

The presentation of Jerome's first letter to Paulinus of Nola in the Codex Amiatinus Pentateuch
diagram

Abstract: A diagram in the first quire of the Codex Amiatinus features five textual captions arranged in cruciform formation, one for each book of the Pentateuch. These are taken from Jerome's first letter to Paulinus of Nola (*Epistle 53*) which was written in 394 AD. This essay examines the diagram's colours, geometric structure, manuscript location and script. It suggests that the Pentateuch diagram should be regarded as a highly original piece of visual exegesis which is designed to celebrate the contribution made by Jerome to the transmission of the Latin Bible and point the viewer towards typological interpretations of Old Testament figures and events.

Keywords: Codex Amiatinus; Pentateuch; Wearmouth-Jarrow; manuscript illumination; Jerome; Paulinus of Nola; *Epistle 53*; Vulgate; Ceolfrith.

In the year 394 St Jerome (d. 420) responded to a letter from Paulinus of Nola, an adult convert to Christianity who became renowned for his achievements as a Latin poet, with a letter of his own.¹ The two men were involved in an epistolary relationship which lasted for at least six years, although just two further letters from Jerome to Paulinus survive and the ones sent from Paulinus to Jerome in Bethlehem have not been preserved.² Jerome's first letter to Paulinus of Nola, which is customarily assigned the number 53 in modern editions of Jerome's correspondence, is studded with allusions to the Apostle Paul. *Epistle 53* emphasises the importance of Christian education and discusses at length the theme of intelligible worship. Jerome offers Paulinus, a recipient he seems to have regarded as

¹ Jerome, *Epistula 53*, edited by Isidor Hilberg, CSEL 54–6 (Vienna and Leipzig 1910–18) 54, 442–65.

² Jerome, *Epistula 58* (Hilberg, CSEL 54, 527–41); *Epistula 85* (Hilberg, CSEL 55, 135–8). On the relationship between Jerome and Paulinus, see: Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: life, letters, and poems* (London 1999) 90–101; Stefan. Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Stuttgart 1992) 220–40; Catherine Conybeare, *Paulinus noster: self and symbols in the letters of Paulinus of Nola* (New York 2000) 6–7.

being unfamiliar with the deeper meaning of scripture,³ a series of examples which highlight the importance of having a learned guide for biblical study. The Apostle Paul is referred to as a 'chosen vessel' in Acts 9.15, Jerome explains, because his intimate knowledge of the Law and the Holy Scriptures made him ideally qualified to teach others after his conversion. Jerome celebrates Paul's knowledge of the 'Law of Moses and the prophets', which he learned at the feet of his teacher Gamaliel.⁴ He proceeds to tell Paulinus that priests must be comprehensively educated in such matters, and that being able to answer questions regarding the Law is an important function of the priesthood (a fellowship which Paulinus joined shortly after receiving *Epistle 53* from Jerome).⁵ A subsequent section of Jerome's letter discusses the New Testament episode in which Philip encounters an Ethiopian eunuch who constantly read the Scriptures in his chariot (Acts 8.26–40). By teaching and baptizing him, Jerome says, Philip 'showed him Jesus, who was concealed beneath the letter' of the texts that he knew so intimately.⁶

Epistle 53 was held in extremely high regard at the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow in Anglo-Saxon England at the turn of the eighth century.⁷ Established by the Northumbrian aristocrat Benedict Biscop (d.689), and furnished with books and other treasures brought back from regular trips to Rome and other continental locations, the foundation enjoyed a fifty-year golden period during which it established itself as a centre of education and produced many sophisticated works of art in various different media.⁸ The interpretation and transmission of the Latin Bible were at the heart of

³ Jerome, *Epistula* 58.9 (Hilberg, CSEL 54, 538).

⁴ Jerome, *Epistula* 53.3 (Hilberg, CSEL 54, 448–9).

⁵ Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 92–3.

⁶ Jerome, *Epistula* 53.5 (Hilberg, CSEL 54, 451–2): 'uenit philippus, ostendit ei iesum, qui clausus latebat in littera'.

⁷ Jennifer O'Reilly, *St Paul and the sign of Jonah. Theology and scripture in Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Jarrow Lecture 2014) 2–3.

⁸ Bede, *Historia abbatum* 4–9 and Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi* 7–16, edited and translated in Christopher Grocock & Ian N. Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013) 30–45 and 84–95.

the community's intellectual programme, and the monks' crowning collective achievement is the Codex Amiatinus, an unusually large edition of the complete Holy Scriptures completed during the abbacy of Ceolfrith, Benedict's immediate successor as abbot (d. 716).⁹ The codex contains a diagram in which five textual captions from Jerome's *Epistle 53* are arranged in a cruciform formation (figure 1).

Documentary sources, one of which was written by an anonymous member of the Wearmouth-Jarrow community and the other by the monastery's foremost intellectual Bede (c. 673–735), record that two other bibles were produced contemporaneously with the Codex Amiatinus in the early eighth century. Each of these was made for public display with a specific destination in mind, one for the church dedicated to St Peter in Wearmouth and the other for St Paul's Church in Jarrow.¹⁰ The Codex Amiatinus was a gift for the shrine of St Peter in Rome, and so presumably was also intended for some form of public display. The manuscript survives more or less fully intact, although not in its original binding, in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, having escaped the Northumbrian coast before the Viking raids began when Ceolfrith took it with him on his final overseas voyage in AD 716. The codex contains 1029 folia, the dimensions of which are in the region of 500 by 335 mm. The Codex Amiatinus has a cycle of illuminated pages in its initial quire, as well as a *Maiestas Domini* image and seven pages of canon tables before the start of the New Testament.¹¹

⁹ Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Amiatino 1. An electronic facsimile has been published: Luigi G. G. Ricci, Lucia Castaldi, and Rosanna Minello (eds), *La Bibbia Amiatina: Riproduzione integrale su CD-ROM del manoscritto Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Amiatino 1* (Florence 2000).

¹⁰ Bede, *Historia abbatum* 15; Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi* 20 (Grocock & Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 56–60 and 98–9).

¹¹ The literature on the initial quire is vast but see especially: Celia Chazelle, 'Ceolfrid's Gift to St Peter: the first quire of the *Codex Amiatinus* and the evidence of its Roman destination', *Early Medieval Europe* 12 (2003) 129–57. On the *Maiestas Domini* see Peter Darby, 'The Codex Amiatinus *Maiestas Domini* and the gospel prefaces of Jerome', *Speculum* 92 (2017) 343–71. For the canon tables: Barbara Apelian Beall, 'Entry point to

Only a handful of additional Ceolfrithian bible fragments are known to be extant.¹² These are substantial enough to suggest that the quality and size of the text pages of these bibles were on a par with the Codex Amiatinus: they too set out Scripture in parallel columns, in clear uncial script, with generous margins.¹³ Aside from the considerable practical and material considerations involved in producing three enormous manuscripts, the editorial project that underpins their finished texts must itself have occupied the community for many years.¹⁴

Ceolfrith's anonymous biographer proudly informs us that the Codex Amiatinus presented the Scriptures according to 'the blessed priest Jerome's translation from the Hebrew and Greek originals', by which is meant the 'Vulgate' version of the Latin Bible put together in Late Antiquity by Jerome.¹⁵ The Codex Amiatinus is the oldest complete Vulgate manuscript to survive fully intact; it is largely based on Italian models and is regarded as offering one of the earliest and highest quality editions of the Hieronymian text.¹⁶ Although the making of a pandect had previously been attempted at least twice at the Southern Italian monastery of Vivarium in the time of its founder Cassiodorus (d. c. 585),

the scriptorium Bede knew at Wearmouth and Jarrow: the canon tables of the Codex Amiatinus', in Stéphane Lebecq, Michel Perrin and Olivier Szerwiniack (eds), *Bède le Vénérable: entre tradition et postérité / The Venerable Bede: tradition and posterity* (Villeneuve d'Ascq 2005) 187–97.

¹² These are known as the Middleton Leaves (London, British Library, Add MS 45025), the Greenwell Leaf (British Library, Add MS 37777), and the Bankes Leaf (British Library, MS Loan 81).

¹³ Images of the Bankes Leaf and one of the Middleton Leaves are reproduced with commentary by Janet Backhouse in Leslie Webster and Janet Backhouse (eds), *The making of England: Anglo-Saxon art and culture AD 600–900* (London 1991) 122–3.

¹⁴ Richard Gameson, 'The cost of the Codex Amiatinus', *Notes And Queries* 237 (1992) 2–9.

¹⁵ Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi* 37 (Grocock & Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 116–9): 'In quibus uidelicet muneribus erat pandectes, ut diximus, interpretatione beati Hieronimia presbiteri ex Hebreo et Greco fonte transfusus'. Bede similarly describes the three Ceolfrithian Bibles as 'pandects of the new translation'. Bede, *Historia abbatum* 15 (Grocock & Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 56–60): 'ita ut tres pandectes nouae translationis ad unum uetustae translationis quem de Roma adtulerat'.

