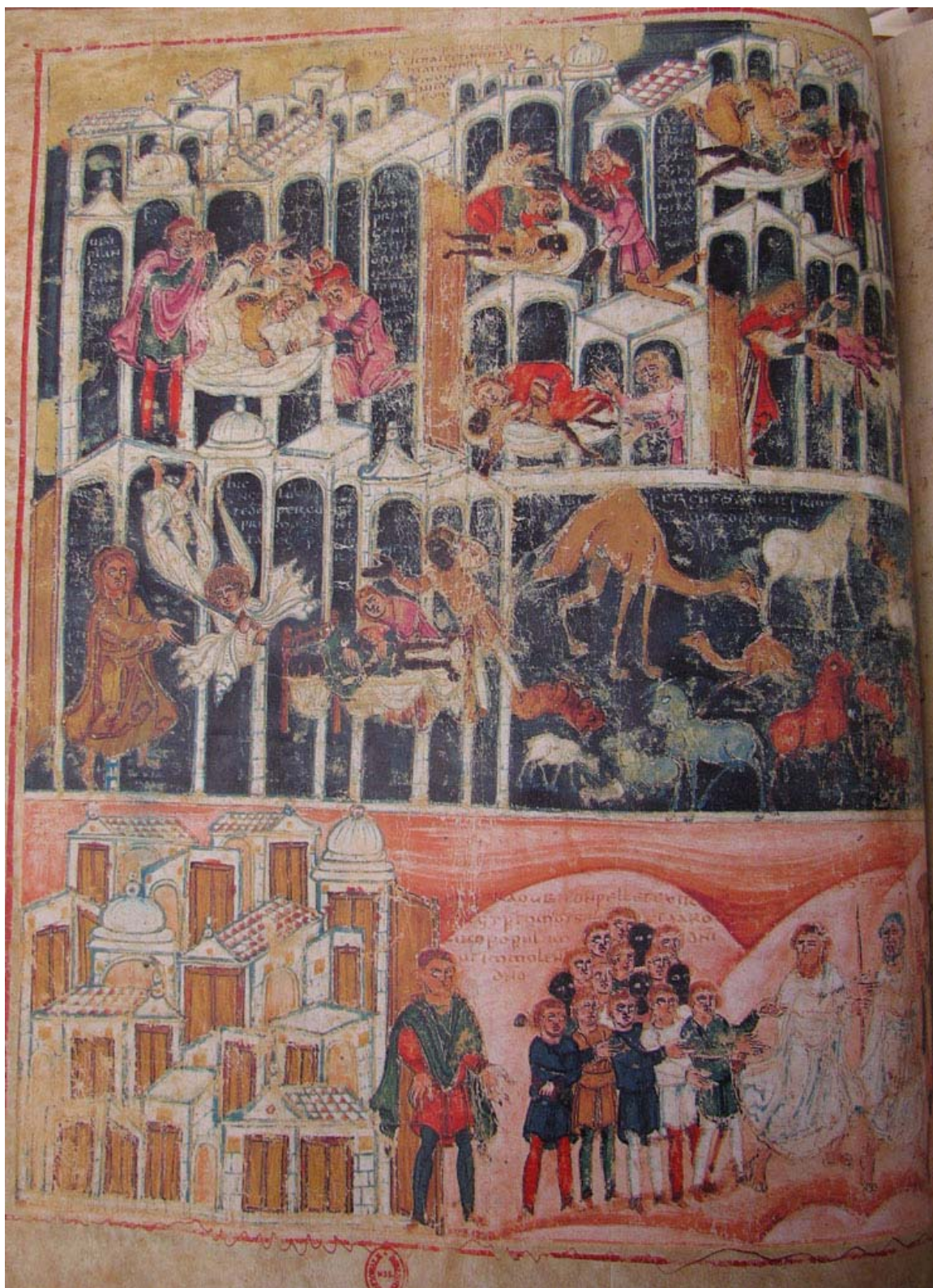


Figure 13. *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, The Tenth Plague, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, Fol. 65v. (Photograph reproduced from the Patrimonio Ediciones Facsimile by permission of UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections).

