

Medieval Allegory and the  
Building of the New Jerusalem

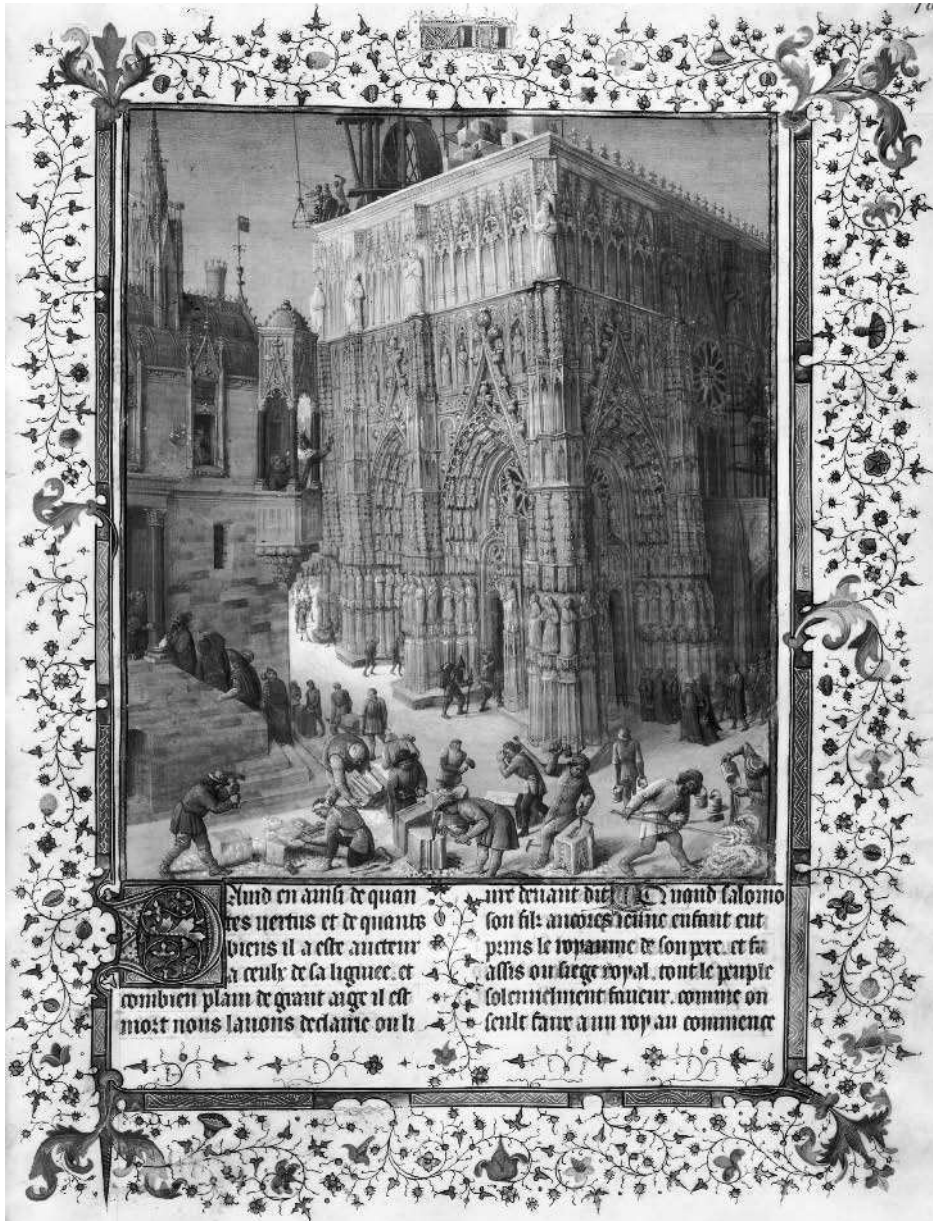
ANN R. MEYER

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## Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem

This book investigates the concept of the New Jerusalem, the City of God, as an architectural ideal during the Middle Ages, and the way in which it is represented allegorically in patristic writings, liturgy, building, and later literature. The author begins by examining its conceptual foundations in such sources as the Hebrew Bible, Bede's exegesis, the religious philosophy of Plotinus, and Augustine's theology. She then explores the influence and the expression of the New Jerusalem in liturgy and architecture, using the twelfth-century remodelling of the Abbey Church of St-Denis and its dedication liturgy to show how the building serves as an eschatological and apocalyptic landscape. The chantry movement in late medieval England is situated in this context, and leads to a demonstration of the movement's associations with the highly-wrought poem *Pearl* and its companion poems; the book analyses *Pearl* as medieval architecture, offering fresh perspectives on its elaborate construction and historical context.

