The *Codex Purpureus* and its Role as an *Imago Regis* in Late Antiquity

"Parchment is [colored] white or yellow or purple..." (1). So claimed Isidore of Seville, the most important encyclopedist of the early Middle Ages, in his description of the types of parchment which were used in books. While Isidore goes on to note that white and yellow are the natural colors of parchment (i.e., flesh side and hair side), he merely adds the following about purple : "Purple [parchments] are dyed with the color purple, on which gold and silver, becoming fluid, are manifest in letters" (2). Unfortunately, this was all Isidore had to say about such a practice. Modern studies of the purple-dyed codex, strangely enough, have replicated Isidore's reticence (3). The preliminary modern exami-

(1) *Membrana autem aut candida aut lutea aut purpurea sunt* (ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, *Etymologiae* VI, 11, 4).

(2) *Purpurea vero inficiuntur colore purpureo, in quibus aurum et argentum liquescens patescat in litteris* (ISIDORE, *Etymologiae* VI, 11, 5).

(3) Aside from the brief comments found in the studies on the individual extant purple manuscripts (which shall be specifically cited within the text), the remaining bibliography on this art form is meager. The best general discussion, which focuses on the symbolic importance of the dye, is by G. MATHEW, *Byzantine Aesthetics*, London, 1963, p. 82-87 ; Otherwise, one is left with a series of introductions satisfied in treating the purple codex as a peculiarity and unconcerned with its particular meaning and use. See : W. WATTENBACH, *Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter*, Leipzig, 1896, p. 132-139 ; K. FAYMONVILLE, *Die Purpurfärberei der verschiedenen Kulturvölker des klassischen Altertums und der frühchristlichen Zeit*, (Inaugural-Dissertation), Heidelberg, 1900, p. 69-75 ; E. M. THOMPSON, *Handbook of Greek and Latin Palaeography*, 3rd ed., London, 1906, p. 38-43 ; H. HYVERNAT, *An Account of a Recent Publication on the Golden Purple Codex of the Pierpont Morgan Collection* in *Catholic University Bulletin* 17, 1911, p. 587-602 ; H. GERSTINGER, *Die griechische Buchmalerei*, Vienna, 1926 ; D. V. THOMPSON, *The Materials and Techniques of Medieval Painting*, London, 1936, p. 198-199 ; D. DIRINGER, *The Illuminated Book*, 2nd ed., London, 1967, p. 81-89 ; R. R. JOHNSON, *The Role of Parchment in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1968, p. 100-102 ; E. A. LOWE, *The Morgan Golden Gospels : The Date and Origin of the Manuscript* in L. BIELER, *Palaeographical Papers 1907-1965*, Edidit L. B., II, Oxford, 1972, p. 399-416 ; D. M. ROBB, *The Art of the Illuminated Manuscript*, New Jersey and London, 1973, p. 35-40 ; A. PETRUCCI, *Aspetti simbolici delle testimonianze scritte* in *Simboli e simbologia nell'alto Medioevo* (Settimane di studio, 23 ; Spoleto, 1976), II, p. 813-844, esp. 831-836 ; K. WEITZMANN, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, New York, 1977, p. 21, 76-96 ;

nations made no attempt at interpretation, opting rather to collect and list both the references mentioning and extant manuscripts exhibiting this style of decoration (4). The few interpretations proffered since these initial studies have been either unsatisfactory or incomplete. H. Hyvernat accounted for the application of purple dye and letters of precious metal to books in one sentence, claiming that "This custom originated very likely with a desire of impressing the due reverence for the word of God upon the still spiritually untrained minds of the thousands who at that time were coming over to the Church from all ranks of society, within the Roman Empire and outside as well" (5).

While purple deluxe manuscripts certainly must have been impressive objects to behold, their role as an aid in proselytization — more specifically, as an art form created for this purpose — is repudiated by the scant evidence that remains surrounding their origin. Not only did the art form seem to develop in the already Christianized realm of the Near East (as will be shown below), but it is found only once outside a thoroughly Christianized community (6). Moreover, while I do not entirely agree with Donald Bullough's statement that "There is nothing to suggest that [deluxe manuscripts] were ever seen outside the private world of a religious community whose regular routine of reading, meditation and worship they were intended to serve" (7), it is nevertheless clear that purple codices were rare objects hardly seen

C. De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Boston, 1986, p. 46 ; R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*, Cambridge, 1989, p. 142-144 ; B. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, transl. by D. Ó Cróinín ans D. Ganz, Cambridge, 1990, p. 10-11, 17-18 ; U. Ernst, *Farbe und Schrift im Mittelalter unter Berücksichtigung antiker Grundlagen und neuzeitlicher Rezeptionsformen* in *Testo e immagine nell'alto Medioevo* (Settimane di Studio, 41 ; Spoleto, 1993), I, p. 343-415 ; for Diplomatic studies, see I. Carini, *La porpora e il colore porporino nella diplomatica specialmente Siciliana*, Palermo, 1880 ; C. Brühl, *Purpururkunden* in *Festschrift für Helmut Beumann*. Ed. K.-U. Jäschke et R. Wenskus, Sigmaringen, 1977, p. 3-21.

(4) For example, Wattenbach, *Das Schriftwesen* [n. 3] ; Faymonville, *Die Purpurfärberei* [n. 3] ; Thompson, *Handbook* [n. 3].

(5) H. Hyvernat, *An Account* [n. 3], p. 588.

(6) This being the sixth century purple-dyed Psalter of St. Germain-des-Prés : Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Lat. 11947 ; see E. A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, V, Oxford, 1934-71, pl. 616 — hereafter cited *CLA*.

(7) Although Bullough is here speaking only of the 9th century *Lothar Gospels* (Paris B.N. lat. 266), he uses them as a vehicle to suggest this more general conclusion ; D. Bullough, *"Imagines Regum" and their Significance in the Early Medieval West* in G. Robertson and G. Henderson, *Studies in Memory of David Talbot Rice*, Edidunt G. R. et G. H., Edinburgh, 1975, p. 223-224 ; For the Gospel Book as a conspicuous object, see below p. 473.

by Hyvernat's "spiritually untrained thousands" (8). My reservations about Bullough's claim stem from a more probable interpretation of the purple codex — one which depends on an audience wider than that of a cloistered religious community. In their examinations of Carolingian manuscripts, both Rosamond McKitterick and Christopher De Hamel have observed that the "use of purple... especially for the colouring of whole pages in a book, was symbolic of great wealth, high social status and prestige" (9) and furthermore, that "manuscripts written in gold on purple had a promotional value in symbolizing imperial culture" (10). These interpretations, while demonstrating a greater understanding of the nature of the art form and its symbolic value, remain incomplete and leave the problem unresolved. McKitterick realized as much when she remarked that an "investigation of the provenance of manuscripts using purple-dyed or painted parchment might well uncover royal associations for many of them, for it is possible that ownership of purple books was a royal prerogative" (11).

Following De Hamel and McKitterick's lead, I wish to advance a more nuanced interpretation of the tradition of purple and gold book decoration — one which focuses on the creation of this iconographic scheme in Late Antiquity. To be sure, purple-dyed codices were objects associated either directly or indirectly with imperial culture. As shall be demonstrated, the general use of the dye itself came to affirm this connection. However, the occasions on which these special books were created and employed both to promote and symbolize imperial culture have not been investigated. I would suggest that one use of the purple and gold deluxe codex was as an imperial response to a crisis occurring with the acceptance of Christianity in the fourth century — namely, the dispute over the veneration of imperial images. While Ernst Kitzinger stated in his classic study that, "In view of the monopoly previously enjoyed...by the imperial image, the development [of the worship

(8) Hyvernat supports his "proselytization" hypothesis with a letter by St. Boniface (680-754 C.E.) [*MGH Epistolae selectae*, Edidit M. TANGL, I, Berlin, 1955, epist. 30, 35, p. 54, 60] who requested a book of St. Peter's Epistles to be written for him in letters of gold so that he might impress the heathen on his missions by illuminating the words of God. The fact that this book was not stained with purple, the imperial color, makes all the difference in its creation and use, as I shall demonstrate below. In other words, what may be true for golden letters may not necessarily be true for golden letters on a purple ground — a distinction Hyvernat did not make.

(9) R. MCKITTERICK, *The Carolingians* [n. 3], p. 143.

(10) C. DE HAMEL, *A History of Illuminated* [n. 3], p. 46.

(11) R. MCKITTERICK, *The Carolingians* [n. 3], p. 143.

of Christian images] must be described as a voluntary surrender of a privilege on the part of the monarch" (12), I shall argue rather that the early Christian-Roman emperors, by commissioning sumptuous purple and gold Gospel Books, sought to avoid this "surrender" of their long-time privilege through compromise and incorporation. By decorating the only object allowed to rest on the altar (the Gospel Book) with a symbolic color that had always been associated with kingship (purple), the Emperor managed to avoid conflict with Cbristians over the worship of imperial images. For indeed, the Gospel Book itself had now become an imperial image, representing, intertwining, and reinforcing the divinity of the "King" — one who was both secular Emperor and heavenly Christ (13).

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In order to investigate and analyze the formation of purple and gold book decoration, it is necessary to begin with a survey of the component parts of this art form. By tracing the early development and use of purple dye and gold letters independently, both the symbolic value and context in which these components were used when later combined in the book become more easily comprehensible.

One cannot examine the tradition of dyeing the leaves of books purple without first examining the ancient practice of using purple itself as a dye. Initially, the dye's primary use was to stain cloth, serving as a symbol to denote wealth or regality (14). This relationship between the color purple and wealth arose from the simple fact that purple dye was exceedingly expensive and was therefore available to only the very rich. There were several reasons for this costliness.

The primary factor behind the dye's enormous expense was the extraordinary amount of labor required to produce it. Three types of seamollusc, largely concentrated along the eastern Mediterranean shores

(12) E. KITZINGER, *The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm* in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8, 1954, p. 125-126.

(13) Note that in P. SCHRAMM's survey of royal symbols, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik* in *Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica* XIII, Stuttgart, 1954-55, he makes no mention of the purple codex.

(14) The best study on the use of purple in the ancient world is by M. REINHOLD, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity*, Brussels, Coll. Latomus, vol. 116, 1970 ; See also W. BORN, *Purple* in *Ciba Review* 4, 1937, p. 106-123 ; J. BRIDGEMAN, *Purple Dye in Late Antiquity and Byzantium* in E. SPANIER, *The Royal Purple and the Biblical Blue*, Edidit E. S., Jerusalem, 1987, p. 159-165.

(*murex brandaris, murex trunculus, purpura haemastoma*), were harvested in great numbers to meet the demand for the animal's costly but conspicuous purple excretion ([15]). The scope of this laborious harvest becomes immediately apparent when one takes into consideration the fact that twelve thousand sea-molluscs yielded a mere 1.4 grams of the dye ([16]), which was scarcely enough for the trim of a single garment ([17]). Considering both the profits to be made and the sheer number of workers required, it is little wonder that the sea-purple dye industry was at the very heart of several coastal cities' economies — Tyre and Sidon being two of the most famous ([18]).

The manufacture of the dye was not only toilsome but hazardous as well. Pliny the Elder states that "to get [cheaper types of purple] nobody seeks the murex oyster in the depths, offering his person as bait to sea monsters while he hastens to snatch his booty, and exploring a bottom that no anchor yet has touched" and that obtaining sea-purple substitutes is a task "certainly with less risk to life" ([19]). This labor, coupled with a later imperial monopoly on the Tyrian purple industry by Diocletian ([20]), dictated the exorbitant price of purple dye in Late Antiquity. Diocletian's Price Edict of 311 C.E. gives some indication : one pound of white silk was priced at 12,000 *denarii* ([21]), hut

(15) See E. SPANIER and N. KARMON, *Muricid Snails and the Ancient Dye Industries* in E. SPANIER, *The Royal Purple* [n. 14], p. 179-192 ; N. JIDEJIAN, *Tyre Through the Ages*, Beirut, 1969, p. 145-146 ; H. ROOSEN-RUNGE, *Farbgebung und Technik frühmittelalterlicher Buchmalerei*, II, Munich, 1967, p. 25.

(16) P. FRIEDLÄNDER, *Über den Farbstoff des antiken Purpurs aus murex brandaris* in *Berichte der Deutschen Chemischen Gesellschaft* 42, 1909, p. 765-770.

(17) D. S. REESE, *The Mediterranean shell purple-dye industry* in *American Journal of Archaeology* 90, 1986, p. 183.

(18) See R. J. FORBES, *Studies in Ancient Technology*, IV, Leiden, 1956, p. 98-121 ; N. JIDEJIAN, *Tyre* [n. 15], p. 143-159 ; N. KARMON and E. SPANIER, *Archaeological Evidence of the Purple Dye Industry from Israel* in E. SPANIER, *The Royal Purple* [n. 14], p. 147-158 ; See also PLINY, *Naturalis Historia* IX, 60, 127, where he says that "the best Asiatic purple is at Tyre, the best African is at Meninx and on the Gaetulian coast of the ocean, the best European in the district of Sparta." ; Being one of the oldest of these centers, Phoenicia itself takes its name from this ancient lucrative industry, *phoinikous* meaning "red-purple". See D. HARDEN, *The Phoenicians*, New York, 1962, p. 22.

(19) *nec quaerit in profundis murices, seque obiciendo escam, dum praeripit, beluis marinis, intacta etiam ancoris scrutatur uada ; sed culpant ablui usu, alioqui fulgentius instrui poterat luxuria, certe innocentius* (PLINY, *Nat. Hist.* XXII, 3, (2)).

(20) EUSEBIUS, *Ecclesiastical History* VII, 32 ; See also the restrictions on purple-dyeing in the *Codex Theodosianus* X, 21, 3 (424 C.E.) and X, 20, 18 (436 C.E.).

(21) *Price Edict of Diocletian* XXIII, 1A (T. FRANK, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, Edidit T. F., V, Baltimore, 1940, p. 382).

raw silk dyed with the finest purple was 150,000 *denarii* per pound (22). For comparison, one pound of refined gold in bars or coins was priced in the same edict at 50,000 *denarii* (23).

Another source of purple dye found throughout the ancient world of the Mediterranean and the Near East was the *coccus* or Kermes insect. The purplish-scarlet dye extracted from its larvae had been used since pre-historic times, but was less renowned than the costly *murex*. Because of its inferior hue and imperfect colorfast quality, Kermes purple usually acted as a cheaper substitute and as a supplement added to the more valuable sea-purple during production — a fact of which the populace was not unaware (24).

Due to the proximity of its source (the Tyrian *murex*) and the prohibitive cost of the dye, the color purple had long been used as a status symbol throughout the ancient world of the Near East. Ugarit, (modern Ras Shamra) on the Syrian coast opposite the easternmost cape of Cyprus, was a center of civilization within 200 miles of Tyre that made early use of the dye. Texts dating back to the 14th century B.C.E. reveal Ugaritic merchants concerned with purple-stained wool (25). While its particular meaning at this period is unclear, later references suggest that the dye symbolized distinction from the earliest times. An inscription of the eighth century B.C.E. implies as much, containing inventories of tribute from the Phoenician city-states, including a number of Tyrian purple-dyed garments for members of the Assyrian royal court (26). Further references to the color purple's use as a status symbol in the ancient Near East appear in the Old Testament. Like the use of the color by the Assyrians, the Old Testament records purple (27) employed as a symbol not only of the rich, but more

(22) *Price Edict* [n. 21], XXIV, 1A ; p. 382.