¹⁶ Richard Marsden, *The text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge 1995) 140–202.

one-volume bibles remained an extremely rare book type when they were manufactured in Northumbria at the turn of the eighth century. The smaller of the two pandects made at Vivarium was a Vulgate.¹⁷ The other one, which is commonly referred to in the scholarship using Cassiodorus' designation 'Codex Grandior', contained illuminations and was comprised of older Latin texts.¹⁸ Although no longer extant, the Codex Grandior is customarily identified with the copy of the bible in 'the old translation' that Bede tells us was acquired for his monastery's library by Ceolfrith in Rome.¹⁹

The Codex Amiatinus is witness to a formative phase in the development of medieval bible illumination, a practice which continuously adapted to reflect new ideas and changing circumstances after it emerged as a serious enterprise from the fifth century onwards.²⁰ Incorporating images into a codex allowed the makers of medieval bibles to draw attention to themes and subjects of their choosing, resulting in the production of physical objects that reflected the distinct cultural identities of the centres that made them. The Codex Amiatinus images offer a valuable gateway to the intellectual culture of Wearmouth and Jarrow at the turn of the eighth century and are especially interesting for their multivalency, their highly allusive natures and their close links with patristic exegesis. Additional witnesses to that culture are the voluminous writings of Bede, the handful of other texts produced at Wearmouth-Jarrow in his lifetime, and the rich body of evidence recovered during many decades of archaeological research at both sites.²¹ Bede's writings are particularly important because

¹⁷ Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* I.12.3, edited by R. A. B. Mynors, *Cassiodori senatoris Institutiones*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1961) 37.

¹⁸ Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* I.14.2 (Mynors, *Cassiodori senatoris Institutiones*, 40) See also: Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum* 14, lines 43–45 and 86, lines 40–44, edited by Marc Adriaen, CCSL 97–98 (Turnhout 1958) 97, 133 and 98, 789–80).

¹⁹ Bede, *Historia abbatum* 15 (Grocock & Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 56–60).

²⁰ John Lowden, 'The beginnings of biblical illustration', in John W. Williams (ed), *Imaging the early medieval Bible* (University Park, PA 1999) 9–59.

²¹ For an overview of Bede's various writings see George Hardin Brown, *A Companion to Bede* (Woodbridge 2009) 17–116. The Wearmouth and Jarrow sites were extensively excavated over three decades; the definitive

they allow us to trace which exegetical themes and patristic authors the community held in especially high regard during his lifetime, and because they reveal him to be a figure who recognised the importance of visual culture for communicating and reinforcing the Christian message.²²

The Pentateuch diagram

The overarching surface-level message of the Pentateuch diagram is fairly easy to grasp: the cruciform presentation of the first five books of the Scriptures, known in Judaism as the Torah and understood by medieval Christians to be books of Law authored by Moses, indicates that those books should be read typologically as revealing Christ.²³ The cross stands not only as a symbol of the person of Christ, but also of Christ's victory over death for the benefit of humankind. This latter association is encapsulated on a late-seventh or early-eighth-century sandstone slab from Jarrow upon which an image of a large cross is surrounded by an inscription which reads: 'in this unique sign life is restored to the world (*IN HOC SINGULARI SIGNO VITA REDDITUR MUNDO*)'.²⁴

report of these excavations is: Rosemary Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow monastic sites*, 2 vols (Swindon 2005–2006). The results of further fieldwork by Sam Turner, Sarah Semple and Alex Turner, in collaboration with English Heritage, is published as: *Wearmouth and Jarrow: Northumbrian monasteries in an historic landscape* (Hatfield 2013).

²² Bede, *Historia abbatum* 6 and 9 (Grocock & Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 34–7 and 42–5); *De templo* II, lines 809–43, edited by David Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout 1969) 143–234: 212–3. See further: Paul Meyvaert, 'Bede and the Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979) 63–77; Peter Darby, 'Bede, iconoclasm and the Temple of Solomon', *Early Medieval Europe* 21 (2013) 390–421.

²³ Jennifer O'Reilly, 'The library of Scripture: views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow', in Paul Binski & William Noel (eds), *New offerings, ancient treasures: studies in medieval art for George Henderson* (Stroud 2001) 3–39: 8–11; Bianca Kühnel, *The end of time in the order of things: science and eschatology in early medieval art* (Regensburg 2003) 55.

²⁴ Rosemary Cramp (ed), *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture in England*, 12 vols (Oxford 1984–2016) i, 112–3. The inscription was reconstructed by Wilhelm Levison, 'The inscription on the Jarrow cross', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 21 (1943) 121–6. For commentary: Rosemary Cramp, *Early Northumbrian sculpture* (Jarrow Lecture 1965) 4–5, reprinted in Michael Lapidge (ed), *Bede and his world: the Jarrow lectures 1958–*

The Pentateuch diagram features in the initial quire of the Codex Amiatinus. The original order of the first quire has been the subject of a great deal of speculation, and the issue is complicated by the fact that its leaves have been reordered more than once since they were first configured by Ceolfrith's community.²⁵ The initial gathering contains the following illuminated pages, listed in their order of appearance in the present-day arrangement (which was devised in the year 2001 as an attempt to reconstruct the order in which the leaves have been arranged for most of the codex's history):²⁶ dedicatory verses which once mentioned Ceolfrith by name written out under a rounded arch (fol. I/1v); a portrait of an illuminator-scribe working in front of an open *armarium* (fol. V/4r); a diagram explaining the division of the Scriptures according to Jerome (fol. VI/5r), and another derived from St Augustine's *On Christian doctrine* (fol. 8r); a Cassiodorean prologue to the Scriptures presented under two columns in golden-yellow text on a painted purple surface (fol. IV/3r); a similarly designed purple page which displays the contents of both Testaments inside arched columns (fol. IV/3v); a two-page illustration of the Tabernacle of Moses (fols II/2v – III/7r); a third diagram showing the division of the Scriptures, this one attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus via Pope Hilarus (fol. VII/6r); and finally, the Pentateuch diagram with which this study is concerned (fol. VII/6v).²⁷ Additionally there are six unused pages in the first quire, several of which have details from the image painted on the

1993, 2 vols (Aldershot 1994), i, 138–9; Ian N. Wood, 'Constantinian crosses in Northumbria', in Catherine E. Karkov, Sarah Larratt Keefer & Karen Louise Jolly (eds), *The place of the cross in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge 2006) 3–13: 4; Catherine E. Karkov, *The art of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge 2011) 57–8.

²⁵ Chazelle, 'Ceolfrid's Gift to St Peter', 133–4.

²⁶ Sabrina Magrini, "Per difetto del legatore." Storia delle rilegature della Bibbia Amiatina in Laurenziana [con una premessa di Franca Arduini], *Quinio: international journal on the history and conservation of the book* 3 (2001) 137–67. Cf. Chazelle, 'Ceolfrid's Gift to St Peter', 134–5.

²⁷ The double foliation of the initial quire reflects two separate historical arrangements of its leaves: the Roman numerals concern a sequence devised in the late nineteenth century and is the one presented in the CD-ROM facsimile; the Arabic numerals refer to an earlier arrangement. 'Foliation', in Ricci, Castaldi, and Minello, *La Bibbia Amiatina*.

reverse side of the folio showing through (fols I/1r; II/2r; III/7v; V/4v; VI/5v; 8v). The vast majority of the 130 quires in the Codex Amiatinus are formed of four bifolia, but in its present state the first quire is made up of three bifolia and two singletons.²⁸ One of these singletons bears the two purple pages and the other has the Epiphanius/Hilarus diagram on the recto and the Pentateuch diagram on the verso.

The present order of the leaves of the initial quire makes little sense as a cycle and is unlikely to be a faithful representation of the original scheme devised in the Wearmouth-Jarrow scriptorium. The two most convincing attempts to recover the original configuration, those of Paul Meyvaert and Celia Chazelle, are essentially in agreement on all matters except for the placement of the two-page Tabernacle illumination (Meyvaert's reconstruction has it at the front of the gathering but Chazelle's places it in the middle). Both studies plausibly suggest that the three diagrams concerning the division of the Scriptures were originally encountered in unbroken sequence in the second half of the first quire in the order Jerome, Augustine, Epiphanius/Hilarus. Meyvaert and Chazelle both surmise that the Pentateuch page was originally placed directly after these diagrams on the verso of the very last folio of the first quire.²⁹

The Pentateuch page has characteristics which make it hard to categorise, and it is perhaps helpful to consider it as equal parts diagram, illumination and preface. It is similar to the three diagrams that explain the division of the scriptures, in that it too arranges books of the Bible into a

²⁸ Lucia Castaldi, 'Quire arrangement', in Ricci, Castaldi, and Minello, *La Bibbia Amiatina*.