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Medieval Allegory and the Building  
of the New Jerusalem

ANN R. MEYER

D. S. BREWER

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Projects such as my own could not be completed without the collections of



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To my mother and father,  
my sister Patsy,  
my brothers Bobby, Godfrey, and Thomas,  
and Auntie Ann,  
for the love that builds Heaven on earth

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## Editorial Note

This book relies extensively on quotations from writers of late antiquity and early Christianity. In order to achieve a degree of brevity in this wide-ranging study, I have selectively omitted original Greek and Latin quotations except where a particular emphasis upon interpretation is crucial, such as in my close analysis in Chapter Three of liturgical texts and commentaries. I have provided key Latin terms and phrases, such as those from the Vulgate and from Saint Augustine's writings, when I thought it especially helpful for clarification. All standard Greek and Latin sources are listed in the Bibliography. Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations in Latin are taken from the Vulgate (*Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969). English translations of biblical passages are taken from the Douay (Rheims-Douay) Version (Baltimore and New York, John Murphy Co., 1899). Full bibliographical references for Augustine's *De civitate Dei* and *Confessiones* (abbreviations listed below) are provided in the notes and Bibliography (Primary Sources). Bibliographical information on all other works by Augustine that I cite in this book may also be found in the Bibliography (Primary Sources).

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## Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers, ed. J. Quasten and J. C. Plumpe (Westminster, MD.: Newman, 1946–)
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1951–)
ANCL	Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to AD 325, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark 1967–72)
<i>AugStud</i>	<i>Augustinian Studies</i> (Villanova: Villanova UP, 1970–)
CCL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna: Tempsky, 1865–)
<i>civ. Dei</i>	Augustine, <i>De civitate Dei</i> (On the City of God), ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCL (2 vols). I have used the English translation of this critical edition, which appears in R. W. Dyson, trans. and ed., <i>The City of God against the Pagans</i> . Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998).
<i>conf.</i>	Augustine, <i>Confessiones</i> (Confessions), L. Verheijen, CCL 27. English translations I have consulted include H. Chadwick, <i>The Confessions</i> (Oxford; New York: Oxford UP, 1991); and R. S. Pine-Coffin, <i>Confessions</i> (New York: Penguin, 1961).
<i>Enn.</i>	Plotinus, <i>The Enneads, Plotini Opera</i> , ed. P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzler (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964–1982). I use the facing-page English translation of this edition by A. Hillary Armstrong, <i>Plotinus</i> , in The Loeb Classical Library, 7 vols (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966–88).
FC	The Fathers of the Church, ed. R. J. Deferrari (Washington: Catholic UP, 1947–)
LCC	Library of Christian Classics, ed. J. Baillie, J. T. McNeill, and H. P. van Dusen (Philadelphia and London: Westminster P, 1953–66)
NPNF	A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Oxford; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994)
PL	Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64)
<i>RechAug</i>	Recherches Augustiniennes (Paris: Études Augustiniennes)
<i>REtAug</i>	Revue des Études Augustiniennes (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1955–)
SCM	Student Christian Movement: SCM/Canterbury Press
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Press
<i>VigChr</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i> . A Review of Early Christian Life and Language (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1947–)
WSA	The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, ed. J. E. Rotelle (New York: New City P, 1990)

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## Introduction

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.  
(1 Corinthians 3.10)

The foundation of the temple is to be understood mystically.  
(Bede, *De templo* 4.1)<sup>1</sup>

Architecture, allegory, and revelation: these three words communicate in a remarkably wide-ranging and complementary way the artistic, intellectual, and religious cultures of medieval Europe. If one wishes to understand medieval beliefs, fears, and aspirations, architecture offers the most commanding visual sources of discovery. It is also an art form that is unsurpassed in its collective powers of expression, including its function as a location for secular and sacred liturgies. Allegory in turn is one of the chief philosophical, religious, and literary modes of medieval expression. From Origen to the sculptors of Chartres Cathedral to Dante, medieval theologians and artists chose allegory as the means of expression most effective and most worthy of communicating the relation between the divine world and human experience. Finally, revelation – and here I use the term to mean an intimate awareness of God’s presence – is the highest spiritual end, the definitive goal of human experience in the medieval world. Revelation is what medieval church architecture aspires to and what medieval religious allegory unveils.