(23) *Price Edict* [n. 21], XXX, 1A ; p. 412.

(24) See R. J. FORBES, *Ancient Technology* [n. 18], IV, p. 100-106 ; also W. BORN, *Scarlet* in *Ciba Review* 7, 1938, p. 206-214 ; H. ROOSEN-RUNGE, *Farbgebung und Technik* [n. 15], II, p. 40-51.

(25) F. THUREAU-DANGIN, *Un comptoir de laine pourpre à Ugarit d'après une tablette de Ras-Shamra* in *Syria* 15, 1934, p. 137-146 ; C. F. A. SCHAEFFER, *The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra-Ugarit*, London, 1939, p. 22-23, 38.

(26) J. B. PRITCHARD, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Edidit J. B. P., 2nd ed., Princeton, 1955, p. 282.

(27) Here the English terms "purple" and "violet" are generally used for the translation of the Hebrew terms "Argaman" and "Tekhelet" — a sumptuous pair used in the same sense as "gold and silver". See I. H. HERZOG, *Hebrew Porphyrology* in E. SPANIER, *The Royal Purple* [n. 14], p. 18-145, especially 52-56.

specifically of the royal. For example, there were the "purple robes worn by the Midianite Kings" (28) (Judges 8 : 26). At the banquet of King Ahasuerus there were "violet hangings fastened to silver rings by cords of fine linen with purple thread" emphasizing the splendor of the royal pavilion (Esther 1 : 6). King Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar, addressed the wise men of Babylon, saying "Whoever reads this writing and tells me its interpretation shall be robed in purple and have a gold chain bung around his neck, and he shall rank third in the kingdom" (Daniel 5 : 7).

The Old Testament is also where purple is seen to take on a new role, acting as a symbol of the sacred and holy. Moses was commanded by God to make the sacred vestments of the priests "using gold, violet, purple, and scarlet yarn" (Exodus 28 : 5). The Ark containing tbe tahlets inscribed with tbe Word of God was associated witb and distinguished by purple. God instructed Moses to fashion for tbe Tabernacle (the tent which housed the Ark) a court gateway screen (Exodus 27 : 16), an entrance screen (Exodus 26 : 36), an altar screen (Exodus 26 : 31), and the Tabernacle itself (Exodus 26 :1) out of "finely woven linen and violet, purple, and scarlet yarn". He was also ordered to wrap the Ark and the rest of the sacred vessels in violet and purple cloth when the camp was due to move. God tells Moses that this service "is most holy" (Numbers 4 : 4 *passim*).

Purple now had a dual symbolic value, carrying associations of royalty and divinity. The use of the color by King Solomon exemplifies this two-fold meaning, having been employed hy him to convey the two qualities. "Tbe palanquin which King Solomon had made for himself... Its uprights were made of silver, its headrest of gold ; its seat was of purple stuff" (Song of Songs 3 : 9-10). Here was the royal purple which Solomon used, along with silver and gold, to distinguish his palanquin as one on which a king might ride. However, at the same time, he had within his temple a "veil of violet, purple, and crimson yarn" hung within the "Most Holy Place" (2 Chronicles 3 : 14). Just as with the Tabernacle, this purple veil indicated the holy area where the Ark of the Covenant lay.

While all of these references demonstrate the awareness and use of the color purple as a distinct symbol of both royalty and sanctity in the ancient Near East, the crux of their importance to this study lies

(28) All Biblical passages are taken from the *Oxford Revised English Bible* edition.

in the legacy these same references left to tbe understanding of purple in Late Antiquity. The well-established symbolism of purple would not only be transmitted through the persistence of the Old Testament and the patristic commentary upon it, but would also be transmitted within a religious paradigm. The Sacred Text described and maintained that purple and gold were the appropriate forms of decoration for the representation of both royalty and sanctity. However, while this ecclesiastical model would later exert a powerful influence on the creation of the purple and gold Gospel Book in the Christian Roman Empire, it was not the only model which played a role.

The Greeks and Romans also made extensive use of the color purple to delineate social class and distinguish the sacred. As Pliny states, "I notice that the use of purple at Rome dates from the earliest times, but tbat Romulus used it only for a cloak ; as it is fairly certain that the first of the kings to use the bordered robe and broader purple stripe (*latiore clauo*) was Tullus Hostilius, after the conquest of tbe Etruscans" (29). There are countless similar examples of purple-dyeing dispersed throughout the entire corpus of Greco-Roman literature (30). In each case, the use of tbe dye was typically modeled after the Near and Middle Eastern practice of staining garments to distinguish the wealthy, the royal, and priests. However, it is specifically with the Greeks and Romans that a crucial formative step in the development of the purple book tradition was made — namely, the application of purple dye to the "book" itself.

Already by the first century B.C.E., the outer trimmings of the papyrus roll (the standard hook of Antiquity) were occasionally dyed purple by the Greeks and Romans to denote a deluxe edition (31). In describing a luxurious roll, Catullus mentions its royal papyrus and *lora rubra* — tbe latter being leather thongs (*lora*) for fastening the roll, which had been dyed red or scarlet (32). The strip of parchment containing tbe title of a roll, known as the *titulus, index*, or *σίλλυβος*, was also attacbed to the roll's exterior and occasionally accented with scarlet. Ovid grieves that the title (*titulus*) of his text, now the work

(29) *Purpurae usum Romae semper fuisse uideo, sed Romulo in trabea : nam toga praetexta et latiore clauo Tullum Hostilium e regibus primum usum Etruscis devictis satis constat* (PLINY, *Nat. Hist.* IX, 63, 136).

(30) See M. REINHOLD, *History of Purple* [n. 14], p. 22 ff.

(31) See E. M. THOMPSON, *Handbook* [n. 3], p. 39.

(32) *chartae regiae, noui libri, novi umbilici, lora rubra, membranae, derecta plumbo, et pumice omnia aequata* (CATULLUS, *Carmina* XXII, 6-8).

of an outcast and unworthy of exquisite decoration, "shall not be tinged with scarlet" (33). Martial also notes that a roll's title tag (*index*) should be stained with scarlet as a mark of distinction (34). This use of the dye is especially provocative, for here one sees the combination of purple dye on a written surface for the first time, prefiguring its later use within the codex. Another accessory, the parchment slip-cover (*toga, paenula, membrana, φαινόλης*, or *διφθέρα*), which served as the dustjacket of a roll, was periodically decorated with purple. Ovid, addressing a volume of his work, lamented that it shall "have no cover dyed with the juice of purple" (35). Lucian chastised his friend, telling him that "the roll that you hold in your hands is very beautiful, with a slip-cover of purple vellum and a gilt knob, but in reading it you barbarize its language, spoil its beauty, and warp its meaning" (36). Martial speaks of purple as an element of book decoration in several of his epigrams — "though you are not yet smart with purple and smoothed by the rough bite of dry pumice, you haste, little book..." (37). Although not entirely clear, one presumes Martial is speaking of the roll's cover being decorated with purple (in epigram X, 93 he describes the staining of a volume of poems in more specific language — *purpurea sed modo suta toga*). Finally, the poet Statius not only describes the decoration of his roll, but also gives an indication of its value, stating that "mine, in scarlet, of new papyrus and embellished with twin knobs, cost me (apart from my personal contribution) ten *asses*" (38). This was a considerable sum for the production of a roll, and Statius made this fact clear by including its cost in his poem (39). The use of purple dye no doubt played a part in its high price.

Although the dye was now found on a new medium, its message was still clear. Rolls with purple decoration on their exterior were under-

(33) *nec titulus minio...notetur* (OVID, *Tristia* I, 1, 7).

(34) *et cocco rubeat superbus index* (MARTIAL, *Epigrammata* III, 2, 11).

(35) *nec te purpureo uelent vaccinia fuco* (OVID, *Tristia* I, 1, 5).

(36) *τὸ μὲν βιβλίον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ ἔχῃς πάγκαλον, πορφυρᾶν μὲν ἔχον τὴν διφθέραν, χρυσοῦν δὲ τὸν ὀμφαλόν, ἀναγιγνώσκῃς δὲ αὐτὸ βαρβαρίζων καὶ καταισχύνων καὶ διαστρέφων* (LUCIAN, *Adversus Indoctum et libros multos ementem* VII). (M. D. MACLEOD, *Luciani Opera*, Edidit M. D. M., II, Oxford, 1974, p. 125 — transl. by A. M. HARMON, *Lucian*, III, Cambridge, Mass., 1921, Loeb Classical Series, p. 185).

(37) *Nondum murice cultus asperoque morsu pumicis aridi politus... libelle* (MARTIAL, *Epigrammata* VIII, 72, 1-3 ; See also I, 66 ; I, 117 ; III, 2 ; X, 93).

(38) *noster purpureus nouusque charta et binis decoratus umbilicis praeter me mihi constitit decussis* (STATIUS, *Silvae* IV, 9, 7-9).

(39) For the determination of the book's relative value, see the commentary by K. M. COLEMAN in *Statius, Silvae IV*, Oxford, 1988, p. 226, n. 9.

stood to be expensive deluxe editions indicative of a wealthy owner. It is important to note, however, that this Greco-Roman application of the dye to the "book" was strictly one-dimensional. Rolls decorated with purple held no religious connotations, even though purple was being used contemporaneously by priests to indicate sanctity. Pagan worship, unlike Christianity or Judaism, did not focus or rely upon a sacred text which might be distinguished and ennobled by the symbolic color. It was not a "religion of the book" (40).

Before following the application of the color purple inward from the cases and tags of rolls to the page, it is necessary to turn briefly to the second component of the tradition — gold or silver letters. Through another brief survey, the art of writing in precious metal, known as chrysography, can be seen to have already been practiced in the ancient world, centuries before its appearance in purple codices (41). This rare form of ornamentation carried a symbolic value similar to that of purple, signifying a wealthy or even royal author/possessor of the decorated text. Ptolemy 'Philadelphus' II (309-246 B.C.E.), Greek king of Egypt and founder of the Alexandrian Library, appears to have been one such owner, allegedly acquiring a deluxe copy of the Hebrew Law sometime in the midst of the third century B.C.E.

> "When they entered with the gifts which had been sent with them and the valuable parchments on which the Law was inscribed in gold in Jewish characters, for the parchment was wonderfully prepared and the connection between the sheets had been effected as to be invisible, the King as soon as he saw them began to ask about the books. And when they had taken the rolls out of their coverings and unfolded the pages (sic) the King stood still for a long time and then, making an obeisance seven times, he said 'I thank you my friends and I thank him that sent you still more, and most of all God, whose oracles these are'" (42).

(40) E. R. CURTIUS, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, transl. by W. R. TRASK, New York, 1953, p. 304-311.

(41) For a more complete survey of references, see W. WATTENBACH, *"Goldschrift"* in *Das Schriftwesen* [n. 3], p. 251-261, esp. 251-252 ; Note that Wattenbach does not mention a possible early reference to chrysography in AUGUSTINE, *De Civitate Dei* X, 29 ; "The old saint Simplicianus, afterwards bishop of Milan, used to tell me that a certain Platonist was in the habit of saying that this opening passage of the holy gospel, entitled 'According to John', should be written in letters of gold, and hung up in all churches in the most conspicuous place".

(42) For the Greek text of the letter, see H. B. SWETE, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, Cambridge, 1902 [reprint New York, 1968], p. 581. sec. 176-177 ; For the translation, R. REED, *Ancient Skins, Parchments, and Leathers*, London, 1972, p. 99.

This remarkable event, from which the translation of the Septuagint is thought to derive, is described in the letter of pseudo-Aristeas, written in approximately 150 B.C.E. It is exceptional not simply because it refers to golden letters but, more importantly, for the context in which it places them. The Sacred Scriptures were the text deserving of gold decoration and the king was the person deserving of sucb a decorated text. The importance of this relationship cannot be overemphasized. Both of these contextual elements (gold letters > sacred text ; gilded text > king) were to become crucial to the later tradition of the purple and gold codex. However, the accuracy of this letter has been challenged. In the opinion of biblical scholar H.B. Swete, "the story of the rolls being written in letters of gold and sent to the King by the High Priest may be dismissed at once ; it belongs to the picturesque setting of the romance" (43). Swete claims that the account was exaggerated in order to "glorify the Jewish race, and to diffuse information about their sacred books" (44). Yet, even if pseudo-Aristeas simply romanticized his report by describing the books as gilded, this embellishment reveals his, as well as his audiences, awareness of chrysography as a form of decoration reserved for exceptional occasions and employed during his own lifetime (2nd century B.C.E.). In other words, he took his "lie" from an existing, albeit rare, practice.

The Romans also seem to have practiced early on the art of writing in letters of gold or silver. Suetonius reports in his *Lives of the Caesars* that Nero recorded one of his own poems in letters of gold — "that part of his poems [which he had read was recorded] in letters of gold, dedicated to Jupiter of the Capitol" (45). Although Suetonius speaks of the poem ambiguously, leaving the modern reader uncertain as to just how or on what it was written, it is significant to note that tbe emperor believed letters of gold were the appropriate medium with which to display an imperial poem. Just a century later, the jurist Gaius, in his *Institutes* (essentially a textbook for law students), states as a legal maxim that "what someone has written on my papyrus or parchment is mine even if it is in letters of gold, because the letters become part of the papyrus or parchment" (46). Though Gaius refers to gold

(43) H. B. SWETE, *An Intro.* [n. 42], p. 22.
(44) H. B. SWETE, *An Intro.* [n. 42], p. 15.
(45) *pars carminum aureis litteris Ioui Capitolino dicata* (SUETONIUS, *Nero* 10).
(46) *quod in cartulis siue membranis meis aliquis scripserit, licet aureis litteris, meum esse, quia litterae cartulis siue membranis cedunt* (GAIUS, *Institutiones* II, 77).

letters as an extreme case to which his logic still applies, this reference nevertheless reinforces the manifestation of the practice of chrysography in the Roman Empire. Moreover, it is a reminder of the different connotations golden letters, like purple dye, held when applied to the "book" : to the Romans they were a symbol of material wealth and prestige, but to the Jews (if pseudo-Aristeas is to be believed) they also held a spiritual value, emphasizing and ennobling the word of God.

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Having surveyed the early use and symbolism of purple dye and metallic letters, the union of these components into an iconographic articulation for power, whether economic or spiritual, should come as no surprise. The wives of the Roman Emperors, for whom the Greek philosopher Philostratus (ca. 172-244 C.E.) wrote, were no doubt familiar with the efficacy and power of this iconography when tbey read that

> "[dragons] are themselves caught by the Indians in the following manner. [The Indians] embroider golden letters on a scarlet cloak, which they lay in front of the animal's hurrow after charming the letters to cause sleep ; for this is the only way to overcome the eyes of the dragon, which are otherwise inflexihle" (47).