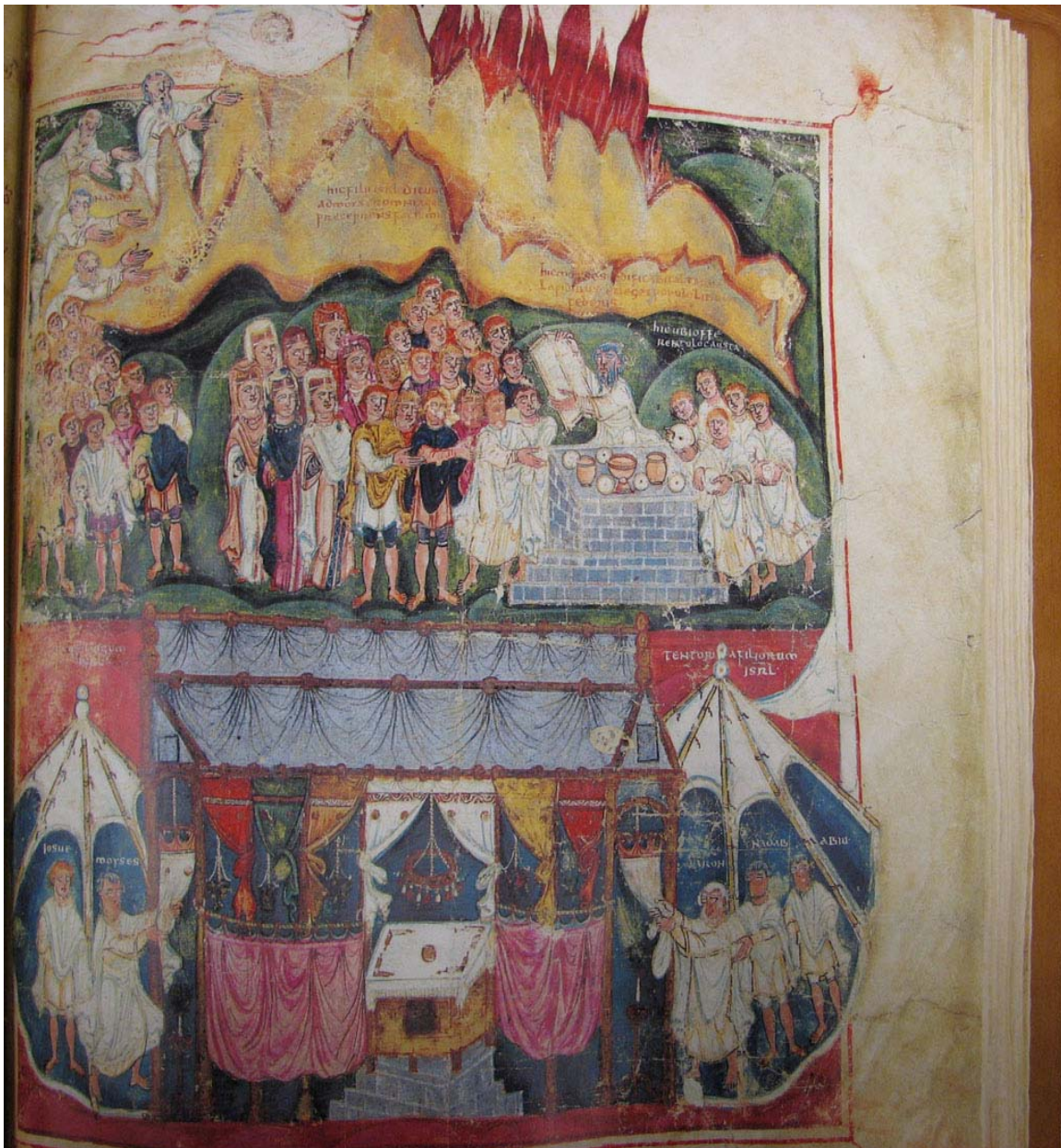


Figure 14. *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, Moses Reading the Covenant, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, Fol. 76r. (Photograph reproduced from the Patrimonio Ediciones Facsimile by permission of UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections).



Figure 15. *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, The Israelites Murmuring Against Moses; The Crossing of the Red Sea, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, Fol. 68r. (Photograph reproduced from the Patrimonio Ediciones Facsimile by permission of UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections).



Figure 16. Santa Maria Maggiore, Triumphal Arch with the Scenes from the Presentation of Christ (top register), Rome. (Photo © Adrian Fletcher, www.paradoxplace.com).

Figure 17. *Cotton Genesis*, Lot and his Daughter, London, British Library, MS Cotton Otho B VI, Fol. 127. (Wash drawing reproduction of original fragment by Dr. Marian Wenzel in *The Cotton Genesis: British Library, Codex Cotton Otho B VI*, by Herbert Kessler and Kurt Weitzmann. N.J: Princeton University Press, 1986, fig. 234). Image withdrawn due to copyright.



Figure 18. *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, King Abimelech and Sarah, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, Fol.18r (detail). (Photograph reproduced from the Patrimonio Ediciones Facsimile by permission of UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections).



Figure 19. *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, Sodom and Gomorrah, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, Fol.18r (detail). (Photograph reproduced from the Patrimonio Ediciones Facsimile by permission of UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections).

Figure 20. *Vienna Genesis*, Temptation of Joseph, Vienna, 6th Century, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. Theolo. Gr. 31, Fol. 31. (Photograph provided by ARTstor, <http://www.artstor.org>). Image withdrawn due to copyright.

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