²⁹ Paul Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the *Codex Amiatinus*', *Speculum* 71 (1996) 827–83: 865; Chazelle, 'Ceolfrid's Gift to St Peter', 135. On the Amiatine biblical diagrams see further: Carol A. Farr, 'The shape of learning at Wearmouth-Jarrow: the diagram pages in the *Codex Amiatinus*', in Jane Hawkes & Susan Mills (eds), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud 1999) 336–44; Lawrence Nees, 'Problems of form and function in early medieval illustrated Bibles from Northwest Europe', in Williams, *Imaging the early medieval Bible*, 121–77: 161–8; Celia Chazelle, 'Christ and the vision of God: the biblical diagrams of the Codex Amiatinus', in J. F. Hamburger & A. Bouché (eds), *The mind's eye. Art and theological argument in the Middle Ages* (Princeton 2006) 84–111.

visual formation, yet here we are given descriptions of the Pentateuchal texts and not just a list of their titles. The Augustine, Jerome and Epiphanius/Hilarus diagrams are displayed upon plain parchment backgrounds, but the Pentateuch page is different because its entire surface area is covered with colour (a technique also used on both sides of the codex's painted purple folio). The Pentateuch image is not framed like the scribal-portrait or *Maiestas Domini*, yet it shares the latter's geometric ordering and use of multiple circles.³⁰ The Pentateuch diagram's five discs display textual captions adapted from Jerome's first letter to Paulinus of Nola, and as such they share much in common with the many Hieronymian prefatory texts which are distributed throughout the Codex Amiatinus, but this is the only instance whereby such textual material is chopped up and presented geometrically. The Pentateuch diagram has tended to be overlooked in modern scholarship in favour of the more overtly complex Tabernacle, scribal portrait and *Maiestas Domini* illuminations. However, sustained analysis of the Pentateuch image reveals additional layers of complexity that establish it as a piece of visual exegesis on a par with the codex's better known images. After first considering the diagram's place within the early tradition of bible illumination, this study offers a thorough investigation of the visual techniques that it employs to communicate with the viewer. The methods considered are the use of colour, the geometric ordering of the image, its location within the manuscript, and the type of script chosen for the textual captions.

Analogues

Several recent studies have emphasised the importance of the local Northumbrian environment in shaping the design of the illuminated pages in the Codex Amiatinus.³¹ The Pentateuch diagram has

³⁰ For discussion of the geometric ordering of the *Maiestas Domini* see Peter Darby, 'Sacred geometry and the five books of the Codex Amiatinus *Maiestas Domini*', in Conor Newman, Mags Mannion & Fiona Gavin (eds), *Islands in a global context* (Dublin 2017) 34–40.

³¹ Karen Corsano, 'The first quire of the Codex Amiatinus and the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus', *Scriptorium* 41 (1987) 3–34; Jennifer O'Reilly, "'All that Peter stands for": the *Romanitas* of the Codex Amiatinus reconsidered', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 157 (2009) 367–95 and 'Library of Scripture'; Nees, 'Problems of form and function', 148–74; Chazelle, 'Ceolfrid's Gift to St Peter' and 'Christ and the vision of

normally been regarded as an original product of the Wearmouth-Jarrow scriptorium, albeit one likely influenced by earlier models.³² There is no obvious direct precedent in the prior tradition of bible illumination, although admittedly only a fraction of the evidence is now extant. In the absence of a compelling immediate template, it is logical to assess the Codex Amiatinus Pentateuch diagram on its own merits as an original piece of Northumbrian art which primarily reflects the intellectual culture of Wearmouth-Jarrow in the time of Ceolfrith. It is also worth stressing that even if the image could be shown to be an attempted facsimile copy of an earlier model, certain aspects of its execution are indisputably local, such as its distinctive capitulary uncial script.³³ Bede's writings occasionally refer to noteworthy manuscripts that he had personal knowledge of, the best known examples of which are the aforementioned Codex Grandior and a deluxe cosmography which Ceolfrith gave to the Northumbrian king Aldfrith (r. 685–705) in exchange for eight hides of land.³⁴ The extent of the Codex Grandior's influence upon the Codex Amiatinus illuminations has long been a subject of considerable interest, not least because both pandects are known to have contained depictions of the Tabernacle.³⁵ The brief descriptions of the Codex Grandior preserved in the writings of Cassiodorus and Bede make no suggestion that it contained a Pentateuch illumination of any kind, and so the case

God'; Janina Ramirez, "'Sub culmine gazas": the iconography of the *armarium* on the Ezra page of the Codex Amiatinus', *Gesta* 48 (2009) 1–36; Darby, 'Codex Amiatinus *Maiestas Domini*'.

³² Corsano, 'First quire of the Codex Amiatinus', 30–31; Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the *Codex Amiatinus*', 863–4; Nees, 'Problems of form and function', 158–60. Cf. Marsden, *Text of the Old Testament*, 122–3.

³³ M. B. Parkes, *The scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow* (Jarrow Lecture 1982) 3–5, reprinted in Lapidge, *Bede and his world*, ii, 557–9: 'I believe that Capitular Uncial was a Wearmouth-Jarrow development. It was the scriptorium's own practical version of Uncial script and was developed and subsequently used there as a regular bookhand'. For the identification of the script used in the Pentateuch diagram as capitular uncial see below.

³⁴ Bede, *Historia abbatum* 15 (Grocock & Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 56–60).

³⁵ Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* I.5.2 (Mynors, *Cassiodori senatoris Institutiones*, 23) and *Expositio Psalmorum* 14, lines 43–45 and 86, lines 40–44 (Adriaen, CCSL 97–98), 97, 133 and 98, 789–90.

for direct Cassiodorean inspiration in this particular instance is difficult to establish and impossible to prove.

Lawrence Nees has suggested that the Codex Amiatinus Pentateuch diagram was likely influenced by models developed in Italian book illumination of an earlier or near-contemporaneous period.³⁶ Nees points out that the Amiatine image bears some similarities with a comparable drawing preserved in a codex containing an incomplete version of the Octateuch in Latin which is now in the Vatican Library.³⁷ The manuscript demonstrates several Insular palaeographic features and is thought to have been copied in Italy in the seventh or eighth century.³⁸ Its text of the Scriptures is majority Vulgate with some older readings mixed in.³⁹ The manuscript features monochrome drawings between the books of Exodus and Leviticus on the recto and verso of folio 113. 113v shows a large disc which contains five smaller circles in a cross formation. In the middle of this arrangement is an image of a lamb with an accompanying label which describes it as such (*'statua agni'*); the other four discs, which are smaller than the centrepiece, contain short textual captions which mention wisdom (*'sapientia'*), prayer (*'oratio'*), work (*'operatio'*) and fasting (*'ieiunium'*). Much of the remaining space on the page is filled with written material, snippets of which are echoed in a group of early-medieval texts authored by Irish or Irish-influenced intellectuals. The writings in question are the anonymous

³⁶ Nees, 'Problems of form and function', 158–60.

³⁷ Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS. Ottobonianus lat. 66, fol. 113v. The diagram can be viewed on the Digital Vatican Library website (online at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Ott.lat.66/0230), accessed 26. 03. 2018.

³⁸ E. A. Lowe, *Codices latini antiquiores: a palaeographical guide to Latin manuscripts prior to the ninth century, pt. 1: The Vatican City* (Oxford 1934) 20 (number 66).

³⁹ This is especially prevalent in the books of Genesis and Exodus: Richard Marsden, 'Old Latin intervention in the Old English Heptateuch', *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994) 229–64: 233.

Irish commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles,⁴⁰ the anonymously authored *Prebium de multorum exemplaribus*,⁴¹ and a miscellany of excerpts compiled by Sedulius Scottus in the mid ninth century.⁴² Despite the substantial differences between the monochrome drawing in the Vatican Octateuch and the colourful painted Pentateuch image in the Codex Amiatinus, the two images have much in common beyond their comparable geometric designs: both images present textual captions inside cruciform quintets of circles, and both are preserved in the midst of Pentateuchal material in biblical codices with strong connections to the Insular manuscript culture of the seventh and eighth centuries. Given these similarities it is possible that the images in the Vatican Octateuch and Codex Amiatinus were designed to contribute to a wider iconographic tradition of cruciform five-circle diagrams which is only now partially recoverable in the surviving manuscript evidence.