As the passage above indicates, the two components had been joined on cloth with remarkable effect — but what of their communion on the page ? It has been demonstrated that both purple dye and metallic letters were used independently on a written medium by the Romans to denote an analogous value. But wben and where did they coalesce ? Richard R. Johnson has suggested that "it is at least possible that gold and silver ink were first used for the title on the dyed *index* [the parcbment title tag of a roll]" (48). This would ascribe the formation of purple and gold book decoration to the period of the roll, possibly during the first century B.C.E. - second century C.E. — the time in which references to the individual components of the art form, as

(47) *αὐτοὶ δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰνδῶν οὕτως ἁλίσκονται · κοκκοβαφεῖ πέπλῳ χρυσᾶ ἐνείραντες γράμματα τίθενται πρὸ τῆς χειᾶς, ὕπνον ἐγγοητεύσαντες τοῖς γράμμασιν, ὑφ' οὗ νικᾶται τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὁ δράκων ἀτρέπτους ὄντας* PHILOSTRATUS, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* III, 7 (F. C. CONYBEARE, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, Edidit F. C. C., I, Cambridge, Mass., 1912, Loeb Classical Series, p. 244-247).

(48) R. R. JOHNSON, *The Role of Parchment* [n. 3], p. 101-102.

surveyed above, begin to emerge. Unfortunately, the little evidence which remains does not directly support this hypothesis. What the evidence does suggest is that the tradition of staining and gilding texts likely began in the Byzantine East, appearing not on the roll but in the codex.

There are five references (49) to purple and gold book decoration which occur prior to tbe date assigned to the oldest extant purple manuscripts (mid- fifth century) (50). Althougb several of these references are problematic, they nevertheless contain hints of tbe East couched in their language or context. By working through the various problems of this evidence, it is possible to identify and isolate these eastern elements, whicb in turn help to define and delimit the use of purple and gold book decoration cbronologically and geographically. The first of these references describes a royal gift of the third century.

Sometime near 235 C.E., the son of Roman Emperor Maximinus Thrax reputedly was given "books of Homer, all purple, written in gold letters" — *libros Homericos omnes purpureos... aureis litteris scriptos* — by a female relative, marking both tbe commencement of his education and his father's rise to power (51). This is the earliest known occurrence of purple and gold used together on a written surface. It is uncertain, however, just what fashion of written surface is being described as decorated — a roll or a codex ? The ambiguous word *libros* provides no clue to its form (52). On tbe one hand, this

(49) It should be mentioned that this number does not include the reference to purple and gold codices in the spurious letter of "Theonas", supposedly dating from the turn of the third century. This letter was proven to be a forgery by P. BATIFFOL on the basis of its Latinity and resemblance to a later text ; For this proof, see his article *L'Épître de Théonas à Lucien. Note sur un document chrétien attribué au IIIe siècle* in *Bibliothèque de L'École des Chartes* 47, 1886, p. 336-340 ; For the text of the letter, see D. L. D'ACHERY, *Spicilegium*, Paris, 1723, [Farnborough, Hants., 1967-8, III, p. 299].

(50) These oldest purple and gold MSS. being the Greek *Vienna Genesis* (VIENNA NATIONAL BIBLIOTHEK, COD. THEOL. GR. 31), and the Latin *Codex Palatinus* (TRENT; MUSEO NAZIONALE S.N. — OLIM VIENNA 1185 ; DUBLIN, TRINITY COLLEGE 1709 — N. IV. 18 ; LONDON, BRITISH MUSEUM, ADDITIONAL MS. 40107), both ascribed to the mid-fifth century.

(51) *filio autem haec fuerunt : cum grammatico daretur, quaedam parens sua libros Homericos omnes purpureos dedit aureis litteris scriptos* (*SHA*, *Maximini* dvo Ivli *Capitolini* XXX, (4), 4 (E. HOHL, *Maximini Duo Iuli Capitolini* in *Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen*, Edidit E. H., CLXXII, Berlin, 1949, p. 27).

(52) C. H. ROBERTS, *The Codex* in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 40, 1954, p. 199, n. 2.

general term for "hooks" used early in the third century would normally be referring to rolls — the codex heing employed at this time primarily by Christians (53). On the other hand, the extravagant "books" of Maximinus the Younger can hardly be considered normal. Moreover, it has been shown that works of Homer number among the earliest surviving examples of codices (54). Other early survivals, such as medical and grammatical manuals, suggest that the form of the codex was adopted and used early for the purpose of education (55). Works of Homer surviving in codex form only serve to reinforce this suggestion, for "[t]he role played by Homer in primary education needs no emphasising" (56). Thus, it seems plausihle that when Maximinus the Younger was given purple and gold books of Homer for the purpose of his education, what he received were decorated codices.

While it is impossible to tell who the relative was that gave the Younger Maximinus such an exotic gift, an examination into the hackground of the child's family yields a possihle motive for the hitherto unparalleled sumptuous decoration of his textbook. His father, the Emperor Maximinus (57), was of low birth, having been horn from "barbarian" parents in a Thracian village (58). As the historian Herodian notes, this was a fact Maximinus, the first of the usurping "military emperors", camc to loathe and went to extremes to conceal (59) :

(53) C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*, Oxford, 1983, p. 73.
(54) C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth* [n. 53], p. 71.
(55) C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth* [n. 53], p. 71-72.
(56) C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat; *The Birth* [n. 53], p. 72.
(57) For more on Maximinus, see A. Bellezza, *Massimino il Trace*, Genova, 1964.
(58) Note that the tale which gives a specific account of his ethnic descent — "He was born... of a barbarian father and mother, the one, men say, being of the Goths, the other of the Alani" (*SHA, Maximini duo Iuli Capitolini*, I, 5, E. Hohl [n. 51], p. 9 ; See also Jordanes, *Getica* XV, 83) is not attested in Herodian, Julius Capitolinus' source. For the "Gothic" and "Alanic" names of his parents, "Micca and Hababa" (*SHA, Maximini duo*, I, 6, E. Hohl [n. 51], p. 9) see E. Hohl, *Die 'gotische Abkunft' des Kaisers Maximinus Thrax* in *Klio* 34, 1941, p. 264-289.
(59) See also the later accounts by Julius Capitolinus (obviously taken from Herodian), — "And in his early days Maximinus himself freely disclosed [the names of his parents] ; later, however, when he came to the throne, he had them concealed, lest it should seem that the emperor was sprung on both sides from barbarian stock". *SHA, Maximini duo* (I, 7, E. Hohl [n. 51], p. 9) ; "He likewise feared that the nobility, because of his low barbarian birth, would scorn him" (VIII, 9, E. Hohl [n. 51], p. 13).

> "[Maximinus was] conscious of the hatred against him for being the first man to rise from the most humble origins to such a fortunate position" (60).
>
> "[Maximinus] was afraid that the senate and his subjects would despise him, forgetting his present good fortune and fixing their attention on the humble circumstances of his birth" (61).

Likewise, in his later biography, the historian "Julius Capitolinus" (62) mentions that

> "to hide the lowness of his birth [Maximinus] put to death all who had knowledge of it, some of whom, indeed, were friends who had often pitied him for his poverty and made him many presents" (63).

As the donor of the purple book possibly realized, a good way to suppress Maximinus' rustic background (thereby gaining his favor) was to emphasize the established symbols of the imperial office. However, due to Maximinus' paranoia over his provincial origins, attempts at emphasis were necessarily aggrandized into ostentation. The royal purple, long an emblem of the emperor, was now used to denote even his son's textbook as an imperial object in order to project Maximinus' "refinement".

After reviewing the little that is known about the creation of the younger Maximinus' purple book, the main impression one is left with is that it was an eastern product. Maximinus' descendants were from the eastern provinces and he himself was from Thrace. The book which his son received was by a Greek author — Homer. Moreover, his son preferred other items decorated according to Greek fashion — "After the style of the Ptolomies this youth wore a golden cuirass" (64). Finally,

(60) *δυσμένειαν ἑαυτῷ συνειδώς, ὅτι πρῶτος ἐξ εὐτελείας τῆς ἐσχάτης ἐς τοσαύτην τύχην ἦλασε* (HERODIAN VII, 1, 1).

(61) *δεδιὼς μή τι τῇ συγκλήτῳ καὶ τοῖς ὑπηκόοις εὐκαταφρόνητος γένηται, οὐκ ἐς τὴν παροῦσαν αὐτοῦ τύχην ἀφορῶσιν, ἀλλ' ἐς τὰ τῆς γενέσεως εὐτελῆ σπάργανα* (HERODIAN VII, 1, 2). Transl. by C. R. WHITTAKER [n. 60], p. 149.

(62) Warning quotes appear since it is neither clear who this author was nor how he relates to the other author(s) of the *Historia Augusta*. For a basic statement of the problem, see D. MAGIE, *The Authorship and Date of the Historia Augusta* in *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, II, Cambridge Mass., 1924, Loeb Classical Series, p. VII-XXXVI.

(63) *nam ignobilitatis tegendae causa omnes conscios generis sui interemit, nonnullos etiam amicos, qui ei saepe misericordiae paupertatis causa pleraque donauerant* ; *SHA, Maximini* duo, I, 9 (E. HOHL [n. 51], p. 14).

(64) *usus autem est idem adulescens et aurea lorica exemplo Ptolomaeorum* ; *SHA, Maximini duo* XXIX, (3), 8 (E. HOHL [n. 51], p. 26).

Maximinus had never even been to Rome, having been acclaimed emperor by the army while in the provinces. The farthest West he had come was to Aquileia, the first city to successfully oppose him on his marcb to conquer Rome.

To be sure, the *Historia Augusta*, the source from which the reference to Maximinus the Younger's special book comes, is known for being problematic, if not at times entirely suspect (65). Tbus, it must be acknowledged that the entire episode of the "gift of purple books" could be an invention on the part of "Julius Capitolinus". Nevertheless, like the earlier appearance of golden letters in tbe passage by pseudo-Aristeas, the reference to an exotic style of decoration in Capitolinus' possible exaggeration or lie suggests the existence of the art form — in this case, during the fourth or fifth century (66). By the act of deploying the trope of the purple and gold book, it is evident that the author assumed a shared symbolic language with his audience, expecting a common understanding of this function of purple within an interpretive community. In other words, it was only by invoking something his audience already understood that the author could be sure to expect a specific reaction — namely, awe — from his readers.

In any event, the enigmatic books of Maximinus have a better substantiated relative, appearing only a century later in tbe Byzantine East. Sometime before ca. 315 C.E. (67), the Emperor Constantine was given an extravagant book of figure poems (*carmina figurata*) by his court poet Pubilius Optatianus Porfyrius (b. ca. 260-270 C.E.) (68).

> "You, O Thalia, formerly having been honored by a beautiful little book, who had been accustomed to carry the poem into the hands of

(65) See R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography : Studies in the Historia Augusta*, Oxford, 1971, p. 184.

(66) The date of its composition, like most other aspects of the *Historia Augusta*, is an issue of debate. R. Syme, *The Bogus Names in the Historia Augusta* in *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1964/5* (3), 1966, p. 272, argues for the end of the fourth century, while E. Birley, *Fresh Thoughts on the Dating of the Historia Augusta* in *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1975/6* (13), 1978, p. 99-105, argues for the fifth. Note that the *Historia Augusta* is so problematic as a source that it has an entire journal dedicated to its interpretation.

(67) The year in which Porfyrius was exiled by Constantine. See T. D. Barnes, *Pubilius Optatianus Porfyrius* in *American Journal of Philology* 96, 1975, p. 186.

(68) See T. D. Barnes, *Pubilius Optatianus Porfyrius* [n. 67], p. 184 ; T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1981, p. 47-48 ; R. Mac Mullen, *Constantine*, 1969 [reprint 1987], New York, p. 142-143, 210-211.

> Augustus, shining entirely with purple, denoting by a colored outline words written with glittering letters in gold and silver..." (69).

Although this book no longer exists, there do remain later manuscripts which exhibit this style of decoration and corroborate the description whicb Porfyrius provided above (70). From these copies, the format of the Late Antique exemplar can be deduced. Every other page was stained purple with certain letters highlighted in silver or gold to form both shapes within the text block and separate "inter-textual" poems (See fig. 1).

While it is not surprising to find, onee again, an imperial recipient of a purple and gold book, the unusual scheme of this decoration is of interest. For the entire method behind the decorative design is one of systematic "tricks" : silver lettering for the text with gold used on the individual "figure" letters and vice versa, an alternation of dyed and plain pages, and the careful positioning of the text to permit the inter-textual poems to take on the desired shape, which was then bordered in color. Porfyrius, the creator of the book, was fascinated by these kinds of calculated, metbodical games, using them not just within his deluxe book of poetry. For example, he enjoyed the line describing himself — *quem diuus genuit Constantius induperator* — because the syllables of the five words increase according to an arithmetic progression (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) (71). Due to Porfyrius' highly idiosyncratic taste for regularity and symmetry, the orderly coloring program followed in his imperial book (alternating purple pages) was most likely a "Porfyrian" feature — one unique to the court poet's works and not part of a larger iconographic scheme for the application of purple and gold to the page (72).

(69) *Quae quondam sueras pulchro decorata libello carmen in Augusti ferre Thalia manus, ostro tota nitens, argento auroque coruscis scripta notis, picto limite dicta notans* P. OPTATIANUS PORFYRIUS, *Carmina* I, 1-4.

(70) The best example being the eighth century Stockholm *Codex Aureus*, (KUNGLIGA BIBLIOTEKET A 135) ; *CLA* XI, pl. 1642 ; For a discussion of this MS., see J. J. G. ALEXANDER, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles*, I, London, 1978, p. 56-57, and especially for its Porfyrian elements, C. NORDENFALK, *A Note on the Stockholm Codex Aureus* in *Nordisk Tidskrift för Bok- och Biblioteksväsen* 38, 1951, p. 145-155.

(71) OPTATIANUS PORFYRIUS, *Carmina* XV, 5, as with all of poem XV ; R. MAC MULLEN, *Constantine* [n. 68], p. 211.

(72) Whether there even was such an iconographic scheme at this time is unclear (being dependent upon the authenticity of Maximinus' earlier purple-dyed books).

An examination of Porfyrius' background demonstrates once again the art form employed by someone with strong connections to the Greek East. Porfyrius served as proconsul of Achaea sometime before 306 C.E. and was probably African in origin (73). This latter possibility is especially provocative, for the *carmina figurata* (figure poems, or the more technical term "technopaegnia") were an ancient Alexandrian device (74). If the young African Porfyrius learned of this eccentric technique there, it may also have been where he learned of purple-dyed books. The fact that one of the earliest extant purple manuscripts, the mid-fifth century Codex Palatinus (75), is thought to have African origins only serves to support this speculation (76).

The three remaining early references to purple and gold books, all made by Saint Jerome, also hint of the East once contextualized. Jerome, clearly contemptuous of luxurious decoration, repeatedly inveighed against *codices de luxe* :

> "Parchments are dyed purple, gold is melted for lettering, manuscripts are decked with jewels, and Christ [in the form of his poor] lies at their door naked and dying" (77) (ca. 384 C.E.).
>
> "Let those who want them have old texts written on purple parchment with gold and silver letters, or as people say popularly with 'uncial letters' — written burdens I call them, rather than books — as long as they allow me and mine to possess our poor leaves and to cherish emended codices rather than such beautiful ones" (78) (ca. 382-5 C.E.).

(73) T. D. Barnes, *Pubilius Optatianus Porfyrius* [n. 67], p. 174-177, 184-186.

(74) C. A. Trypanis, *Greek Poetry : from Homer to Seferis*, London and Boston, 1981, p. 341-342.

(75) Trent, Museo Nazionale S.N. (olim Vienna 1185) ; Dublin, Trinity College. 1709 (N. IV. 18) ; London, British Museum, additional MS. 40107 ; *CLA* IV, pl. 437.