This book is an investigation of how these aspects of medieval thought and expression functioned simultaneously as form, method, and meaning – how architecture, allegory, and revelation worked together in an effort to represent the New Jerusalem on earth. As a way of usefully limiting this investigation, I focus my attention on the architectural approach to divine revelation in the medieval west, including its manifestation in liturgy and literature. This focus contributes to the tradition of scholarship, especially in the last decade, that has explored ways in which architecture and architectural motifs in other areas of medieval studies stand out as among the most pervasive and complex significations in medieval culture.

There are many ways of studying these medieval accomplishments. Much recent scholarship has focused on technical, sociological, and political questions including, in the last twenty years, a whole range of theoretical perspectives that have stimulated discussion on the contexts and meanings of

<sup>1</sup> D. Hurst, ed., CCL 119A (1969); trans. Seán Connolly, Translated Texts for Historians Series, Vol. 21 (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1995).

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medieval art and culture. My focus is not meant to counter such approaches, to fit the great variety and complexity of medieval architectural expressions into a restrictive or all-encompassing structure, or to impose from without artificial formulations. Such approaches have come to be regarded as inadequate, since they risk underestimating the richness of purpose and meaning these accomplishments from our distant past offer. I do not, in other words, suggest that allegory is the only method or that divine revelation the only purpose relevant for understanding medieval art and architecture. Rather, by examining selected works from the disciplines of philosophy, theology, liturgy, architecture, and literature, my aim is to direct closer attention to the pervasiveness and complexities of an extraordinary intellectual and cultural achievement and to suggest a method of interdisciplinary research that reaches well beyond surface relationships between these disciplines.

My use of the term “allegory” also requires qualification. The word itself combines two Greek words: *allos* (other) and *agoreuein* (to speak). The fundamental meaning conveyed by the word “allegory” (Gr. *allegoria*), then, is “to speak otherwise,” “to say other things,” “to say other than that which is meant” (Lat. *alia oratio*). The single use of the word (as a participle, *allégoroumena*) in the New Testament appears in Paul’s letter to the Galatians (4.24) to designate the relation between the Old and New Covenants. Jerome (c. 347–420) translated Paul’s text as *quae sunt per allegoriam dicta* (“which things are said by an allegory”). Other Latin uses of the word and its related forms appear in writings of major theologians in the medieval west. Augustine (354–430), who identifies Saint Paul as his master in the craft and transformational spirituality of biblical exegesis, cites the passage from Galatians and glosses it with the phrase, *quae sunt aliud ex alio significantia* (“which things signify one thing by another”).<sup>2</sup> Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) used the term *alieniloquium*, the Latin equivalent of the Greek combination *allos* + *agoreuein* (other-speaking), to describe allegory as a grammatical technique. Hugh of St.-Victor (1096–1141) also used *alieniloquium* to describe allegory, since *aliud dicitur et aliud significatur* (“one thing is said and another thing is signified”).

The ancient and medieval writers used “allegory” and its related verbal and adjectival forms in conjunction with, and often as a substitution for, a whole range of other terms to designate identical or closely related meanings. These terms include *hyponoia* (“under-sense”), *symbolon* (“symbol”), *figura* (“figure”), *signum* (“sign”), *imago* (“image”), *eikon* (“icon”), and *aenigma* (“enigma”). It is important to emphasize that in the historical periods I treat in this book, these terms were not often clearly distinguished from one another in meaning. To cite one highly influential example in the western medieval tradition, Augustine demonstrates great flexibility in his use of *allegoria* and *figura* in his biblical exegesis, not taking care in a consistent way to distin-

<sup>2</sup> *De Trinitate* XV 9; see also *civ. Dei* XV 18–19.

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guish them from the Pauline terms *typos* (Lat. *figura* in I Corinthians 10.6) and *typikôs* (Lat. *figura* in I Corinthians 10.11) or from *similitudo*, *umbra*, *sacramentum*, *mysteria*, and *imago*.<sup>3</sup> Jon Whitman cites examples from Hellenic and Hebraic writers: “The rhetorician Heraclitus uses both *hyponoia* and *allegoria* to describe his interpretation of Homer. So does the great Jewish exegete Philo, at about the same period, only with reference to the Bible, not Homer.”<sup>4</sup> That these terms were used indiscriminately among major ancient and medieval writers indicates that for them there was great overlap in meaning. It is clear, however, that for these writers all of the terms “involve the intention of conveying or constructing meaning.”<sup>5</sup>

In this book I follow the example of the ancient and medieval writers, demonstrating an informed Augustinian flexibility, for example, in my use of words like “sign,” “figure,” “image,” and “symbol.” One additional aspect of my own flexibility is that, unlike many of the ancient and medieval writers, I selectively apply the multiple terms of allegorical language across the disciplines, so that these terms become part of my discussion not only of the biblical exegeses of Bede and Augustine, but also in my treatments of medieval liturgy, architecture, and poetry.