Another early witness to the Vulgate translation of the Pentateuch, albeit incomplete, is the manuscript known as the Pentateuch of Tours or Ashburnham Pentateuch.⁴³ The provenance of this manuscript has been variously attributed to North Africa, Spain and Rome, without any consensus being reached.⁴⁴ In its present condition it contains the following decorative elements: a painted

⁴⁰ *Commentarius in Epistolas Catholicas Scotti Anonymi, Commentarius Epistolae Iacobi*, lines 168–9, edited by Robert E. McNally, CCSL 108B (Turnhout 1973) 1–50: 7: 'deutare mala, facere bona, sperare proemia'. According to its editor this text originated in Southern Ireland towards the end of the seventh century.

⁴¹ Anonymous, *Prebium de multorum exemplaribus* 1 and 29, edited by McNally, CCSL 108B, 161 and 163: 'deutare mala, facere bona, sperare proemia'. McNally's preface to the *Prebium* (155–9) attributes it to a circle of Irish or Irish-influenced scholars in Southern Bavaria in the mid to late eighth century.

⁴² Sedulius Scotus, *Collectaneum miscellaneum* 13.20, edited by Dean Simpson, CCCM 67 and supplement (Turnhout 1988–90) 123: 'Penitentia de preteritis peccatis, timor de futuris, spes premiorum, amor celestis regni'. On the miscellany of Sedulius see François Dolbeau, 'Recherches sur le *Collectaneum Miscellaneum* Sedulius Scottus', *Bulletin du Cange: Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 48–9 (1990): 47–84.

⁴³ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. nouv. acq. lat. 2334.

⁴⁴ See David H. Wright's review of Williams, *Imaging the early medieval Bible* in *The Medieval Review* 00.07.08 (2000). The case for Rome is made by Dorothy Hoogland Verkerk, *Early medieval Bible illumination*

frontispiece; ten pages of *capitula lectionum* presented inside arched columns;⁴⁵ a decorated initial 'I' (for *In principio*) at the opening of the Book of Genesis; and 18 pages which feature brightly coloured illustrations depicting various Pentateuchal scenes. These illustrations are interspersed throughout the manuscript to form a substantial visual exegesis of the Books of Law. The frontispiece (fol. 2r) displays the Latin titles of the five Books of the Pentateuch alongside Latinised forms of their Hebrew names (given as: *bresith, hellesmoth, ualecra, uaieddabber, and elladdabbarim*). These are written out in a majuscule script on a square panel behind the opened veil of a Torah shrine (identified as such by the presence of a large conch shell underneath the rounded arch in the upper part of the image).⁴⁶ The Pentateuch of Tours contains nothing directly comparable in visual terms to the geometrically-ordered Pentateuch diagram in the Codex Amiatinus. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that three of our earliest witnesses to the Vulgate translation of the Pentateuch – the Codex Amiatinus, the Pentateuch of Tours and the Vatican Octateuch – all contain substantial artistic programmes in text and image of one sort or another.

Chazelle has suggested that similarities can be drawn between the Codex Amiatinus Pentateuch diagram and the cross carpet pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels and Book of Kells.⁴⁷ A carpet page featuring a double-armed cross made up of eight linked medallions is found on folio 33r of the Book of Kells as part of a body of illuminated material which prefaces the commencement of the narrative account of Christ's life in the Gospel according to Matthew (1.18).⁴⁸ A similar, though

and the Ashburnham Pentateuch (Cambridge 2004), but cf. the comments of Nees in *The Catholic Historical Review* 91 (2005) 135–138.

⁴⁵ Fols 51r–53r (*capitula* for Exodus), 115v–116v (Numbers), 142r–142v (Deuteronomy).

⁴⁶ Joseph Gutmann, 'The Jewish origin of the Ashburnham Pentateuch miniatures', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* (1953) 55–72: 57–9.

⁴⁷ Chazelle, 'Ceolfrid's Gift to St Peter', 138–9.

⁴⁸ Dublin, Trinity College MS A.I.6 (58). For reproduction of the image and commentary see George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: the Insular Gospel-books* (London 1987), 145–6.

more angular cruciform design opens another Insular gospel book, the Book of Durrow (fol. 1v).⁴⁹ The Lindisfarne Gospels, which were produced in Northumbria under strong Irish cultural influence in the late-seventh or early eighth century, feature five exquisite cross carpet pages; of these, the closest parallel to the Amiatine Pentateuch diagram is the five-part cross with rounded edges sandwiched between the evangelist miniature and incipit page for the Gospel of Matthew (fol. 26 v).⁵⁰ The monastic centres at Wearmouth, Jarrow, and Lindisfarne were connected by the North Sea coastline and their communities were in regular contact during the abbacies of Ceolfrith and his successor Hwaetberht (716–47).⁵¹ It is well known that the illuminator scribe depicted in the Codex Amiatinus (fol. V/4r) and the Lindisfarne miniature featuring the evangelist Matthew (fol. 25v) were produced using the same pictorial template, which suggests that a certain amount of competitive sharing took place between these monasteries as they worked on their most famous deluxe manuscripts.⁵² In Brown's view the Lindisfarne carpet pages served dedicatory functions and were influenced by many different types of media, including metalwork, stone sculpture and prayer mats.⁵³ Similarly, potential sources of inspiration for design elements of the Amiatine Pentateuch diagram should not be limited to manuscript art alone. Cruciform designs featured prominently on the stonework produced at Wearmouth and Jarrow either side of the year 700, a prominent example being

⁴⁹ Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS A.4.5 (57). Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, 18–19; Martin Werner, 'The cross-carpet page in the Book of Durrow: the cult of the True Cross, Adomnan, and Iona', *The Art Bulletin* 72 (1990) 174–223.

⁵⁰ For high-quality colour reproductions of the carpet pages see Michelle P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: society, spirituality and the scribe* (London 2003) plates 2, 10, 16, 20 and 24, with discussion at 312–31.

⁵¹ One example of this is the Lindisfarne community's commissioning of the prose *Uita sancti Cuthberti* by Bede. See Bede's preface, edited and translated by Bertram Colgrave, *Two lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge 1940) 142–306: 142–7.

⁵² R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The art of the Codex Amiatinus* (Jarrow Lecture 1967) 19–25, reprinted in Lapidge, *Bede and his world*, i, 207–12.

⁵³ Brown, *Society, spirituality and the scribe*, 312–331.

the inscribed sandstone cross-slab from Jarrow mentioned above. Intact early medieval book covers are rare, but there is evidence to suggest that this medium lent itself especially readily to cruciform geometric designs.⁵⁴ Two contemporaneous examples of this are the cover of the gospel book depicted in the illuminator-scribe's *armarium* in the Codex Amiatinus, and the Insular manuscript known as the St Cuthbert Gospel (formerly the Stonyhurst Gospel of St John), which features stepped cross designs on its rear leather cover.⁵⁵

Colours

The Pentateuch diagram features a relatively limited palette of colours. That palette is intimately connected with the description of the Tabernacle provided in the Book of Exodus.⁵⁶ Leaving the black used for the border lines and text to one side for a moment, the diagram can be said to utilise four distinct colours: gold, purple, red (for the large thin circle which borders the purple disc) and blue.⁵⁷ The Tabernacle was built from gilded wooden pillars, several of its furnishings were manufactured in gold, and it contained curtains in blue, purple and scarlet. The most dominant colours in the Amiatine image are the bright purple which fills the inner section of the largest disc and the lustrous golden-yellow which is used to populate the background spaces. In the mid-career text *On the Tabernacle*, a biblical commentary which covers chapters 24 to 30 of the Book of Exodus, Bede routinely associates gold with the kingdom of heaven and purple with bodily suffering.⁵⁸ Regarding gold, Bede's treatment

⁵⁴ Lawrence Nees, 'A fifth-century book cover and the origin of the four evangelist symbols page in the Book of Durrow', *Gesta* 17 (1978) 3–8.

⁵⁵ Leslie Webster, 'Decoration of the binding', in Claire Breay & Bernard Meehan (eds), *The St Cuthbert Gospel. Studies on the Insular manuscript of the Gospel of John* (London 2015) 65–82.

⁵⁶ Exodus 25–6 and 36–8.

⁵⁷ The material composition of the coloured pigments used in the Pentateuch diagram are considered in Marina Bicchieri, Francesco Paolo Romano, Lighea Pappalardo, Luigi Cosentino, Michele Nardone and Armida Sodo, 'Non-destructive analysis of the Bibbia Amiatina by XRF, PIXE- α , and Raman', *Quinio: international journal on the history and conservation of the book* 3 (2001) 169–79: 175–6.