(76) E. A. Lowe, *On the African Origin of Codex Palatinus of the Gospels (e)*, in E. A. Lowe, *Palaeographical Papers 1907-1965*, Edidit L. Bieler, I, Oxford, 1972, p. 129-132.

(77) *inficitur membrana colore purpureo, aurum liquescit in litteras, gemmis codices uestiuntur et nudus ante fores earum Christus emoritur* ; Jerome, *Epistulae* XXII, 32 (*ad Eustochium*) ; (J. Labourt, *Saint Jérôme Lettres*, Edidit J. L., I, Paris, 1949-63, p. 147 ; for the transl., see P. Meyvaert, *"Uncial Letters" : Jerome's Meaning of the Term* in *Journal of Theological Studies* 34, 1983, p. 188).

(78) *Habeant qui uolunt ueteres libros uel in membranis purpureis auro argentoque descriptos, uel uncialibus, ut uulgo aiunt, litteris onera magis exarata quam codices, dum mihi meisque permittant pauperes habere scidulas et non tam pulchros codices quam emendatos* ; Jerome, *Preface to Job* (R. Weber O. S. B., *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, Edidit R. W., I, Stuttgart, 1975, p. 732) ; for the transl. and a

> "Let her love the manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures, and in them let her prefer correctness and accurate punctuation to gilding and Babylonian parchment painted scarlet" (79) (ca. 403 C.E.).

By vilifying purple and gold decoration, Jerome followed in a tradition of Christian moralists, such as Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, who condemned the use of these luxuriant symbols due to their associations with pagan worship and kingship (80). At the same time, however, Jerome had another motive for alluding to purple and gold books. In two of the three instances, the onerous purple and gold codices containing "old" texts were used as a foil. Jerome referred to them in order to promote, by way of contrast to their spiritually "burdensome" decoration, the plain and textually accurate books of his newly completed version of the Scriptures (the Vulgate).

It is also through this literary device of comparison and contrast that Jerome provides a clue to the eastern background of the art form. In carefully describing its superfluous deluxe components, he notes not only the use of scarlet decoration and golden letters, but also the "Babylonian" parchment upon which these components were found. Here Jerome, much as Julius Capitolinus and pseudo-Aristeas before him, was speaking an assumptive, symbolic language, expecting his audience to comprehend the sumptuous connotations of this particular component and react accordingly. While the exact nature of Babylonian parchment is lost (81), Jerome's basic assumption concerning its deluxe quality can still be confirmed. Saint John Chrysostom, a contemporary of Jerome, also noted the quality of a book's parchment as a feature contributing to its material value : "And [the 'superficial' Christians'] whole interest in [the books] lies in the fineness of the parchment and the beauty of the letters, not in reading them" (82). While it is true,

discussion of this passage, see P. MEYVAERT, *"Uncial Letters" : Jerome's Meaning* [n. 77], p. 185-188.

(79) *diuinos codices amet, in quibus non auri et pellis Babyloniae uermiculata pictura, sed ad fidem placeat emendata et erudita distinctio* ; JEROME, *Epistulae* CVII, 12 (*ad Laetam*) (J. LABOURT [n. 77], V, p. 156) ; for the transl. and a discussion of this passage, see C. M. BOOKER, *"Vermiculatus" as Scarlet in Jerome* in *Orpheus* 16, 1995, p. 124-126.

(80) TERTULLIAN, *De Idololatria* 18 ; CLEMENT, *Paedagogus* II, 10, 108-9, 114-5 ; M. REINHOLD, *History of Purple* [n. 14], p. 56-57.

(81) Though see the comments by C. NORDENFALK in his *Die spätantiken Zierbuchstaben*, Stockholm, 1970, p. 114 n. 2.

(82) *καὶ ἡ πᾶσα αὐτοῖς σπουδὴ περὶ τὴν τῶν ὑμένων λεπτότητα, καὶ τὸ τῶν γραμμάτων*

from a paleographical standpoint, that a thin/fine quality of parchment is generally characteristic not only of deluxe codices but of most ancient books ([83]), Chrysostom's statement nevertheless makes it clear that by his time, a certain grade of the parchment could itself be considered a luxury feature. Moreover, specific types of skins, designated "Babylonian", are priced in the Edict of Diocletian at 500 *denarii* — this being the most expensive grade — well above the 200 for "Trallian" hides, 100 for "Phoenecian", 20-50 for sheep or goatskin, and 40 *denarii* for a one foot quaternion of white/yellow parchment ([84]). Thus, upon returning to the question of an eastern link, Jerome's statement is of value, for the adjective "Babylonian" most likely referred to a specific type of parchment from the Middle East which, according to Jerome, was found in deluxe purple books.

This view, however, has been challenged. In his dissertation *The Role of Parchment in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Richard R. Johnson makes the claim that "We have no indications that any one area was especially noted for the quality of its parchment" ([85]). As is evident from the discussion above, it is only by finding a way to subvert Jerome's *pellis Babyloniae* that such a claim can be made. Consequently, one finds in the note to Johnson's passage the following : "the Babylonian hide referred to there [in Jerome] is leather — 'pellis', not parchment — 'membrana' " ([86]). To the contrary, it is rather clear that Jerome is speaking of books (*diuinos codices*) containing these sumptuous materials — that is, books using parchment leaves. *Pellis* had been used prior to Jerome to indicate parchment, such as Martial XIV, 190 — *pellibus exiguis arctatur Liuius ingens.*

In addition to providing another clue to its eastern origins, Jerome's statements, unlike those of Julius Capitolinus and Porfyrius, provide a more refined image of the art form. First, in both his preface to Job and his letter to Laeta, Jerome implies that purple and gold decorated books were obtainable objects and not, as in the cases of Maximinus and Porfyrius, just an imperial device. "Let those who want

κάλλος, οὐ περὶ τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν. CHRYSOSTOM, *Homil. in Ioannem* 32, 3 (J. P. MIGNE, *Patrologia Graeco-Latina*, LIX, col. 187).

(83) See E. M. THOMPSON, *Handbook* [n. 3], p. 38 ; B. BISCHOFF, *Latin Palaeography* [n. 3], p. 9.

(84) *Price Edict* [n. 21], VIII, 1A ; VIII, 3-4 ; VIII, 11-14 ; VII, 38 ; p. 346-7, 342.

(85) R. R. JOHNSON, *The Role of Parchment* [n. 3], p. 119.

(86) R. R. JOHNSON, *The Role of Parchment* [n. 3], p. 119 n. 3.

them have old texts written on purple parchment...". "Let [Laeta's daughter] love manuscripts [which are not purple]...". However, if Jerome's efforts to warn Laeta away from them is any indication, purple-dyed books, like the older purple-trimmed rolls, were still objects only available to and associated with the very rich. For Laeta was a woman of the Roman elite, having a father who was both a pagan pontifex and consul of Numidia, as well as a brother who was *praefectus urbi* in 402 C.E. Moreover, according to Jerome, her husband came from a family who had the blood of the Julii and Aeneas in their veins (87).

Another implication of Jerome's statements is that books decorated with purple were available in the Roman West by at least the beginning of the fifth century. Jerome was in Rome at the time he composed his first two criticisms of purple books (382-385 C.E.). More significantly, he was there by invitation of Pope Damasus to help reform a corrupt, materialistic Roman society which, according to Jerome, made use of them. It was just this type of "morally deficient" Roman that Jerome warned Eustochium (another woman of the Roman elite) of in his letter :

> "You can see most women nowadays pack their wardrobes with garments, change their dress every day, and yet not get the better of the moths. Those who are especially devout wear out only one robe at a time, pulling their rags out of full coffers. Parchments are dyed purple, gold is melted for lettering, manuscripts are decked with jewels, and Christ [in the form of his poor] lies at their door naked and dying. When they extend their hands to the needy, they blow a full blast on the trumpet. When they go to mass, they hire the town-crier" (88).

Jerome's denigration of the stereotypically depraved Roman Christian implies that the style of purple-dyed books was in vogue with the Christian elite of Rome. This, in turn, suggests that the "exotic" decora-

(87) For a more detailed survey of Laeta's family and descent, see E. A. CLARK, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends*, New York, 1979, p. 63-67.

(88) *At nunc plerasque uideas armaria stipare uestibus, tunicas mutare cotidie et tamen tineas non posse superare. Quae religiosior fuerit unum exterit uestimentum, et plenis arcis pannos trahit. Inficitur membrana colore purpureo, aurum liquescit in litteras, gemmis codices uestiuntur et nudus ante fores earum Christus emoritur. Cum manum porrexerint, bucinant ; cum ad agapen uocauerint, praeco conducitur* ; JEROME, *Epistulae* XXII, 32 (*ad Eustochium*), [n. 77], transl. by F. A. WRIGHT, *Select Letters of Jerome*, Cambridge, Mass., 1933, Loeb Classical Series, p. 131-133.

tive practice had, at least by Jerome's time, spread from its initial eastern sphere to the more western provinces — not that the western part of the empire was unprepared for such decoration. For as has been demonstrated, the Romans were well aware of its symbolic value, having long been familiar with rolls accented with purple.

Finally, Jerome's invective is directed not simply at the purple-dyed book, but more specifically at the application of this opulent decoration to the texts of Scripture. It is here that one comes to the extant Late Antique purple manuscripts, for their contents confirm the very problem Jerome was addressing. Of the fourteen surviving examples (89), all dating from the fifth and sixth centuries, twelve of them are Gospel Books, one is a Psalter, and another contains the book of Genesis :

1. Vienna, Nationalbibliothek cod. theol. Gr. 31 - *Vienna Genesis* - mid fifth century, Greek text, containing the book of Genesis, illustrated (90)

(89) It should be noted that this number does not include the forged purple-dyed fragment of Plautus (BERLIN, STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, MS. lat. qrt, 784) allegedly dating from the fourth century. For a critical analysis of this manuscript, see H. DEGERING, *Über ein Bruchstück einer Plautushandschrift des vierten Jahrhunderts* in *Sitzungsberichte der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1919, p. 468-476, 497-503, and also E. CHATELAIN, *Un prétendu fragment de Plaute en onciale du IV^e siècle* in *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Comptes Rendus*, 1922, p. 223-229 ; Moreover, this list does not contain the *Cotton Genesis* (LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, COD. COTTON OTHO B. VI) claimed by E. A. LOWE to number among the extant purple manuscripts (*The Morgan Golden Gospels : The Date and Origin* [n. 3], p. 400). This observation has not been verified in any other studies of the manuscript, even when such studies point out other purple manuscripts, e.g., K. WEITZMANN, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination* [n. 3] ; Finally, there remains the case of the *Vercelli Gospels* (VERCELLI, BIBLIOTECA CAPITOLARE S. N.). In a very early discussion, F. G. KENYON reported in his *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 3rd ed., London, 1898, that this earliest surviving Latin manuscript of the Gospels (ca. 371 C.E.) was "written in silver letters... on extremely thin vellum stained with purple" (p. 167). This statement was reiterated not only in the 1958 revised edition of his book (p. 240), but also in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Edd. F. L. CROSS et E. A. LIVINGSTONE, 2nd ed., London, 1974, p. 868. However, in his analysis of the same manuscript, E. A. LOWE made no mention of dyed parchment or metallic letters (*CLA* IV, pl. 467). To the contrary, Lowe noted that the first 3 lines of each Gospel were written in red ink, while the colophons appear in alternating lines of red and black. It goes without saying that red ink could hardly have been used, let alone seen, on a purple ground.

(90) See B. METZGER, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, Oxford, 1981, p. 92 ; O. MAZAL, *Kommentar zur Wiener Genesis*, Frankfurt, 1980 ; E. WELLESZ, *The Vienna Genesis*, London, 1960 ; H. GERSTINGER, *Die Wiener Genesis*, Vienna, 1931 ; K. WEITZ-

2. Rossano Cathedral, Calabra, Italy - *Rossano Gospels* - sixth century, Greek text, Gospel Book, illustrated (91)
3. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. suppl. Gr. 1286 - *Codex Sinopensis* - sixth century, Greek text, Gospel Book, illustrated (92)
4. St. George Church, Berat, Albania - *Codex Beratinus* - sixth century, Greek text, Gospel Book (93)
5. Imperial Library, St. Petersburg [182 leaves] ; Monastery of St. John, Isle of Patmos [33 leaves] ; Vatican Library [6 leaves] ; British Museum [4 leaves] ; Vienna, Nationalbibliothek [2 leaves] ; Byzantine Museum, Athens [1 leaf] ; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library [1 leaf] ; Lerma, Italy, private possessor [1 leaf] - *Codex Purpureus Petropolitanus* - sixth century, Greek text, Gospel Book (94)
6. Universitätsbibliothek, Uppsala, cod. DG I - *Codex Argenteus* - sixth century, Gothic text, Gospel Book (95)

MANN, *Late Antique* [n. 3], p. 76-87 ; D. M. ROBB, *The Art* [n. 3], p. 35-37 ; M. D. LEVIN, *Some Jewish Sources for the Vienna Genesis* in *Art Bulletin* 54 , 1972, p. 241-244 ; D. DIRINGER, *The Illuminated Book* [n. 3], p. 85-86 ; H. FILLITZ reporting *Die Wiener Genesis : Resumé der Diskussion* in *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und Archäologie des Frühmittelalters*, Graz and Cologne, 1962, p. 44-52.

(91) See B. METZGER, *The Text of the New Testament*, Oxford, 3rd ed., 1992, p. 59 ; A. MUNOZ, *Il Codice Purpureo di Rossano*, Rome, 1907 ; K. WEITZMANN, *Late Antique* [n. 3], p. 88-96 ; D. M. ROBB, *The Art* [n. 3], p. 37-39 ; W. C. LOERKE, *The Miniatures of the Trial in the Rossano Gospels* in *Art Bulletin* 43, 1961, p. 171-195 ; D. T. RICE, *The Art of Byzantium*, New York, 1959, p. 40, 42, 44, 303-304 ; D. DIRINGER, *The Illuminated Book* [n. 3], p. 87-88.

(92) See A. GRABAR, *Les Peintures de L'Évangéliaire de Sinope*, Paris, 1948 ; K. WEITZMANN, *Late Antique* [n. 3], p. 19, 21, 30 ; D. M. ROBB, *The Art* [n. 3], p. 39-40 ; B. METZGER, *The Text* [n. 91], p. 55 ; D. DIRINGER, *The Illuminated Book* [n. 3], p. 89.

(93) See P. BATIFFOL, *Les Manuscrits grecs de Bérat d'Albanie et le Codex Purpureus Φ* in *Archives des Missions Scientifiques*, 3rd ser., 13, 1887, p. 437-556 ; H. LECLERCQ, *Évangéliaire* in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, V, Paris, 1922, p. 785, no. 11 ; B. METZGER, *The Text* [n. 91], p. 59-60.

(94) See H. S. CRONIN, *Codex Purpureus Petropolitanus (N)* in *Texts and Studies* 5, 1899, ix-lxiv ; S. RYPINS, *Two Inedited Leaves of Codex N* in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75, 1956, p. 27-39 ; B. METZGER, *The Text* [n. 91], p. 54-55 ; H. J. VOGELS, *Codicum Novi Testamenti Specimina*, Bonn, 1929, p. 6, pl. 9.