As is well known, the term “allegory” has often been used to designate a technique or system of interpretation. Medieval theologians conceived a multi-leveled system of biblical exegesis, with terms such as “typological,” “tropological,” and “anagogical” serving as specific designations for different levels of meaning. Dante famously adapted the allegorical system used by the theologians for interpretation of his own great poem, *La Divina Commedia*. My interest in allegory also emphasizes the technique or system of conveying

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Galatians 4.21ff; *De utilitate credendi* 3.8. See David Dawson’s article, “Figure, Allegory,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 366–368. Dawson observes, however, that there are instances when Augustine prefers *figura* to *allegoria*: “*figura* . . . preserves the significance of a historical reality.” *Allegoria* emphasizes “the relationship between biblical words and their spiritual referents,” but “omits the intermediate category of physical or historical reality.” Nonetheless, as Dawson points out, Augustine is inconsistent in his use of the two terms. See, for example, *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber* 2.5; *Conf.* XXIV.37 and XXV.38.

<sup>4</sup> *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997), 266. My discussion here on the historical background of the term “allegory” and related terms is based primarily on Whitman’s study; see especially Appendix I: “On the History of the Term ‘Allegory’.” The following sources have also been especially useful: Michael Murrin, *The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes toward a Theory of Allegorical Rhetoric in the English Renaissance Culture* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1969); Philip Rollinson, *Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP: 1981; Brighton, UK: Harvester, 1981). Classic studies on ancient and medieval uses of words and concepts designating symbolic meaning, such as metaphor, allegory, *integumentum*, and *figura* include Félix Buffière, *Les Mythes d’Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1956); M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, trans. Jerome Taylor and L. K. Little (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968); Jean Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1976); Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l’Écriture*, 4 vols (Paris: Aubier, 1959–64); and Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972).

<sup>5</sup> Rollinson, *Classical Theories*, 18.



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meaning, but it is also more specific: I focus on how the interpretive technique functions as an epistemological process, how specific philosophical and theological traditions define that process, and how it is manifested as a process – as a vehicle of spiritual transformation – in medieval liturgy, architecture, and literature. To clarify my interest even more specifically, I focus on the “screen” or veil of allegory itself in order to explore how it is philosophically and theologically possible to understand medieval architecture – including architectural forms and motifs in liturgy and literature – as eschatological landscapes and images of apocalyptic revelation.

Finally, my frequent use in this book of the term “medieval culture,” may also require clarification. Here I follow the example of Richard K. Emmerson, who in his essay, “The Apocalypse in Medieval Culture,” explains that the term “allows for a wide-ranging analysis restricted neither by disciplinary categories nor by such artificial distinctions as religious/secular or elite/popular.” The influence of the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages, Emmerson observes, “is ubiquitous, all pervasive” and its “imagery is limited neither to religious texts nor even to Christian settings.”<sup>6</sup>

### ***Visio pacis: Allegory and John’s Vision in the Book of Revelation***

The foundational biblical texts for the medieval building of the New Jerusalem include the description of sacred architecture in the Hebrew Bible – especially the desert Tabernacle (Exodus 25–40) and Solomon’s Temple (I Kings 5–8; cf. Ezekiel 40–42) – Paul’s teachings in the New Testament on allegoresis and, of course, John’s vision of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation.<sup>7</sup>

The apocalyptic eschatology of medieval Christianity was driven by a hope to be reborn after divine Judgment into the eternal presence of a loving God, to become a child of Heaven, a worshipper of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem. The last chapters of the New Testament, chapters 21 and 22 of the Revelation to John, include a prophetic vision of the New Jerusalem and the state of being of its inhabitants:

et civitatem sanctam Hierusalem novam vidi descendentem de caelo a Deo  
paratam sicut sponsam ornatam viro suo  
et audivi vocem magnam de throno dicentem  
ecce tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus et habitabit cum eis  
et ipsi populus eius erunt et ipse Deus cum eis erit eorum Deus  
et absterget Deus omnem lacrimam ab oculis eorum  
et mors ultra non erit neque luctus neque clamor neque dolor erit ultra

<sup>6</sup> *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1992), 294–95.