⁵⁸ E.g. Bede, *De tabernaculo* I, lines 243–8, edited by David Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout 1969), 5–139: 11.

of the five-fold sets of rings which joined the Tabernacle's acacia wood boards and bars to each other is instructive (Exodus 26.29):

Each of the boards had five rings ... because the same perpetual brightness and bright perpetuity of that kingdom [of heaven] is contained written in Genesis, the same in Exodus, the same in Leviticus, the same in the Book of Numbers, the same in Deuteronomy. And five rings of gold were fastened to each of the boards of the tabernacle because the hearts of the righteous, which are greatly extended through love, read in all the books of Mosaic Law not only the reproach of works but also the perpetual light of heavenly reward.⁵⁹

These comments reveal that Bede regarded the Pentateuchal books as repositories of divine truths, a message that is also promoted by the diagram in the Codex Amiatinus (where the cruciform presentation of those books inside gold-coloured discs directs the viewer's mind towards God).

The Pentateuch diagram's use of the colour gold in partnership with purple knowingly recalls the luxury manuscript culture of the late-antique Byzantine world.⁶⁰ At the time of the codex's manufacture purple was established as the colour worn by Byzantine emperors in Constantinople. Wilfrid, who between the years 705 and 710 served as bishop of Hexham (the prelate who held diocesan responsibility for Wearmouth-Jarrow), reportedly had an illuminated gospel book made in purple and gold for the Church of St Peter at Ripon in the 670s.⁶¹ These same colours reportedly featured on the banner of the seventh-century Northumbrian king Oswald (r. 634–642).⁶² The use of

⁵⁹ Bede, *De tabernaculo* II, lines 1044–52 (Hurst, CCSL 119A, 68). Translation: Arthur G. Holder, *Bede: on the Tabernacle* (Liverpool 1994) 76. See the comments of O'Reilly, 'Library of Scripture', 9–11.

⁶⁰ Sofia Kotzabassi, 'Codicology and Palaeography', in Vasiliki Tsamakda (ed), *A companion to Byzantine illustrated manuscripts* (Leiden 2017) 35–53: 41. The lavish nature of some late-fourth-century manuscripts drew criticism from Jerome: *Epistula* 22.32 (Hilberg, CSEL 54, 193).

⁶¹ Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi* 17, edited and translated by Bertram Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge 1927) 34–7.

⁶² Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* III.11, edited by Michael Lapidge, *Beda Storia degli Inglesi*, 2 vols (Rome; Milan 2010) 54.

purple and gold by a secular ruler to convey power and triumph recalls the *toga picta* worn by generals in ancient Rome when celebrating military victories.⁶³ Such connotations are broadly relevant to the Pentateuch diagram, which celebrates the divine power of God and announces the triumph of Christ in fulfilment of the ancient Law.

In the Bible blue is a high status colour, often mentioned in conjunction with purple as a marker of luxury and wealth.⁶⁴ As well as featuring prominently in the accounts of the furnishings of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25–7 and 35–8), blue is also mentioned several times in the description of the priestly vestments of the Israelites (Exodus 28 and 39). In both of these contexts blue is regularly identified as the colour for various types of connective fastenings including cords, ribbons, threads and loops. The blue ribbon which passes through gold rings to connect the breastpiece and ephod worn by Israelite priests (Exodus 28.36) is an example which resonates with the Pentateuch diagram, where a blue thread connects several gold-coloured discs together. Another pertinent Pentateuchal association is found in the Book of Numbers. In Chapter 15 God suggests to Moses that the Israelites wear ritual tassels called *tzitzit* which incorporate threads made with a blue dye known as *tekhelet*:

Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God.’⁶⁵

⁶³ H. Granger-Taylor, 'Toga', in Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (eds), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th edition (Oxford 2012). On the use of purple in Ancient Rome see Mark Bradley, *Colour and meaning in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge 2009) 189–211.

⁶⁴ Esther 1:6 and 8.15; Jeremiah 10.9; Ezekiel 23.6, 27.7 and 27.24.

⁶⁵ Numbers 15.38–40, cited from Codex Amiatinus fol. 127r: 'loquere filiis Israhel et dices ad eos ut faciant sibi fimbrias per angulos palliorum ponentes in eis vittas hyacinthinas quas cum viderint recordentur omnium mandatorum Domini nec sequantur cogitationes suas et oculos per res varias fornicantes sed magis memores

The blue cord is a divinely sanctioned aide-memoire, designed to help individual Jews focus their attention on God and the Torah.⁶⁶ The Pentateuch diagram's blue thread serves a similar function for a Christian viewer by presenting the Books of Law and Christ's cross to the viewer for their personal contemplation. It is certain that Bede shared this understanding of the inspirational properties of the colour blue, since in *On the Tabernacle* blue is said to represent the contemplation of heaven on account of it being the colour of the sky.⁶⁷ Commenting on the *ansulae*, the blue loops which connected the Tabernacle's colourful curtains to one another (Exodus 26.4–5), Bede suggests that blue is the colour of heavenly blessings. After drawing in and explicating the passage from Numbers concerning the *tzitzit* cited above, Bede goes on to explain that the Tabernacle's blue loops should remind present-day Christians to be mindful of the eternal fellowship of heaven, just as the ancient Israelites were reminded of the heavenly commandments by the blue threads incorporated into their ritual dress.⁶⁸

Black is used to mark out each of the image's various discs, and it is also used for the text, its associated abbreviation marks, and for two small crosses. One of those crosses sits apart from the rest of the image, above the Genesis disc but not touching it. The other is squeezed inside the uppermost part of the Deuteronomy disc, sandwiched between the textual caption and the blue thread. These crosses draw special attention to the Pentateuch's first and last books, which describe the creation of the Universe by God and the establishment of the Law through Moses. Additionally, the Genesis and Deuteronomy discs break out beyond the large purple circle whilst their three counterparts are fully enclosed. The caption inside the bottom disc explains that the word *deuteronomium* is understood to

praeceptorum Domini faciant ea sintque sancti Deo suo'. Cited in English from the *New International Version*, edited by the International Bible Society (Colorado Springs, CO 1984).

⁶⁶ Louis Jacobs, *A concise companion to the Jewish religion* (Oxford 1999) 283.

⁶⁷ Bede, *De tabernaculo* III, lines 230–5 (Hurst, CCSL 119A, 98–9). See also *De tabernaculo* II, lines 263–5 (Hurst 48); II, lines 1264–5 (74); II, lines 1878–9 (89); III, lines 846–52 (114).

⁶⁸ Bede, *De tabernaculo* II, lines 262–99 (Hurst, 48–9).

mean 'second law, and the foreshadowing of the law of the Gospel'.⁶⁹ The detail of the small black cross highlights and reinforces the idea expressed in the caption that the contents of the Book of Deuteronomy foreshadow the coming of Christ in fulfilment of the Law.⁷⁰ Similar crosses are found elsewhere in the first quire of the Codex Amiatinus. For example, one features on the dedication page next to the C for 'Ceolfriðus' (fol. I/1v), and several are used to mark out six different groups of books of the Bible in the diagram showing the division of the Scriptures according to Augustine (fol. 8r). Perhaps the best-known example is the small cross concealed within the Tabernacle illumination above the entrance to the Holy Place, which suggests to the viewer that the biblical Tabernacle should be interpreted spiritually as foreshadowing the establishment of the New Covenant between God and humankind through the death of Jesus.⁷¹ The use of cross-symbols to highlight typological connections between the Old and New Testaments is not limited to the first quire of the Codex Amiatinus. A similar device is employed on folio 505v, where a small black cross identifies a line from the Book of Isaiah as Christological prophecy ('for the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose out of Israel').⁷² Another example can be seen on folio 797r above the initial words of Jerome's *Novum opus* preface for the gospels.

Geometric ordering

The geometric structure of the Pentateuch diagram contains no polygonal shapes, no corners and no straight lines, only circles. The two *tabulae ansatae* at the top and bottom of the page can be

⁶⁹ 'Deuteronomium quoque secunda lex et evangelicae legis praefiguratio nonne sic ea habet quae propria sunt ut tamen nova sint omnia de veteribus'.

⁷⁰ O'Reilly, 'Library of Scripture', 11.

⁷¹ Bianca Kühnel, 'Jewish symbolism of the Temple and the Tabernacle and Christian symbolism of the Holy Sepulchre and the Heavenly Tabernacle. A study of their relationship in late antique and early medieval art and thought', *Jewish Art* 12/13 (1986–7) 147–68: 165–6; O'Reilly, 'Library of Scripture', 30–34.