(95) See O. v. FRIESEN-A. GRAPE, *Om Codex Argenteus*, Uppsala, 1928 and *Codex Argenteus Upsaliensis*, Uppsala, 1927 ; J.-O. TJÄDER, *Der Codex Argenteus in Uppsala und der Buchmeister Villiaric in Ravenna* in *Studia Gotica*, Stockholm, 1972, p. 144-164 ; H. WOLFRAM, *History of the Goths*, transl. T. J. DUNLAP, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988, p. 80, 325, 351 ; B. METZGER, *The Text* [n. 91], p. 81-82 ; P. MCGURK, *The Oldest Manuscripts of the Latin Bible* in R. GAMESON, *The Early Medieval Bible*, Edidit R. G., Cambridge, 1994, p. 11, 22-23 ; H. J. VOGELS, *Codicum Novi Testamenti* [n. 94], p. 13, pl. 49. E. STUTZ, *Fragmentum Spirense* in *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Sprachforschung* 85, 1971, p. 85-95 ; 87, 1993, p. 1-15.

7. Verona, VI (6) - *Codex Veronensis* - end of the fifth century, Latin text, Gospel Book (96)
8. Trent, Museo Nazionale S.N. (olim Vienna 1185), [228 leaves] ; Dublin, Trinity College 1709 (N. IV. 18), [1 leaf] ; London, British Museum, add. MS. 40107 [1 leaf] - *Codex Palatinus* - middle of the fifth century, Latin text, Gospel Book (97)
9. Naples, Lat. 3 (Vindobon. 1235) - *Codex Vindobonensis* - end of the fifth century, Latin text, Gospel Book (98)
10. Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana S.N. - *Codex Brixianus* - sixth century, Latin text, Gospel Book (99)
11. Sarezzano, Biblioteca Parrocchiale S.N. - *Codex Sarzanensis* - beginning of the sixth century, Latin text, Gospel Book (100)
12. Sarezzano, Biblioteca Parrocchiale S.N. - *Codex Sarzanensis - minor* - fifth or sixth century, Latin text, Gospel Book (101)

(96) See E. S. BUCHANAN, *The Codex Veronensis* in *Journal of Theological Studies* 10, 1909, p. 120-126 ; H. J. WHITE, *On the Reading of the Old Latin Codex Veronensis (b) in Luke i 34-38* in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 15, 1914, p. 600-602 ; G. MERCATI, *Un Paio Di Appunti Sopra Il Codice Purpureo Veronese Dei Vangeli* in *Revue Biblique* 34, 1925, p. 396-400 ; H. J. VOGELS, *Codicum Novi Testamenti* [n. 94], p. 9, pl. 26 ; P. MCGURK, *Latin Gospel Books From A.D. 400 to A.D. 800*, Paris and Amsterdam, 1961, p. 93, no. 109 ; *CLA* IV, pl. 481.

(97) See E. A. LOWE, *On the African Origin* [n. 76], p. 129-132 ; J. H. TODD, *An Account of a Fragment of an Ancient Manuscript of the Gospels in Latin...* in *The Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 3, 1847, p. 374-381 ; A. SOUTER, *A Lost Leaf of Codex Palatinus (e) of the Old-Latin Gospels Recovered* in *Journal of Theological Studies* 23, 1922, p. 284-286 ; H. J. VOGELS, *Codicum Novi Testamenti* [n. 94], p. 9, pl. 29 ; P. MCGURK, *Latin Gospel Books* [n. 96], p. 91, no. 104 ; *CLA* IV, pl. 437.

(98) See J. BELSHEIM, *Codex Vindobonensis membranaceus purpureus...*, Leipzig, 1885 ; H. J. VOGELS, *Codicum Novi Testamenti* [n. 94], p. 9, pl. 30b. ; P. MCGURK, *Latin Gospel Books* [n. 96], p. 89, no. 99 ; *CLA* III, pl. 399.

(99) See F. C. BURKITT, *The Vulgate Gospels and the Codex Brixianus* in *Journal of Theological Studies* 1, 1899, p. 129-134 ; J.-O. TJÄDER, *Der Codex Argenteus* [n. 95], p. 144-164 ; H. J. VOGELS, *Codicum Novi Testamenti* [n. 94], p. 10, pl. 37 ; P. MCGURK, *Latin Gospel Books* [n. 96], p. 85-86, no. 93 ; *CLA* III, pl. 281.

(100) See N. GHIGLIONE, *L'Evangeliario Purpureo di Sarezzano (sec. V/VI)*, Vicenza, 1984 ; M. TERRAGNI, *Il codice biblico di Sarezzano e le sue vicende* in *Rivista di storia, arte, archeologia della provincia di Alessandria* 13, 1904, p. 117ff. ; A. AMELLI, *Un antichissimo codice biblico latino purpureo conservato nella chiesa di Sarezzano presso Tortona*, Milan, 1872, and 2nd ed. in *Bulletino della Società per gli studi di storia economica ed arte del Tortonese*, 1904, fasc. 3, p. 33ff. ; P. MCGURK, *Latin Gospel Books* [n. 96], p. 91, no. 103 ; *CLA* IV, pl. 436a.

(101) See note 100 ; P. MCGURK, *Latin Gospel Books* [n. 96], p. 90-91, no. 102 ; *CLA* IV, pl. 436b.

13. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 11947 - *Codex Purpureus* - sixth century, Latin text, Psalter ([102])
14. Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS. 18723 fol. 17 - *Xanten Purple Leaf* - evangelist portrait, thus likely once part of a Gospel Book ([103])

To be sure, there are differences between the various manuscripts. Three of the five Greek books, the Vienna Genesis, Rossano Gospels, and Codex Sinopensis, were lavishly illustrated — a feature not present in the Gothic or Latin books (See fig. 2a-b). This has traditionally been the aspect of purple manuscripts most studied by modern scholars ([104]), even though it is an element exclusive to these three Greek books. While their miniatures tell art historians much about the earliest iconographic schemes of Christian book painting ([105]), they say next to nothing about the creation of the books themselves other than that illustrated purple Gospels were the exception — more specifically, a Greek exception. As the remaining purple books attest, miniatures were not a feature standard to the common iconographic tradition followed by Roman nor even by Byzantine scribes.

The Gothic and Latin books, while unillustrated, also contain their own idiosyncrasies. The Latin Codex Veronensis displays both a chrismon and a leaf border scroll above several of its colophons (fol. 121, 215, 328). E.A. Lowe called this feature a characteristic of ancient Greek manuscripts — an observation which only supports the eastern origins of purple book decoration ([106]). In addition, it contains a liturgical entry

(102) A. ALLGEIER, *Die altlateinischen Psalterien*, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1928, p. 38 ; P. MCGURK, *The Oldest Manuscripts* [n. 95], p. 11-12 ; *CLA* V, pl. 616.

(103) This purple leaf is an issue of dispute among art historians as to its date. For the view that it is a fragment of a Late Antique book, see H. SWARZENSKI, *The Xanten Purple Leaf and the Carolingian Renaissance* in *Art Bulletin* 22, 1940, p. 7-24 ; For the opinion that it is a product of the Carolingian school, see D. TSELOS, *A Greco-Italian School of Illuminators and Fresco Painters : Its Relation to the Principal Reims Manuscripts and to the Greek Frescoes in Rome and Castelseprio* in *Art Bulletin* 38, 1956, p. 1-30.

(104) For example, W. C. LOERKE, *The Miniatures of the Trial* [n. 91], p. 171-195 ; M. D. LEVIN, *Some Jewish Sources* [n. 90], p. 241-244 ; D. DIRINGER, *The Illuminated Book* [n. 3], p. 85-89 ; D. M. ROBB, *The Art* [n. 3], p. 35-40 ; K. WEITZMANN, *Late Antique* [n. 3], p. 21, 76-96 ; E. WELLESZ, *The Vienna Genesis* [n. 90] ; A. GRABAR, *Les Peintures* [n. 92] ; D. T. RICE, *The Art of Byzantium* [n. 91], p. 40, 42, 44, 303-304.

(105) For example, the Rossano Gospels contain the earliest known evangelist portrait in book decoration (St. Mark, fol. 121r) ; See the studies in note 104, and also H. FILLITZ reporting *Die Wiener Genesis* [n. 90], p. 48-52.

(106) *CLA* IV, pl. 481 ; As Lowe points out, this is a feature also found in the Laurentian Digests (*CLA* III, pl. 295) and the Verona Gaius (*CLA* IV, pl. 488).

(fol. 99v) — +II·ID APR. ADSUMTIO SCI ZENONIS EPI — referring to St. Zeno, the patron saint of Verona, which dates from the ninth century, implying that the manuscript has been in Verona from at least that time (107). Another distinctive feature is found in the Codex Palatinus. It has already been mentioned tbat this manuscript is thought to have an African origin (108). As E.A. Lowe demonstrated, it displays the "African" feature of having its letters written "partly above and partly below the line, so that the ruled line appears to cut through the lower portion of the letters" (109). The Codex Vindobonensis exhibits perhaps the strangest feature of all, for it contains "several" (110) palimpsest leaves. Unfortunately, Lowe's explanation that "the scribe apparently turned tbem upside-down to rewrite the same text" (111) raises more questions than it answers, necessitating a more detailed report. Finally, both the Latin Codex Brixianus and the Gothic Codex Argenteus demonstrate the rare decorative technique of placing the canon tables at the foot of each page beneath a series of arches (See fig. 3a-b) (112). When taken together with the fact that both manuscripts observe the same unusual order of the Gospels (Matthew, John, Luke, Mark), and contain a very similar pre-Vulgate text of the Gospels, the common canon arches confirm a more than exceptional relationship between the two books. It has even been suggested that tbe peculiar preface to the Gospels in the Codex Brixianus, which promises that tbe following text shall provide "footnotes", giving certain words in their Greek or Latin equivalents (even though the manuscript is already in Latin) (113), implies that the codex was at one time a bilingual Latino-

(107) *CLA* IV, pl. 481 ; E. S. Buchanan, *The Codex Veronensis* [n. 96], p. 120-126 ; Note that I follow Lowe's date of the ninth century for the entry rather than Buchanan's date of the sixth.

(108) See above, p. 458.

(109) E. A. Lowe, *On the African Origin* [n. 76], p. 129-132 ; Note that Lowe's article was a refutation of the invalid reasons why the manuscript was "African" first proposed by A. Souter in *Journal of Theological Studies* 23, 1922, p. 285.

(110) Unfortunately, Lowe only cites one example — fol. 110.

(111) *CLA* III, pl. 399, p. 38.

(112) The only other MS. which exhibits this form of decoration is the 7th/8th century Gothic Gospel Book *Codex Rehdigeranus* (Breslau, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. R 169) ; For an illustration, see H. J. Vogels, *Codicum Novi Testamenti* [n. 94], p. 9, pl. 31.

(113) The relevant section of the preface is : *nam et ea conuenit indicare pro quod in uulthres factu est. Latina uero lingua adnotatio significatur quare id positum est agnosci possit. ubi littera Gr super uulthre inuenitur sciat qui legit quod in ipso uulthre secundum quod Graecus continet scribtum est : ubi uero littera La super uulthre*

Gothic book — now missing the Gothic section (114). That these related deluxe books were in Gothic at all raises a question central to this study : who owned purple-stained books in Late Antiquity ?

***

The extant manuscripts themselves reveal very little about the circumstances surrounding their creation. Yet, as noted earlier, their contents overwhelmingly demonstrate the crystallization of a trend Jerome repeatedly denounced. The Gospel Book had become the milieu of purple and gold book decoration. Before answering the question of who owned them, however, it is first necessary to ask why the Gospel Book came to assume this preeminence. For I shall suggest that it was the particular liturgical symbolism and ceremonial role of the Gospel Book which made it the ideal text to receive, nearly exclusively, purple ornamentation.

When purple was applied to the Gospel Book, there can be little doubt that this action was meant to emphasize the royalty of Christ. For the Gospel Book itself had, from the earliest of liturgies, represented the earthly presence of the heavenly Christ (115). This is clearly evident in the very early ceremony and ritual that surrounded the Gospel Book, which was treated as though it were the equivalent of a secular king. During the Christian mass, a solemn entry and formal procession were observed for the carrying of the Gospel Book to the altar by the deacon (116). Torchbearers preceded the book during this ceremonial (117) — a practice also used by Roman Emperors to solem-

inuenitur secundum Latina lingua in uulthre ostensum est. et ideo ista instructio demonstrata est ne legentes ipsos uulthres non perciperent pro qua ratione positi sint (M. HAUPT, *Opuscula*, II, Leipzig, 1876, p. 409).

(114) F. C. BURKITT, *The Vulgate Gospels* [n. 99], p. 129-134 ; W. HENSS, *Leitbilder der Bibelübersetzung im 5. Jahrhundert*, Heidelberg, 1973.

(115) See F. R. CURTIUS, *European Literature* [n. 40], p. 310-315.

(116) *Ordo Romanus Primus* I, 5 ; I, 11 ; (Edidit, E. G. C. F. ATCHLEY, London, 1905, p. 124-125, 130-133) ; T. F. MATHEWS, *The Early Churches of Constantinople : Architecture and Liturgy*, University Park and London, 1971, p. 141-142 ; J. A. JUNGMANN, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, transl. F. A. BRUNNER, I, New York, 1951, p. 444-447 ; G. W. H. LAMPE, *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Edidit G. W. H. L., II, Cambridge, 1969, p. 229-230.

(117) *Ordo Romanus Primus*, I, 11 ; (E. G. C. F. ATCHLEY [n. 116], p. 130-133) ; T. F. MATHEWS, *The Early Churches* [n. 116], p. 141-142, 149 ; J. A. JUNGMANN, *The Mass* [n. 116], p. 445-446 ; G. W. H. LAMPE, *The Cambridge History* [n. 116],

nize their royal processions (the *aduentus*) in the second and third centuries ([118]). Before taking the Gospel Book to the ambo of the church for tbe service, the deacon would further honor Christ by kissing the book ([119]), thereby imitating the reverential "kissing the purple" of the Emperor's cloak — a ritual of obeisance demanded from tbose granted an imperial audience ([120]). Indeed, the adoption of secular royal ceremony was so complete that, at the Church Council of Ephesus (431 C.E.), a throne was erected on whicb the Gospels were placed in order to signify tbe presence of Christ bearing witness on the proceedings (See fig. 4) ([121]).

If the Gospel Book had come to be the earthly representative of the divine royal Christ, decorating it with purple and gold was the ultimate way to express His regality, for these colors were the most familiar symbols of kingship in the Ancient world. The heightened use of purple beginning in the fourth century with Diocletian only served to reinforce the royal connotations of the color ([122]). For example, during this period the purple stone porphyry became nearly an imperial prerogative, portraits of the Emperor and royal sarcophagi exclusively being composed of it (See fig. 5) ([123]). Byzantine Emperor Leo I issued

II, p. 230 ; See an early account of tapers being lit when the Gospel was read as an Eastern practice in Jerome, *Contra Vigilantium* 7 (J. P. MIGNE, *Patrologia Latina*, XXIII, col. 360-361).