⁷² Isaiah 14.1, cited from Codex Amiatinus fol. 505v: 'miserebitur enim Dominus Iacob et eliget adhuc de Israel'. This example of visual exegesis aligns with Jerome's suggestion that the Book of Isaiah seems more like a gospel than a prophecy: Jerome, *Epistula* 53.8 (Hilberg, CSEL 54, 460).

discarded from our analysis along with the pair of small circles that are faintly visible either side of the Genesis disc since these details are showing through from the image painted on the folio's recto. Five text-bearing discs and seven smaller link circles are joined together by the blue thread to form the shape of a Latin cross (*crux immissa*) in twelve parts. Besides the connection to the number of disciples chosen by Jesus and various other New Testament types, twelve is the number of tribes of Israel descended from the sons of Jacob, the formation and early history of which are recorded in the five books of the Pentateuch. All of the circles within the image are near-enough geometrically perfect, which suggests that their outlines were drawn using an artist's compass rather than freehand. Such an implement is shown beneath the feet of the illuminator-scribe depicted on Codex Amiatinus folio V/4r.⁷³ Circles are shapes with no end and no beginning, symbolic of completeness and eternity. In early medieval Christian art this shape was often associated with the divinely created cosmos. Isidore of Seville, in a seventh-century encyclopedia which was available to the monks of Wearmouth and Jarrow and used extensively (although not uncritically) by Bede, described the five books of the Pentateuch as 'the cosmography of divine history'.⁷⁴

The Wearmouth-Jarrow monks seem to have been fond of images that feature multiple circles. Concentric circles are a dominant motif in the *Maiestas Domini* illumination depicted on folio 796v of the Codex Amiatinus. The device is used again in a frontispiece to the gospels which is preserved along with other fragments of an early Gospel book which are bound together with the

⁷³ To the left of the artist's compass is a three-pointed implement which facilitates the drawing of curved shapes: Richard N. Bailey, *The Durham Cassiodorus* (Jarrow Lecture 1978) 16–17, reprinted in Lapidge, *Bede and his world*, i, 478–9.

⁷⁴ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* VI.2.1, edited by Wallace Martin Lindsay, *Etymologiarum siue originum libri XX*, 2 vols (Oxford 1911): 'Primus Moyses divinae historiae cosmographiam in quinque voluminibus edidit, quod Pentateuchum nominatur'. On Bede's use of Isidore see Paul Meyvaert, 'Bede the Scholar', in Gerald Bonner (ed), *Famulus Christi: essays in commemoration of the thirteenth centenary of the birth of the Venerable Bede* (London 1976) 40–69: 58–60; Calvin B. Kendall and Faith Wallis, *Bede: On the nature of things and On times* (Liverpool 2010) 13–20.

Utrecht psalter (figure 3).⁷⁵ These uncial Gospel book fragments are thought to be broadly contemporaneous with the Codex Amiatinus, and many scholars identify them as products of the Wearmouth-Jarrow scriptorium.⁷⁶ The gospels frontispiece shares another design feature with the Pentateuch diagram and *Maiestas Domini*: the use of continuous ribbons and threads. The frontispiece has three such devices, in yellow green and blue; the *Maiestas Domini* features a multi-coloured and pleated three-dimensional ribbon which is folded at the four cardinal points; and the blue cruciform border of the Pentateuch diagram is unbroken, symbolising the interconnectedness and indivisibility of the components joined together by it.⁷⁷ The small black cross hidden amongst the coloured borders at the top of the Gospels frontispiece offers another iconographic connection back to the Codex Amiatinus.

The textual captions

A substantial part of Jerome's *Epistle 53* goes through the books of the Bible one by one, offering brief descriptions of their contents and in some instances guides to how they ought to be interpreted. The captions in the Codex Amiatinus Pentateuch diagram are drawn from that part of the letter, designated as sections 8 and 9 in modern editions of the Latin text.⁷⁸ Karen Corsano has observed that short pieces of text excerpted from the same portion of *Epistle 53* are used to introduce eleven out of

⁷⁵ Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Bibl. Rhenotraiectinae I Nr 32, fols 94–105.

⁷⁶ E. A. Lowe, *English Uncial* (Oxford 1960) 19; David H Wright, 'Some Notes on English Uncial', *Traditio* 17 (1961) 441–56: 443–56; T. Julian Brown, *The Stonyhurst Gospel of Saint John* (Oxford 1969) 7–10; Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts: a list of manuscripts and manuscript fragments written or owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, AZ 2001) 681–2.

⁷⁷ O'Reilly, 'Library of Scripture', 11–13. Additional connections between the frontispiece and the Codex Amiatinus are proposed by Farr, 'Shape of learning', 338.

⁷⁸ Jerome, *Epistula* 53.8 (Hilberg, CSEL 54, 454–63).

the twelve books of the Minor Prophets contained within the Codex Amiatinus.⁷⁹ In the Middle Ages Jerome's summary of the books of the Bible had considerable practical utility as an educational resource for novice exegetes. Isidore of Seville drew upon Jerome's letter in his *Etymologies* and Cassiodorus praised its brevity and clarity.⁸⁰ The substantial and lasting influence of *Epistle 53* on Bede is clear from the fact that his commentaries on Ezra-Nehemiah and the Acts of the Apostles both expressly approach their subject texts through the prism of interpretations advanced in it.⁸¹ Both of those commentaries cite Jerome's letter in such a way as to suggest that Bede had access to it in a complete and unabridged form.⁸² The explicit citation of *Epistle 53* in the preface to Bede's early-career treatise on Acts is especially important because it confirms that the letter was known and held in regard at Wearmouth-Jarrow in the early years of the eighth century.⁸³ It is likely, therefore, that the architects of the Pentateuch diagram would have had access to *Epistle 53* in its entirety and been fully aware of its major themes and circumstances of composition.

A close reading of the Pentateuch diagram's text in tandem with Isidor Hilberg's edition of *Epistle 53* reveals some minor variations between the two. The most notable difference is that the image's captions omit a handful of words and phrases that are present in the respective parts of the original letter. This suggests that a certain amount of editorial work was undertaken in the design

⁷⁹ Corsano, 'First quire of the Codex Amiatinus', 30–31. The Book of Hosea is not prefaced by text excerpted from *Epistle 53*. The Hieronymian caption used as a prologue for the Book of Jonah (fol. 664r) is discussed in O'Reilly, *St Paul and the sign of Jonah*, 3.

⁸⁰ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* VI.1–2 (Lindsay, *Etymologiarum siue originum libri XX*), especially the description of the Book of Numbers at V.2.6 (cf. Jerome, *Epistula 53.8* (Hilberg, CSEL 54, 445)). Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* I.21.2 (Mynors, *Cassiodori senatoris Institutiones*, 59–60).

⁸¹ Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* praefatio, lines 23–28, edited by M. L. W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnhout 1983) 3–99: 4; *In Ezram et Neemiam* prologus, lines 1–9, edited by David Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout 1969), 237–392: 237.

⁸² The references are collated by Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford 2006) 217.

⁸³ According to Brown the commentary was completed in the period 709–716: *Companion to Bede*, 63–4.

process so that the excerpts could be accommodated inside their circular spaces. The following is a transcription of the Pentateuch diagram's five textual captions; the parts of *Epistle 53* which have been excluded from the Codex Amiatinus diagram are enclosed within square brackets:

[uidelicet] manifestissima est genesis in qua de creatura mundi de exordio humani generis [de diuisione terrae, de confusione linguarum] et [de] gente usque ad aegyptum scribitur Hebraeorum

patet exodus cum decem plagis [cum] decalogo cum mysticis scripturis⁸⁴ diuinisque praeceptis

in prom[p]tu est leuiticus liber in quo singula sacrificia [immo singulae paene syllabae] et uestes Aaron et totus ordo leuiticus spirant caelestia sacramenta

numeri uero nonne totius arithmeticae [et prophetiae balaam] et mensura terrae⁸⁵ et XL duarum per heremum mansionum mysteria continent

deuteronomium quoque secunda lex et euangelicae legis praefiguratio nonne sic ea habet quae propria sunt⁸⁶ ut tamen noua sint omnia de ueteribus

The exclusions are not especially significant and do not compromise the overall message of Jerome's prose. The Leviticus circle omits a superfluous emphatic phrase, the Numbers text passes over a reference to the prophecy of Balaam, and the Genesis caption excludes allusions to the division of the earth (in the time of Peleg) and the confusion of tongues (after the building of the Tower of Babel).

⁸⁴ *Scripturis* is omitted in Hilberg's edition and is not offered as a variant reading (CSEL 54, 454).

⁸⁵ The phrase *et mensura terrae* does not feature in Hilberg's text or apparatus (CSEL 54, 455).

⁸⁶ Hilberg's text reads *priora sunt* (CSEL 54, 455).

Despite these alterations the text presented within the Pentateuch diagram still reads as a continuous piece of prose. It is designed to be read in the same manner as a typical page of Latin text, from top to bottom and left to right, so that the first five books of the Old Testament are encountered in their customary sequential order. Some of Jerome's link words are retained, meaning that the captions retain something of their original identity as interlinked parts of a coherent paragraph. An example of this is the use of '*quoque*' as the second word in the Deuteronomy caption, which serves to tie that block of text to its antecedent from the Numbers disc above it. By doing so the diagram makes the same point that Jerome expressed in the original letter, that Numbers and Deuteronomy reveal a great many mysteries in like manner.