(118) *Ordo Romanus Primus* (E. G. C. F. ATCHLEY [n. 116], p. 9-10) ; for the *aduentus* M. MC CORMICK, *Eternal Victory : Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West*, Cambridge, 1986 ; for an example, the inhabitants of Sirmium welcoming the Emperor Julian (361 C.E.) with traditional "lights and flowers and good wishes", AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Roman History* XXI, 10, 1 ; For other examples, see E. G. C. F. ATCHLEY, *A History of the Use of Incense in Divine Worship*, 1909, p. 51ff.

(119) *Ordo Romanus Primus* I, 8 ; I, 11 (E. G. C. F. ATCHLEY [n. 116], p. 126-133) ; J. A. JUNGMANN, *The Mass* [n. 116], p. 444, 449-451 ; T. F. MATHEWS, *The Early Churches* [n. 116], p. 149 ; G. W. H. LAMPE, *The Cambridge History* [n. 116], II, p. 230.

(120) See W. T. AVERY, *The Adoratio Purpurae and the Importance of the Imperial Purple in the Fourth Century of the Christian Era* in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 17, 1940, p. 66-80 ; For Diocletian and the "kissing of the purple" see AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Roman History* XV, 5, 17-18.

(121) "the adored Gospel had been placed on a sacred throne" (*Ἔκειτο γὰρ ἐν ἁγίῳ θρόνῳ τὸ σεπτὸν Εὐαγγέλιον*) ; CYRIL of ALEXANDRIA, *Apol. ad Imperatorem* (J. P. MIGNE, *Patrologia Graeco-Latina*, LXXVI, col. 472)) ; T. F. MATHEWS, *The Early Churches* [n. 116], p. 141, 148 ; J. A. JUNGMANN, *The Mass* [n. 116], p. 446.

(122) See M. REINHOLD, *History of Purple* [n. 14], p. 59-60.

(123) See R. DELBRUECK, *Antike Porphyrwerke*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1932, p. 11, 23-26.

an edict in 470 C.E. proclaiming that all royal documents were to be signed in purple ink, a formerly tacit imperial privilege possibly dating back to the reign of Constantine (124). The edict goes on to say that "it shall not be lawful for, or permitted to anyone, to have or to seek for any dye of this kind, or to expect to obtain it from any source, and he who audaciously violates this rule shall be condemned to death, after the confiscation of all his property" (125). This example of imperial ink (*sacrum incaustum*) is especially significant, as E.R. Curtius has noted (126), for tbrough it one can witness another appropriation of purple by the Christians, wbo transformed the royal ink into the blood of the martyrs, symbolizing Christ : "See, Lord, thy name is being written on me. How I love to read these letters, for they record thy victories, O Christ, and the very purple of the blood that is drawn speaks the holy name" (127).

While the use of purple by Late Antique emperors no doubt invested the color with powerful connotations of secular regality, there was an equally significant contributor to its symbolic value. Purple had long been known from the Old Testament as the appropriate symbol for the representation of the royal and sublime. One recalls God's words to Moses, informing him that the use of purple cloth to wrap the sacred vessels was a "most holy" service (128). In short, the use of purple and gold, when applied to the Gospel Book, was tbe result of influences both from secular and religious traditions.

The economy of symbolism between ornament (purple and gold/royalty signifier) and object (Gospel book/royalty signified) not only evolved from two traditions, but would also dictate ownership. It can hardly be denied that purple Gospel Books were commissioned by wealthy patrons, eitber lay or ecclesiastic. The noblewomen of Rome, to whom Jerome wrote concerning purple Gospels, clearly endorse this

(124) R. MACMULLEN, *Constantine* [n. 68], p. 14.

(125) *Hanc autem sacri incausti confectionem nulli sit licitum aut concessum habere, aut quaerere, aut a quoquam sperare ; eo uidelicet, qui hoc agressus fuerit tyrannico spiritu, post proscriptionem bonorum omnium capitali non immerito poena plectendo* (*Corpus Iuris Civilis* I, 23, 6 (transl. by S. P. SCOTT, *The Civil Law*, XII, Cincinnati, 1932, p. 126)).

(126) E. R. CURTIUS, *European Literature* [n. 40], p. 312.

(127) *scriberis ecce mihi, Domine. quam iuuat hos apices legere qui tua, Christe, tropaea notant! nomen et ipsa sacrum loquitur purpura sanguinis eliciti* (PRUDENTIUS, *Peristephanon* III, 136-140).

(128) See p. 447.

assumption. Purple was still a status symbol, whether on cloth, in stone, or upon leaves of parchment. Yet it was also a way for the rich to ostentatiously display their Christian piety and devotion to Christ. As Jerome said, "When they extend their hands to the needy, they blow a full blast on the trumpet. When they go to mass, they hire the town-crier" ([129]). And when they commissioned Gospel Books, they requested purple parchment with gold letters. These wealthy owners were surely aware of the symbolic, metaphorical nature of the Gospel Book, and, in imitation of imperial practice, saturated it with decoration which not only announced their own social status but which also befit the regal quality of the sacred book. As Patrick McGurk has noted, "Jerome might condemn the extravagance of the luxury codex, but the opulence, the purple and gold and silver were for Christ" ([130]). However, it was exactly this dual symbolic function which purple could play when applied to the Gospel Book, distinguishing both patron and Christ, that made this particular object an ideal instrument for another use — as an *imago regis*, an imperial symbol.

It is often overlooked that people in the Ancient world were incredibly perceptive and adept in their ability to distinguish between shades of purple and their variety of meanings. Yet, it is this very fact which allowed purple to continue to be used as the symbolic imperial color, even when imitation grades were readily available. People knew what the shade of the extremely precious imperial murex-purple looked like and could distinguish its color from cheaper varieties. This distinction actually became formalized in 383 C.E., when laws were passed limiting the use of the sumptuous *sacer murex* to the imperial household, while permitting all other qualities — the *publicus murex* — to be widely obtainable ([131]). That people risked stealing or clandestinely producing the *sacer murex* in the face of severe, sometimes capital, penalties only serves to demonstrate the significance attributed to the color's particular shade ([132]). Thus, if a Gospel Book were decorated with the imperial purple, its audience would know of its imperial connection, being able to distinguish it from other purple

(129) See p. 461.

(130) P. McGurk, *The Oldest Manuscripts* [n. 95], p. 23.

(131) *Codex Iustinianus* IV, 40, 4 ; *Codex Theodosianus* X, 20, 18 ; M. Reinhold, *History of Purple* [n. 14], p. 65-66.

(132) M. Reinhold, *History of Purple* [n. 14], p. 67 ; id., *Usurpation of Status and Status Symbols in the Roman Empire* in *Historia* 20, 1971, p. 275-302.

Gospels containing inferior dye. Whereas the imperfect purple in most dyed books, appearing after imperial fashion, could only indicate *wealth* and sanctity, a Gospel Book stained with the restricted *sacer murex* would carry both sacred and *imperial* connotations. During the fourth century, anxieties arose which I believe prompted this distinctively imperial decoration of the Gospel Book.

Due to the triumph of Christianity in the fourth century, the long practiced worship and reverence of imperial images came under attack, not generally, but in a rather specific context (133). A remarkable case, reported by the African Bishop Optatus of Milevis (ca. 370 ?) as a calumny, illustrates the nature of the problem :

> "It was said that at that time Paulus and Macarius [the imperial envoys] would come, who were to be present at the sacrifice, so that when the altar was to be properly prepared, they could bring out an [imperial] image, wbich they first would place on the altar, and thus the sacrifice would be offered. When [the Donatists] learned of this, their souls were struck and the tongue of each person was violently moved towards these words, so that each who had heard these things said 'He who partakes [of the Communion also] partakes of a sacrilege' " (134).

According to Optatus, the Donatists feared that the setting of imperial images upon the altar would have desecrated it. The problem lay in that the altar could not at once be both the mystical throne of Christ and the symholic throne of the emperor (135). This rejection of traditional imperial iconography challenged the authority of the emperor by excluding the imperial presence, made manifest by means of his imperial image, during the Christian mass. Of critical significance is the fact that the imperial image which the envoys reputedly sought to place on the altar was likely a type of book — the official codicillar

(133) K. SETTON, *Christian Attitude towards the Emperor in the Fourth Century*, New York, 1941, p. 206-211.

(134) *dicebatur enim illo tempore uenturos esse Paulum et Macarium, qui interessent sacrificio, ut, cum altaria solemniter aptarentur, proferrent illi imaginem, quam primo in altare ponerent, et sic sacrificium offerretur. hoc cum acciperent aures, percussi sunt et animi et uniuscuiusque lingua in haec uerba commota est, ut omnis, qui haec audierat, diceret, "qui inde gustat, de sacro gustat"* (OPTATUS III, 12 ; Edidit, C. ZIWSA, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, XXVI, Vienna, 1893, p. 100) ; See the commentary in J. P. MIGNE, *Patrologia Latina*, XI, col. 1025-1027, n. 39, 44, 46.

(135) For another possible case (ca. 380), see *Question d'un Paien à un Chrétien* (*Consultationes Zacchei christiani et Apollonii philosophi*), XXVIII, 8. Edidit J. L. FEIERTAG, I, Paris, 1994 (Sources Chrétiennes, no. 401), p. 174.

diptych (See fig. 6) ([136]). This small sort of "hook" was presented to imperial officials hoth to legitimize their positions and cast the imperial aura over any organized functions. It has even been suggested that certain of these diptychs were luxuriously decorated, having ivory covers adorned with gold ([137]).

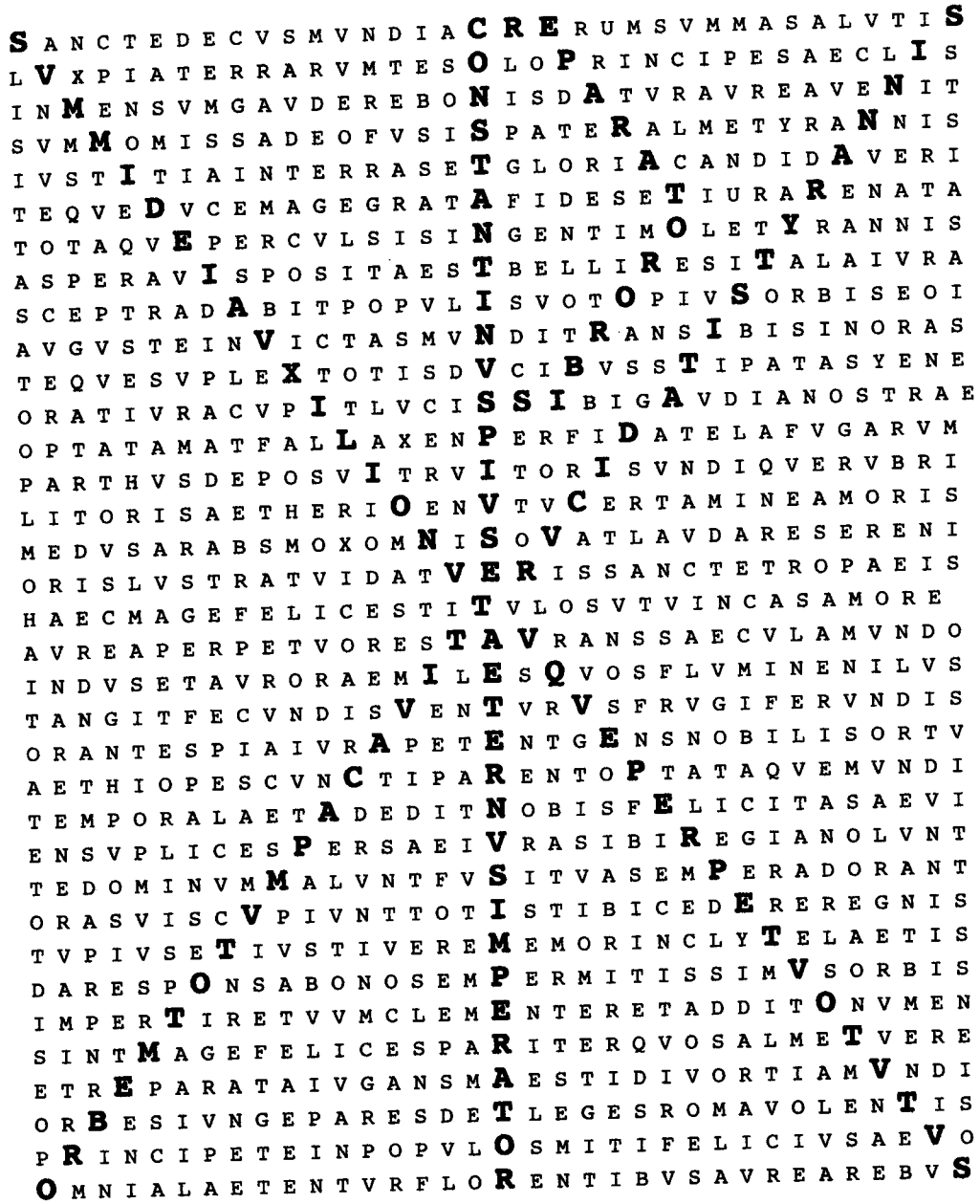
If the codicillar diptych was unacceptable for projecting the imperial image during the mass, there was still another option available to the Emperor ; rather than surrendering his privilege of image worship, he made use of another book — the Gospels — which alone was permitted by Christians to rest upon the altar ([138]). By decorating a Gospel Book in the recognizable imperial purple and gold, and bestowing it to a special church, the emperor circumvented the problems posed by Churcb doctrine (namely the first tbree Commandments) over the adoration of the imperial image. For the Gospel Book itself had now become an imperial image during the mass — an image which, as it made its way down the aisle to the altar in a ceremonial procession, symbolized in a singular instance, and therefore united, the emperor and Christ. That the codicillar diptych is thought to have been decorated would only support the case for its "replacement" — the lavishly dyed Gospel Book. Moreover, purple had long been used to decorate imperial images and icons because of its ability to symbolically empower the object it adorned. Gregory of Nyssa (330-395 C.E.) plainly states that "those who make images of emperors portray the form first in the likeness, and then add the purple covering by which the royal majesty is indicated" ([139]).

(136) See P. C. BERGER, *The Insignia of the Notitia Dignitatum*, New York and London, 1981, p. 175-183, also 25-31, 140-141, 172, 219 n. 14 ; H. KRUSE, *Studien zur Offizielen Geltung des Kaiserbildes im römischen Reiche*, Paderborn, 1934, p. 105-106, R. GRIGG, *Portrait-Bearing Codicils in the Illustrations of the Notitia Dignitatum* in *Journal of Roman Studies* 69, 1979, p. 107-124 ; for more on the *Notitia Dignitatum*, see R. GOODBURN and P. BARTHOLOMEW, *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum*, Oxford, (*British Archaeological Reports, Supplementary Series*, XV), 1976.

(137) P. C. BERGER, *The Insignia* [n. 136], p. 26.

(138) J. A. JUNGMANN, *The Mass* [n. 116], p. 442-443 ; F. J. DÖLGER, *Die Heiligkeit des Altars* in *Antike und Christentum* 2, 1930, p. 173 ff ; G. GALASSI, *Roma o Bisanzio*, Rome, 1953, I, pl. XI.

(139) *Ὥσπερ γὰρ κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην συνήθειαν οἱ τὰς εἰκόνας τῶν κραταούντων κατασκευάζοντες, τόν τε χαρακτῆρα τῆς μορφῆς ἀναμάσσονται, καὶ τῇ περιβολῇ τῆς πορφυρίδος τὴν βασιλικὴν ἀξίαν συμπαραγράφουσι, καὶ λέγεται κατὰ συνήθειαν καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν, βασιλεύς* (GREGORY of NYSSA, *De hominis opificio* 4 ; J. P. MIGNE, *Patrologia Graeco-Latina*, XLIV, col. 136C) ; for more on Gregory, see G. MATHEW, *The Aesthetic*



Versus intexti Summi dei auxilio nutuque perpetuo tutus
orbem totum pacavit trucidatis tyrannis
Constantinus pius et aeternus imperator,
reparator orbis.

FIG. 1. — *Carmen figuratum* (XIV) of P. OPTATIANUS PORFYRIUS [Taken from E. KLUGE, *P. Optatiani Porfyrii Carmina*, Lipsiae, 1926].

PLATE VI

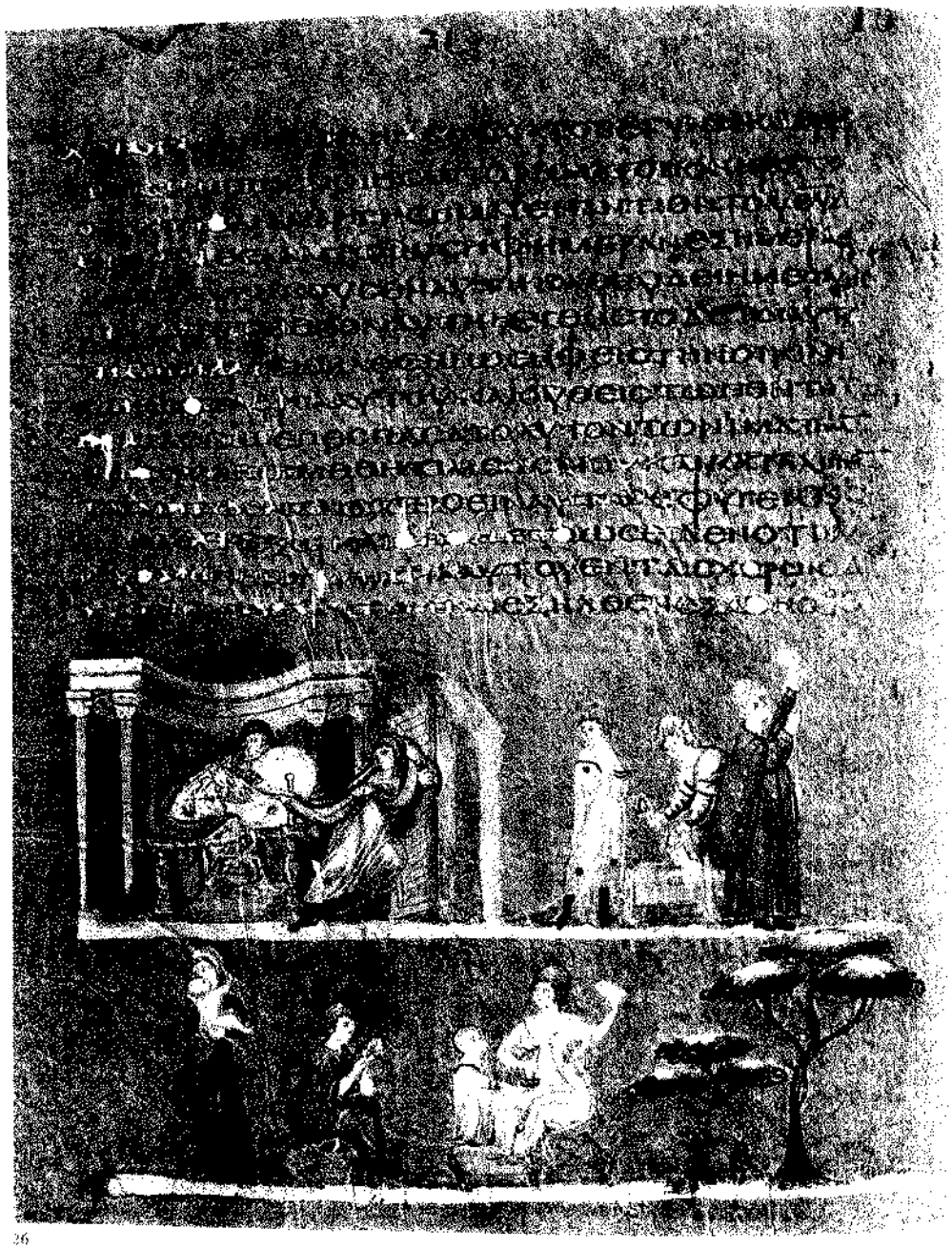


FIG. 2a. — Greek illustrated purple codex *Vienna Genesis* (fol. 16r) [Taken from K. WEITZMANN, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, New York, 1977].

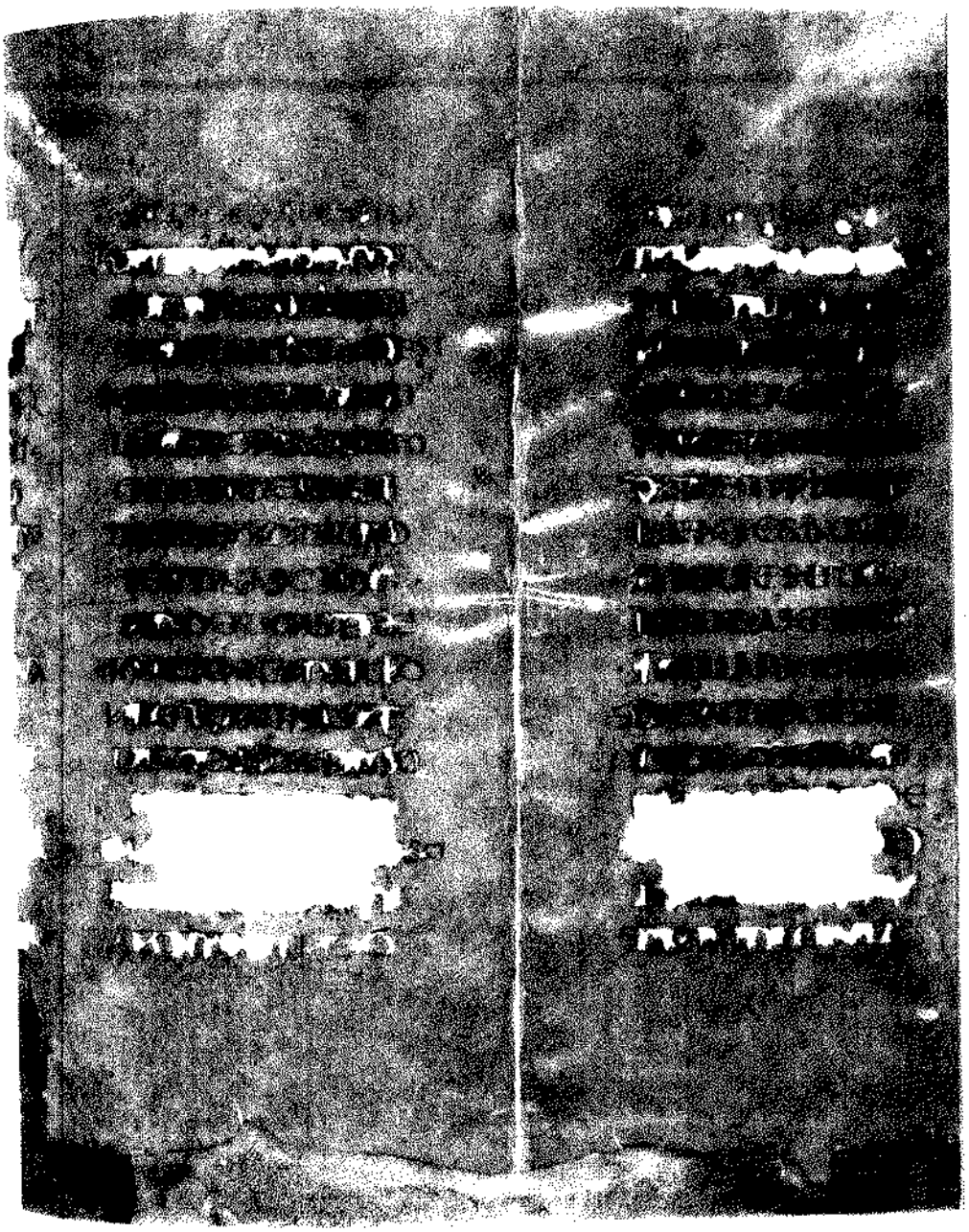


FIG. 2b. — Latin unillustrated purple codex *Codex Sarzanensis* (fol. 13^{v} col. B, fol. 12^{r} col. A) [Taken from N. GHIGLIONE, *L'Evangeliario Purpureo di Sarezzano (sec. V/VI)*, Vicenza, 1984].

PLATE VIII

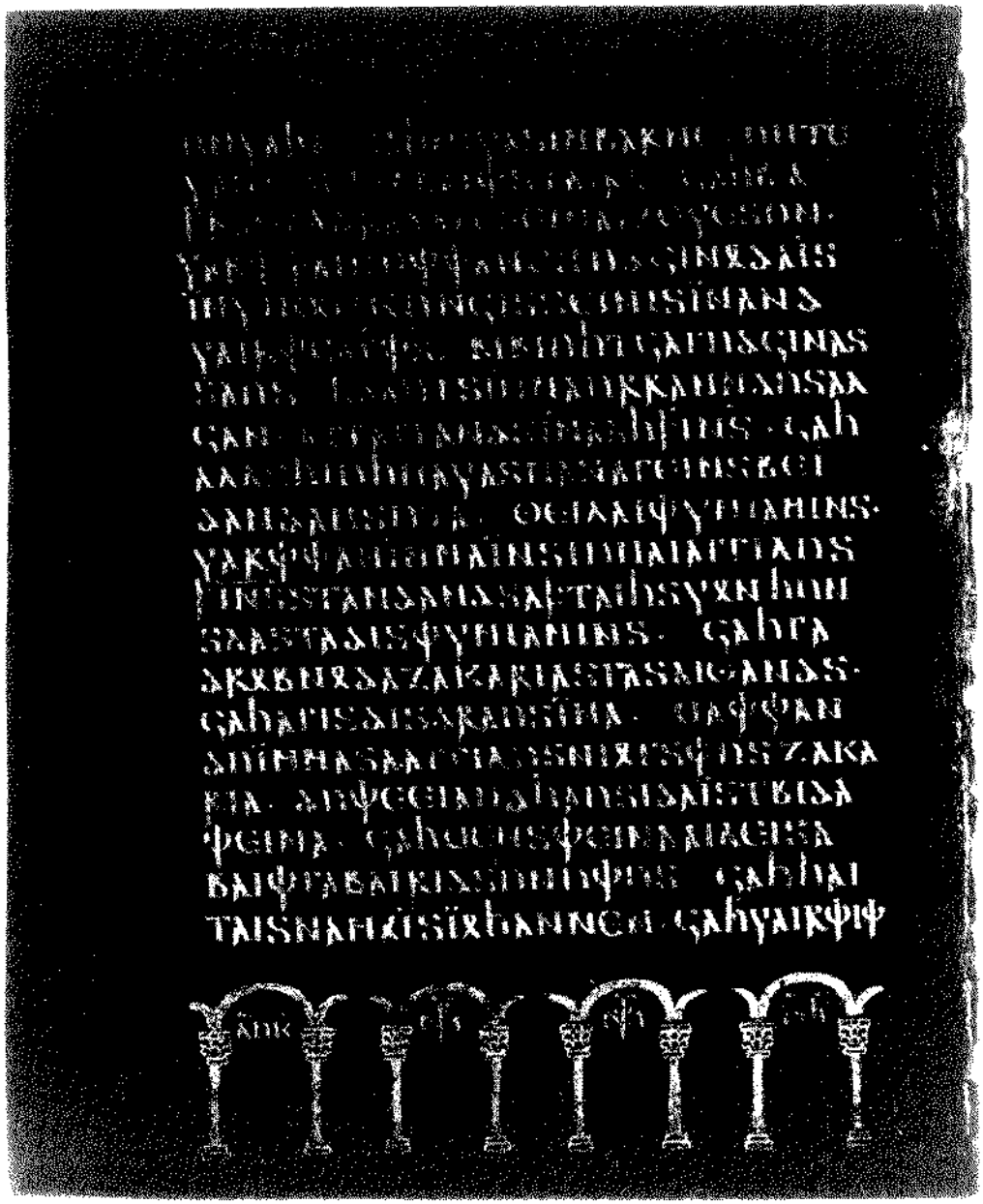


FIG. 3a. — *Gothic Codex Argenteus* with Canon Arches in bottom margin (fol. 118^{v}) [Taken from H. J. VOGELS, *Codicum Novi Testamenti Specimina,* Bonn, 1929].

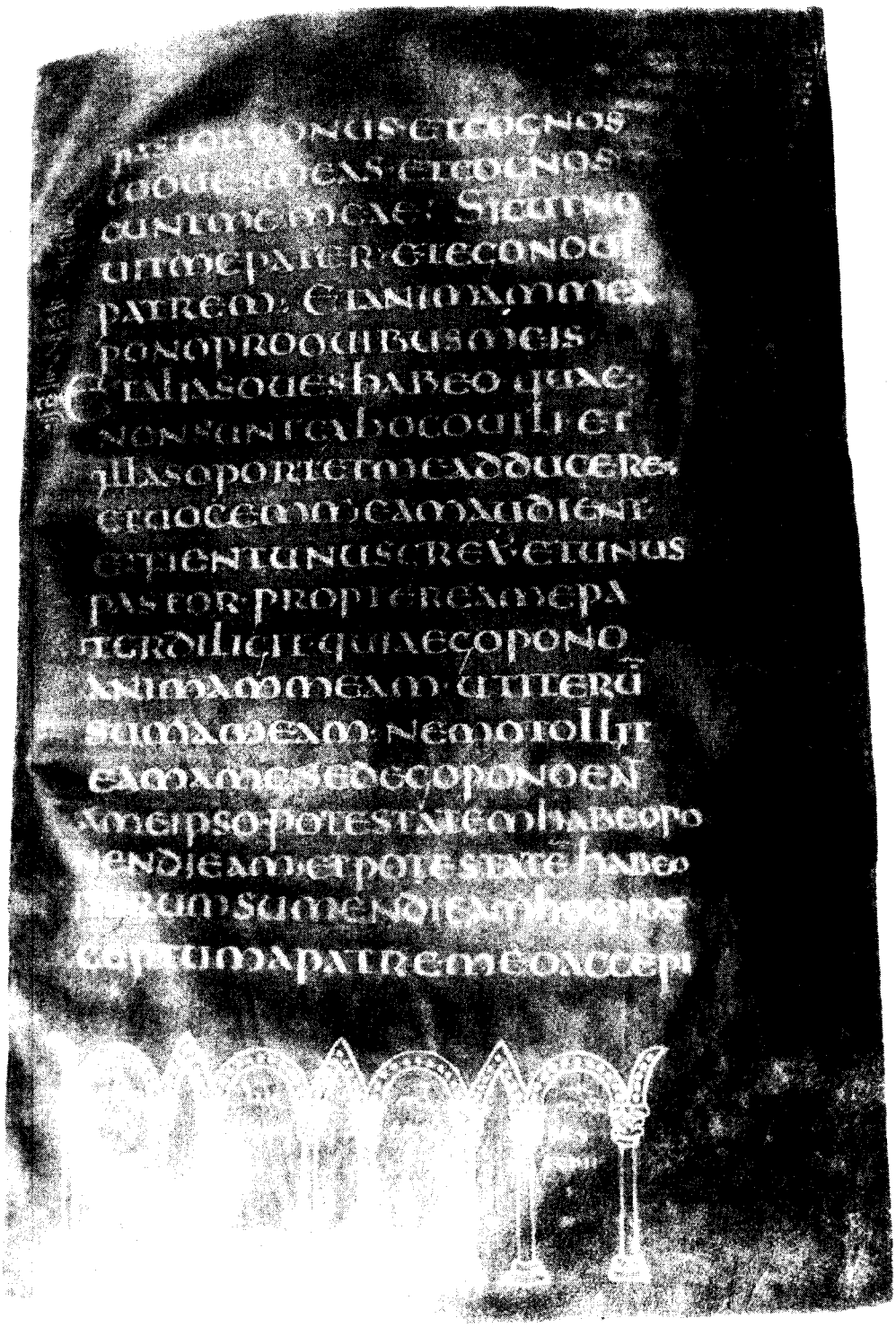


FIG. 3b. — Latin *Codex Brixianus* with Canon Arches in bottom margin (folia unnumbered, John 10 :14-18) [Taken from H. J. VOGELS, *Codicum Novi Testamenti Specimina*, Bonn, 1929].