The presence of a substantial amount of text in the Pentateuch image raises important questions about its intended audience. All used folios of the Codex Amiatinus contain at least some text in continuous prose except for the *Maiestas Domini* and Tabernacle illuminations. The latter does, however, include a series of labels which identify the four cardinal points, the twelve tribes of Israel and some of the Tabernacle's most noteworthy architectural features. In the Middle Ages images were sometimes recommended as teaching tools for the illiterate. This view is expressed, for example, in a well-known pair of letters sent by Gregory the Great to Serenus of Marseilles in the last two years of the sixth century.⁸⁷ Bede spoke fondly in such terms of sets of panel paintings that hung in St Peter's Church, Wearmouth during his lifetime.⁸⁸ However, a lack of competency in Latin would present insurmountable barriers to understanding the Pentateuch diagram fully, unless a literate guide were available to help. The high intellectual entry point for the image is further apparent in its use of scribal practices which demand the reader to subconsciously process the text in order to interpret it correctly, such as abbreviation and words breaking across lines. There are examples of both of these practices in the Leviticus disc. '*Leviticus*', '*sacrificia*', and '*caelestia*' all break across the line, whilst

⁸⁷ Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistularum* IX.209 (July 599) and XI.10 (October 600), edited by Dag Norberg, CCSL 140–140A (Turnhout 1982). For commentary see Celia Chazelle, 'Pictures, books, and the illiterate: Pope Gregory I's letters to Serenus of Marseilles', *Word & Image* 6 (1990) 138–53.

⁸⁸ Bede, *Historia abbatum* 6 (Grocock & Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 34–7).

liber and *sacramenta* are shortened, the missing letters being represented by posterior suspension marks.

The visual appearance of the diagram's textual captions reveals a great deal about the status attributed to Jerome's *Epistle 53* by the manuscript's creators. David H. Wright established that the text of the Codex Amiatinus can be divided into nine discrete sections which were copied out by at least seven different scribes. Wright did not think it was possible to identify the person responsible for the textual material in the first quire's illuminated pages with any of the seven scribes who worked on the remainder of the manuscript. His study also considered the manuscript's hierarchy of scripts, pointing out that various grades were used for different purposes within the codex.⁸⁹ The main text of Scripture is typically presented in a clear uncial with generous gaps between each word. A second type of uncial, which Wright termed 'capitulary uncial', is regularly used for chapter headings and other prefatory content.⁹⁰ Although various scribal idiosyncrasies are evident, it is clear that the team attempted to maintain an overall visual distinction between the text of Holy Scripture and ancillary material. Folio 905v displays chapter headings for the Book of Acts in the left column, and the first verses of Acts itself on the right (figure 4). The words in the left column are written in capitulary uncial, which is smaller and more cramped than the display script used for the beginning of Acts itself. There are substantial differences between the two grades of script in terms of their formation of individual characters.⁹¹ In the capitulary 'e' a horizontal bar meets the curve to close off the upper portion of the letter, giving it a half-uncial-like appearance. The display script's equivalent is a more open formation in which an arm extends from just above the midpoint of the arc. The tail of 'g' is much longer in the main uncial hand than in the capitulary script, and the diagonal in the capitulary 'N' comes much lower down the stem than in its display script equivalent.

⁸⁹ Wright, 'Notes on English Uncial', 442–3 and 452–3.

⁹⁰ Wright, 'Notes on English Uncial', 443–6. See also: E. A. Lowe, 'A key to Bede's scriptorium, some observations on the Leningrad manuscript of the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*', *Scriptorium* 12 (1958) 182–90: 185–6.

⁹¹ Parkes, *Scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow*, 4–5, reprinted in Lapidge, *Bede and his world*, ii, 558–9.

It is clear that the textual captions featured in the Pentateuch diagram are written out in the lesser of these two grades of uncial. The word '*evangelicae*' (which breaks across the third and fourth lines of the Deuteronomy disc) demonstrates all of the distinguishing features of the capitulary script identified above. The diagram's use of the capitulary script distinguishes the text inside the circles as separate from Holy Scripture. A contrast can be drawn with the first quire's purple contents page (fol. IV/3v), where the title of each book of the Bible is presented in the higher-grade uncial. The Codex Amiatinus contains a substantial number of ancillary, extra-biblical texts. Much of this prefatory material was originally written by Jerome, and in many cases these texts originated as letters to individual recipients, much like *Epistle 53*. In the Codex Amiatinus such prefaces are customarily written out in capitulary uncials. The Pentateuch diagram's presentation of the excerpts from Jerome's letter to Paulinus of Nola in like manner is therefore entirely logical.

The textual captions featured within the Pentateuch diagram tell the viewer what is coming up in the codex whilst keying their mind in to an interpretative strategy which sees the Books of Law as containing various types and symbols which have been fulfilled in the New Testament era. The first circle contains a rather matter of fact summary of the contents of Genesis; this book is said to concern the birth of the world, the origin of the human race, and the descent of the Hebrews into Egypt. The Exodus circle refers to the Decalogue, the ten plagues and to unspecified 'mysterious scriptures and divine precepts (*mysticis scripturis diuinisque praeceptis*)'. This perspective, that the Old Testament episodes picked out by Jerome foreshadow greater mysteries, is overtly brought out in the three remaining captions. Every sacrifice described in the Book of Leviticus, Aaron's vestments, and the Levite order are said to 'breathe the spirit of heavenly sacraments' (*spirant caelestia sacramenta*). The reader is asked, using the interrogative construction *nonne* (which implicitly expects the answer 'yes') whether or not the Book of Numbers contains many mysteries. The passage reaches a crescendo in the final disc: 'Deuteronomy, the Second Law and foreshadowing of the Law of the Gospel, does it not,

while holding its own things, nevertheless put old truths in a new light’?⁹² The Deuteronomy caption thus encapsulates the image's overarching message; the old truths contained within the five Pentateuchal books are presented in the new light of their cruciform arrangement. The central importance of the Deuteronomy circle is confirmed by the fact that it contains the longest textual caption of the five.⁹³ Various visual devices further emphasise its special status: the Deuteronomy disc is 23% larger than its four counterparts, it contains the small black cross discussed above, and more than half of its blue border breaks beyond the purple surround.

In *Epistle 53*, immediately after describing the Book of Deuteronomy, Jerome makes the following remark before moving on to summarise the next book in the canon, here given as the Book of Job: 'thus far [the books of] Moses, thus far the Pentateuch, with which five words the apostle boasts his desire to speak in the church'.⁹⁴ The sentence alludes to the Apostle Paul and echoes a verse from 1 Corinthians 14 which emphasises how important it is to communicate the Christian message clearly: 'but in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue'.⁹⁵ Jerome's statement regarding the five words of the apostle is not reproduced in the Codex Amiatinus Pentateuch diagram, but it is nevertheless significant because it

⁹² 'Deuteronomium quoque secunda lex et euangelicae legis praefiguratio nonne sic ea habet quae propria sunt ut tamen noua sint omnia de ueteribus'.

⁹³ The Deuteronomy disc contains the highest number of characters. The total number of words in each caption is as follows: Genesis 19; Exodus 11; Leviticus 19; Numbers 16; Deuteronomy 22.

⁹⁴ Jerome, *Epistula* 53.8 (Hilberg, CSEL 54, 455): 'hucusque moyses, hucusque πεντάτευχος, quibus quinque uerbis uelle se loqui in ecclesia gloriatur apostolus'. See also Jerome's exegesis of the five cities mentioned in Isaiah 19.18 in *Comentarii in Isaiam* V.19.18, lines 17–20, edited by Marc Adriaen, CCSL 73–73A (Turnhout 1963). Here, the five cities are said to represent either the hierarchical orders of the Church, the spiritual understanding of the Law which Paul talks of in 1 Corinthians 14, or the five books of Moses themselves.

⁹⁵ 1 Corinthians 14.19, cited from Codex Amiatinus fol. 958r: 'sed in ecclesia uolo quinque uerba sensu meo loqui ut et alios instruam quam decem milia uerborum in lingua'. Cited in English from the *New International Version*.

draws together and caps off the five excerpts that are featured, and because any viewer who had *Epistle 53* committed to memory would have immediately recalled this phrase and the scriptural concordance which it initiates after reading the captions in sequence.