FIG. 4. — Detail from a 16th cent. Polish Icon exhibiting the persistence of the enthroned Gospel Book as Christ metaphor [Photo courtesy of the Polish National Museum, Kraków].

FIG. 5. — Porphyry Sculpture of the Tetrarchs (3rd-4th cent.) [Taken from P. BROWN, *The World of Late Antiquity*, London, 1971].

FIG. 6. — Detail of the Codicillar Diptych used as an Imperial Icon, illustration from the *Notitia Dignitatum* (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 10291 ; fol. 178r) [Taken from P. C. BERGER, *The Insignia of the Notitia Dignitatum*, New York, 1981].

As to whether such an icon would be visible, the Byzantine imperial court secretary Paulus Silentiarius assures that the Gospel Book was an object which was seen by many :

> "[The path to the ambo is where] the priest, as he holds the Golden Gospel, passes along, and the surging crowd strive to touch the sacred book with their lips and hands, while moving waves of people break around" ([140]).

In addition, as Michael McCormick has recently suggested, the optical qualities of purple itself helped ensure that any item so decorated could easily be seen. Purple to the Ancients was, "in some sense, not unlike the modern florescent paints. Thanks to its brilliant color, spectators could immediately pick out the key person [or Gospel Book] in a group" ([141]).

Finally, although there is but one early example, a precedent had likely been set for the occasional imperial commissioning of sacred texts for churches by Constantine in 324 C.E. :

> "I have thought it expedient to instruct your Prudence to order fifty copies of the sacred Scriptures, the provision and use of which you know to be most needful for the instruction of the Church, to be written on prepared parchment in a legible manner, and in a convenient, portable form, by professional transcribers thoroughly practiced in their art... Such were the emperor's commands, which were followed by the immediate execution of the work itself, which we sent him in magnificent and elaborately bound volumes of a threefold and fourfold form" ([142]).

Theories of Gregory of Nyssa in G. ROBERTSON and G. HENDERSON, *Studies in Memory of David Talbot Rice* [n. 7], p. 217-222.

(140) *ἔνθεν ὑποτροπάδην χρυσέην εὐάγγελος ἀνὴρ*
βίβλον ἀερτάζων διανίσσεται. ἱεμένης δὲ
πληθύος, ἀχράντοιο θεοῦ κατὰ μύστιδα τιμήν,
χείλεα καὶ παλάμας ἱερὴν περὶ βίβλον ἐρεῖσαι,
κύματα κινυμένων περιάγνυται ἄσπετα δήμων

PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, *Descriptio ecclesiae sanctae Sophiae et ambonis*, "Descriptio ambonis", 247-251 ; (P. FRIEDLÄNDER, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius : Kunst-beschreibungen justinianischer Zeit*, Edidit P. F., Leipzig, 1912, p. 263-264 ; transl. by W. R. LETHABY and H. SWAINSON, *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople*, New York and London, 1894, p. 57).

(141) M. MCCORMICK, *Analyzing Imperial Ceremonies* in *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 35, 1985, p. 19.

(142) EUSEBIUS, *Vita Constantini* IV, 36, 37 (F. WINKELMANN, *Eusebius : Werke*, Edidit F. W., Berlin, 1975, I, p. 133-135 ; transl. by P. SCHAFF and H. WACE, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser., I, Oxford, 1890, p. 549).

Although the exact nature of these books is unknown ([143]), the rare practice of imperial book donation is supported by a later Carolingian example. Angilbert, abbot of the monastery of St. Riquier (790-814 C.E.) and close friend of Charlemagne, makes mention of a Gospel Book in golden letters presented to him by the Frankish king ([144]). A golden Gospel Book is also included in the inventory of the abbey's treasures in 831 C.E. ([145]). This book is likely the extant purple and gold codex known as the "Ahbeville Gospels" ([146]). Just as Charlemagne's court employed purple and gold book decoration to create a type of bond with and continuity between Late Antique and Carolingian culture, they also likely resurrected the scheme of imperial purple book as symbolic royal gift — hence, Charlemagne presenting the deluxe book to the abbey of St. Riquier.

A few of the Late Antique purple Gospels also provide clues suggesting possible royal affiliations. The purple Psalter in Paris ([147]) has, according to a tradition of the monastery of St. Germain-des-Prés, long been thought to be associated with St. Germain (496-576 C.E.). E.A. Lowe, who ascribed this manuscript to the sixth century, has suggested that it could have been used by the saint due to the age of its script ([148]). In 555 C.E., St. Germain was Bishop of Paris and

(143) See the interpretation of Eusebius' passage by T. D. BARNES, *Constantine and Eusebius* [n. 68], p. 124, and especially p. 345 n. 139 ; also C. WENDEL, *Der Bibel-Auftrag Kaiser Konstantins* in *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 56, 1939, p. 165-175 ; It was at one time thought that the ancient Greek biblical manuscripts *Codex Sinaiticus* (LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, ADD. 43725), *Codex Vaticanus* (ROME, BIBLIOTECA VATICANA, GR. 1209), and *Codex Alexandrinus* (LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, ROYAL I.D. V-VIII) were possibly surviving copies of Constantine's Bibles : for an early argument undermining this view, see K. LAKE, *The Sinaitic and Vatican Manuscripts and the Copies sent by Eusebius to Constantine* in *Harvard Theological Review* 11, 1918, p. 32-35 ; For more on these manuscripts, along with plates, see B. METZGER, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* [n. 90], p. 74-79, 86-87.

(144) Angilbert is presented with an *Euangelium auro scriptum cum tabulis argenteis, auro et lapidibus preciosis mirifice paratum* 1 ; in *Angilberti abbatis de ecclesia Centulensi libellus* — "De libris" (*MGH Scriptores*, Edidit G. WAITZ, XV, pt. 1, Hannover, 1887, p. 177).

(145) *textus evangelii* IV. *aureis litteris scriptus totus* 1. (G. BECKER, *Catalogi bibliothecarum antiqui*, Edidit G. B., Bonn, 1885 ; revised edition with recensions by M. PERLBACH, G. MEIER, Hildesheim, New York, 1973, p. 28, no. 236).

(146) ABBEVILLE, BIBLIOTHÈQUE MUNICIPALE 4 (1) ; *CLA*, VI, pl. 704 ; for the silver chair on which it was reputedly displayed, see C. DAVIS-WEYER, *Early Medieval Art, 300-1150*, Toronto, 1986, p. 96.

(147) PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, LAT. 11947 — *Codex Purpureus* — see note 102 ; *CLA* V, pl. 616.

(148) *CLA* V, pl. 616, p. 28.

Arch-Chaplain to King Childebert, whom he converted from a licentious life and cured of a sickness. The King built for him the abbey of St. Vincent, now known as St. Germain-des-Prés ([149]). The Codex Purpureus could conceivably have been commissioned by the King to commemorate this occasion ([150]).

Another royal origin postulates the commissioning of the Codex Argenteus and Brixianus by King Theodoric ([151]). That Theodoric was aware of the symbolic meaning of purple is certain, having been raised as a child in the Byzantine imperial court under Leo I ca. 461-72 C.E. In 470, Leo issued the edict encountered above, designating the use of purple ink as an imperial prerogative, its violation punishable by death ([152]). In an early letter (ca. 507-11 C.E.), Theodoric treated the shipment of purple cloth just as gravely, warning the chief of the purple-dye industry in Hydruntum ([153]) "If you have any care for your safety come at once with the purple, which you have hitherto been accustomed to render up every year. If not, if you think to mock us by delay, we shall send you not a constrainer but an avenger" ([154]). Theodoric was a Goth and ruled from a palace in Ravenna at the beginning of the sixth century. Accordingly, the Codex Argenteus is written in Gothic script, while both it and the Codex Brixianus date from the sixth century, share as a common form of decoration the canon arches at the foot of each page ([155]), and have been localized to a common production center in Ravenna ([156]). In addition, one recalls that the Codex Brixianus is thought to possibly have had an entire Gothic

(149) See H. LECLERCQ, *Germain-des-Prés (Saint)* in *Dictionnaire D'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, VI, Paris, 1924, p. 1102-1150.

(150) Though a book is not mentioned, see the accounts in both the *Vita Germani episcopi Parisiaci* (*MGH Scriptores Merovingici, passiones vitaeque sanctorum*, Edidit B. KRUSCH, VII, Hannover et Lipsiae, 1920, p. 337-428), and the *Vita Droctoveus*, *MGH Scriptores Merovingici*, Edidit KRUSCH, III, p. 537-543.

(151) J.-O. TJÄDER, *Der Codex argenteus* [n. 95], p. 146, 155-157 ; B. BISCHOFF, *Latin Palaeography* [n. 3], p. 10, 186 ; P. MCGURK, *The Oldest Manuscripts* [n. 95], p. 22.

(152) See p. 469.

(153) The modern city of Otronto, Italy.

(154) *si salutis propriae tangit affectus, intra illum diem, imminente tibi harum portitore, cum blatta, quam nostro cubiculo dare annis singulis consuesti, venire festina : quia iam non compulsorem ad te mittimus, sed ultorem, si aliqua crediderit ludificatione tardandum* (CASSIODORUS, *Variae* I, 2, 6 ; *MGH Auctores Antiquissimi*, Edidit T. MOMMSEN, XII, Berlin, 1894, p. 11-12 ; for the transl., see T. HODGKIN, *The Letters of Cassiodorus*, London, 1886, p. 144).

(155) See p. 466 and note 112.

(156) J.-O. TJÄDER, *Der Codex argenteus* [n. 95], p. 144-164.

section at one time, further strengthening the Gothic link between the two manuscripts ([157]). That these books were seen by Theodoric as an *imago regis* — another symbol among the many signs of Roman majesty such as the building of a palace or the wearing of purple robes — and used by him as an imperial image, is especially conceivable when he is taken in light of his own words : "An able Goth wants to be like a Roman" ([158]), in this case by replicating Roman imperial ritual and ceremony. Finally, Theodoric not only had both the means and motive for commissioning purple and gold Gospels, but also the opportunity. During his reign, an active program concerned with the restoration and construction of monuments and churches was undertaken ([159]). The rise of such buildings as the Gothic palace church of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (begun ca. 504 C.E.) presented possible occasions for the commissioning of a dedicatory imperial book. It is not difficult to imagine a monumental purple Gospel Book, such as the Brixianus or Argenteus, resting on the altar of such a church.

*
* *

Like the Babylonian parchment referred to by Jerome, the exact quality of the "imperial purple" is unknown. If the correct shade could be determined, a re-examination of the extant purple codices would likely distinguish any books which were imperial objects from those that were the property of the wealthy. However, through a careful examination, the nuances in the coloring of the manuscripts, when combined with the little that is known of their origins, reveal possibly the most provocative aspect of this study. Of the three purple manuscripts which E.A. Lowe described as "deeply dyed" or having "beautifully prepared purple parchment" (as opposed to the remainders, which he simply noted as having "purple parchment"), two of them have been discussed above as possibly having royal affiliations — namely, the Codex Brixianus, and the purple Psalter of St. Germain-des-Prés ([160]). The Codex Argenteus should also be included among this group, for

(157) See p. 467 and note 114.

(158) *Romanus miser imitatur Gothum et utilis Gothis imitatur Romanum ; Anonymus Valesianus* 12, 61 (*Excerpta Valesiana*, Ed. J. Moreau et V. Velkov, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1968, p. 17).

(159) See M. J. Johnson, *Toward a History of Theodoric's Building Program* in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 42, 1988, p. 73-96.

(160) For Lowe's descriptions, see *CLA* III, pl. 281 ; V, pl. 616.

just from the facsimiles one can see it to be very deeply dyed (161) (not to mention its associations with the Codex Brixianus). The last book described by Lowe to exbibit this feature is the Codex Palatinus (162). Apart from its African origin, the only other guess concerning its background comes from Patrick McGurk, who postulates that it may have been created for tbe Trent Cathedral, its present home, "commissioned by ecclesiastics or presented hy wealthy lay people" (163). I would suggest, to the contrary, tbat the shade of its color implies a more royal background.

While it must certainly be true that purple manuscripts were objects associated with wealth, I hope to have demonstrated another, more specifically imperial, use and association for them. André Grabar goes too far when be states that "Evocative though they are of imperial pomp, there can be no doubt that the purple pages and gold- and silver-written texts of the Gospels are solely a homage to the Divine Ruler of the Universe and thus have no associations with the earthly seat of Empire" (164). But even the little that can be gleaned from the extant manuscripts, as well as from tbe information the prior history of purple-dyeing provides, suggests exactly the opposite. It is in light of this evidence that one should rather heed the opinion of Kurt Weitzmann, when be says that "In view of the great splendor and luxuriousness of fourth-century manuscripts... it is safe to assume that the imperial court as patron must have played an essential role" (165). I would add that it played this essential role at times for a specific reason — to retain the imperial privilege of emperor worship heing challenged by the adoration of Christian images. The purple-and-gold-decorated book provided one solution to this problem (166).

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(161) See J. ROMER, *Testament*, New York, 1988, color pl. 30 ; H. J. VOGELS, *Codicum Novi Testamenti* [n. 94], p. 10, pl. 37.

(162) *CLA* IV, pl. 437.

(163) P. MCGURK, *The Oldest Manuscripts* [n. 95], p. 23.

(164) A. GRABAR, *Byzantine Painting*, transl. by S. GILBERT, New York, 1979, p. 160.

(165) K. WEITZMANN, *Book Illustration of the Fourth Century : Tradition and Innovation* in H. L. KESSLER, *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, Edidit H. L. K., Chicago and London, 1971, p. 125.

(166) Many thanks to K. Attell, M. Breeze, S. Cho, C. Deroux, B. Löfstedt, J. Moralee, C. Murray, A. Remensnyder, R. Rouse, and M. Skinfill for their countless suggestions. Where flaws occur, they do so only as a result of my temerity in passing on their sound advice.

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