Integrity of the Pentateuch

In the nine-part bible displayed in the illuminator-scribe's *armarium* on folio V/4r of the codex's initial quire the Pentateuchal books are incorporated into an Octateuch. In contrast, the Pentateuch diagram's visual scheme encourages the viewer to regard the first five books of the Bible as a standalone unit of the Scriptural canon by joining just these books together with an unbroken blue cord. This sentiment reflects the status of these books in Judaism where they comprise the Torah. By emphasising the essential harmony of the five Pentateuchal books the diagram expresses an exegetical principle which is articulated elsewhere in the pandect through various visual, textual and physical means, all of which connect in one way or another with the intellectual endeavours of Jerome.

Of the three diagrams which show the division of the Scriptures according to different authorities in the codex's initial quire, only the one attributed to Jerome presents the books of the Pentateuch as a discrete section of the Scriptural canon in its own right (figure 5). The scheme attributed to Epiphanius/Hilarus on folio VII/6r simply divides the books of the Bible into two large groups, one for each Testament. Augustine's arrangement on folio 8r identifies the five books of Moses as a group, but incorporates them into a larger category of 22 books labelled '*In historiam*' which forms a sub-division of a bipartite Old Testament. The more nuanced framework that is visualised in the Hieronymian diagram is derived from Jerome's *Prologus Galeatus* ('helmeted preface'). In the Codex Amiatinus this text is written out in its entirety underneath the heading '*PRAEFATIO REGNORUM*' on folios 218r to 219r, immediately before the *capitula lectionum* for the First Book of Samuel. Originally a letter sent by Jerome in 391 to two female correspondents named Paula and Eustochium, *Prologus Galeatus* describes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy as 'the five books of Moses, which they [i.e. the Jews] appropriately call *Thorath*, that

is, Law'.⁹⁶ The diagram showing Jerome's scheme for the division of the scriptures features the phrase 'in lege' above the rhombus which contains the names of the Pentateuchal books, and inside the rhombus the titles share space with that diagram's only Chi-Rho monogram, thus forming a second version of the full-page Pentateuch diagram in microcosm.

Another example where the integrity of the Pentateuch is expressed in material associated with Jerome is the preface beginning *Desiderii mei desideratas*, This originated as a letter written by Jerome in c.403 to a correspondent of his named Desiderius and, like *Epistle 53*, was a well-known and influential text in the early Middle Ages. In the Vulgate tradition it commonly situated ahead of the Book of Genesis where it serves as a preface to all five of the Pentateuchal books. Jerome did not write additional prefaces for the individual books of the Pentateuch, and no alternatives are copied into the Codex Amiatinus before Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers or Deuteronomy. In the Codex Amiatinus the letter to Desiderius begins on folio 9r. It is followed by the *capitula lectionum* for the Book of Genesis (9v – 10r), a blank page (10v), and the beginning of Genesis itself (11r). The present ordering of the codex's initial quire has the Pentateuch diagram on the verso side of its final folio, a placement which (as mentioned above) correlates with the position assigned to it in the most convincing attempts to reconstruct the first quire's original configuration.⁹⁷ This places the Pentateuch image and Jerome's letter to Desiderius opposite each other, an arrangement which mirrors the text-image diptych found later in the codex at the opening of the New Testament, where the *Maiestas Domini* illumination sits opposite Jerome's *Novum opus* preface for the gospels.⁹⁸ By serving as a single preface for the five Books of Law, the epistle to Desiderius encourages the reader to think of those books as interlinked, a message which is reinforced by the diagram which sits opposite Jerome's letter on a facing page.

⁹⁶ Jerome, *Prologus in libris Regum*, cited from Codex Amiatinus fol. 218v: 'Hi sunt quinque libri Mosi quos propriae Thorath, id est Legem appellant'.

⁹⁷ Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the *Codex Amiatinus*', 865; Chazelle, 'Ceolfrid's Gift to St Peter', 135.

⁹⁸ Darby, 'Codex Amiatinus *Maiestas Domini*', 365–8.

The idea that the first five books of the Old Testament form a coherent and singular body of material is also reflected in the physical characteristics of the Codex Amiatinus. Together, the *Desiderii mei desideratas* preface and Jerome's translations of the Books of Genesis through Deuteronomy form a section of the manuscript which is codicologically and paleographically distinct. Wright identifies this batch of material as the work of a single scribe.⁹⁹ The Pentateuchal material extends over 21 quires, the last of which is irregular to accommodate the conclusion of the Book of Deuteronomy.¹⁰⁰ The next book, the Book of Joshua, is written out in a different hand and commences on the first folio of a new quire (174r).¹⁰¹ The Pentateuch diagram's concern to present the Pentateuchal books as interlinked thus reflects an exegetical principle which also influenced the design and planning stages of the project, specifically the choice of how to divide the text of Holy Scripture up between the members of the scribal team for copying.

Conclusion

The Pentateuch diagram resonates with the wider themes of *Epistle 53* which were highlighted at the beginning of this essay: the need for Christians to have a comprehensive understanding of the Law and the importance of studying the scriptures under the guidance of learned teacher. By engaging the viewer with textual captions culled from *Epistle 53*, and through the use of various visual techniques to communicate exegetical meanings, the Codex Amiatinus image helps to realise Jerome's wish that Christ be found 'beneath the letter' of the Pentateuchal texts. This perspective is instilled in the viewer through the following means: the cruciform structure of the image, which aligns it with cross-carpet pages more commonly found in Insular gospel books; the colours, which are purposefully chosen to resonate with scriptural passages and exegetical interpretations; the inclusion of two small crosses which (like other examples scattered throughout the codex) inspire the viewer to think of typological links across the Old and New Testaments; and the textual captions themselves, which explicitly

⁹⁹ Wright, 'Notes on English Uncial', 452. The Pentateuch scribe signs off with a simple 'Amen' on fol. 173v.

¹⁰⁰ For details see Castaldi, 'Quire arrangement' in Ricci, Castaldi, and Minello, *La Bibbia Amiatina*.

¹⁰¹ Wright, 'Notes on English Uncial', 452.

encourage the reader to see the Pentateuch's old truths in a new light. Accordingly, the Pentateuch diagram should be regarded as a complex and multi-dimensional piece of visual exegesis on a par with the codex's better known illuminations. The one-volume bible was an extremely rare book type in pre-Carolingian Europe, and Ceolfrith's remarkable project to produce three such bibles was extraordinarily ambitious. The illuminated pages of the Codex Amiatinus are monuments to the community's creativity, sophistication and depth of learning. The Pentateuch image is ideally suited to a codex which contains the Old and New Testaments together because it visually reinforces the guiding principle behind Ceolfrith's grand project: the idea that the two parts of Scripture are inextricably linked and should be presented as such.

The decision taken at Wearmouth-Jarrow to include a heavily abridged version of *Epistle 53* in the Codex Amiatinus anticipates a later development in the transmission of the Vulgate, whereby the letter to Paulinus often came to be reproduced in its entirety before the beginning of the Old Testament.¹⁰² The innovative presentation of excerpts from *Epistle 53* in such prominent location in the initial quire of the Codex Amiatinus is testimony to the high regard which the Wearmouth-Jarrow community had for Jerome and his letter at the turn of the eighth century. It is clear that the authority of Jerome, above all other patristic figures, was crucially important to the monks who manufactured the Codex Amiatinus. The Pentateuch diagram can be aligned with several other features of the codex which implicitly or overtly celebrate Jerome, such as the *Maiestas Domini*, the purple contents page (which contains a poetic quatrain in his honour), the diagram for the Hieronymian division of the Scriptures, and the reproduction of the Vulgate text.¹⁰³

Jerome's importance to the intellectual culture fostered by Ceolfrith far exceeded his practical contributions as a translator of Sacred Scripture. The letters which circulated with Jerome's scriptural

¹⁰² *Epistle 53* was introduced into the Vulgate tradition as a regular prefatory text in bibles manufactured in Tours in the early ninth century: Hugh A. G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: a guide to its early history, texts, and manuscripts* (Oxford 2016) 82–5. *Epistle 53* is printed in full in the two copies of the Gutenberg Bible held by the British Library, shelf marks: C.9.d.3,4 (on paper) and G.12226–7 (vellum).

¹⁰³ See further Darby, 'Codex Amiatinus *Maiestas Domini*', 368–71.

translations provided medieval Christians with a substantial and influential critical apparatus to the Latin Bible, but of all of the prefatory letters included in the Codex Amiatinus only *Epistle 53* is given special treatment in terms of its visual presentation. The Pentateuch diagram ably demonstrates Jerome's overall importance to Ceolfrith's community. In producing their pandects the monks looked to Jerome not only for his edition of the various books of the Bible, but also for lenses through which to interpret those books. When writing to Paulinus of Nola in 394 Jerome stressed the importance of finding a learned guide to the Scriptures; through close study of his various writings the Wearmouth-Jarrow monks who produced the Codex Amiatinus found there to be no better guide to the Scriptures than Jerome himself.