<sup>7</sup> For Paul’s teachings on allegorical interpretation and on Pauline passages especially relevant for this study, see, for example, I Cor. 3.2; 3.10–17; 10; 16; II Cor. 5.1–10; Gal. 4.21ff; Eph. 2.19–22.

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quae prima abierunt  
et dixit qui sedebat in throno  
ecce nova facio omnia  
et dicit scribe quia haec verba fidelissima sunt et vera.

(Revelation 21.2–5)

[And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away. And he that sat on the throne, said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said to me: Write, for these words are most faithful and true.]<sup>8</sup>

In verse nine of the same chapter an angel speaks to John: *veni ostendam tibi sponsam uxorem agni* (Come, and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb). The angel takes John up *in spiritu in montem magnum et altum* (in spirit to a great and high mountain) and shows him the New Jerusalem *habentem claritatem Dei* (having the glory of God) and *lumen eius simile lapidi pretioso tamquam lapidi iaspidis sicut cristallum* (his light like a precious stone, as to the jasper stone, even as crystal) (21.9–11). The verses that follow describe the city's measurements, its twelve jeweled walls and foundations, its twelve pearl gates, and in chapter 22, its crystalline river and fruit-laden tree of life.

The exquisite complexity of John's apocalyptic vision of the New Jerusalem has encouraged varied interpretations, both symbolic and historical, since it was first compiled and written down sometime in the first century.<sup>9</sup> Biblical commentators, drawing on a rich tradition of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, have sought to understand the figurative limits of John's account. Some of its interpretive difficulties include, for example, the multiple designations of the New Jerusalem, cited variously as the *civitatem sanctam* (holy city) (21.2), the *tabernaculum Dei* (tabernacle of God) (21.3), the *throno* (throne) of God (21.5), and the *sponsam uxorem agni* (bride, the wife of the lamb) (21.9). Further, the detailed material descriptions of the New Jerusalem and the apparent imminence of the apocalyptic event – *tempus enim prope est* (for the time is at hand) (1.3), when the New Jerusalem will descend onto a high mountain – have challenged believers in their efforts to distinguish literal from symbolic meanings. Explanations within the text itself – like the angel's account of the woman sitting upon the scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns (17.7–18) – are, in fact, less than helpful, since these

<sup>8</sup> See editorial note for source details.

<sup>9</sup> For a survey of some of the most influential medieval interpretations of the Book of Revelation, see the collection of essays and accompanying bibliographies in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn.

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explanations lead inevitably to still further questions. Of course, this method of literary narrative – in which questions arise that prompt explanations, which in turn lead to more questions – is a common feature of apocalyptic literature.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see later in this Introduction, medieval Christian exegetes, like Bede in his commentaries on the Mosaic Tabernacle and on Solomon's Temple, viewed the multiple significations that John ascribes to the New Jerusalem as a genuine experience of divine truth.

The cultural and intellectual achievements of the medieval Christian world give prolific evidence of the pervasiveness of this apocalyptic eschatology. Yet, it was the church buildings and their liturgical programs that most comprehensively and dramatically manifested a hope for eternal union with God. After more than six centuries, the extant buildings – so many of them having survived neglect, corrosion, and various forms of desecration – remain among the world's most remarkable spectacles of visual and, through their liturgies, aural splendor. One motivation for this focus in medieval architecture and related art forms stemmed in great part from biblical accounts or descriptions – not the least of which was Revelation 21–22 – of God's elect community, accounts that repeatedly emphasize an inseparable relationship between salvation, sacramental liturgy, and architectural forms. The colors, the textures, the supremely authoritative instructions, the careful designs, the intimate, familiar quality of the vessels for liturgical service, all provided nourishment for the medieval imagination in its impressive drive to make manifest a spiritual world.

The architectural expression of this spirituality and the complementary liturgical expression played out within the buildings' stone surroundings did not, of course, spring *ab ovo* in the contemporary world of the Middle Ages. In this Introduction I turn briefly and selectively to important sources of influence from ancient Rome and the Hebrew Bible. In addition, one enduring subject of scholarship on the medieval period is the debate on the possible influence of Platonic ideas upon the design and symbolic programs of medieval church architecture.<sup>11</sup> Earlier in the last century, art historians working within a scholarly tradition whose representatives included Erwin Panofsky and Otto von Simson argued that the great churches of the medieval period were visual manifestations of Platonic ideas mingled with Christian beliefs.<sup>12</sup> Influential

<sup>10</sup> The thirteenth-century *Queste del Saint Graal* demonstrates this technique well. Knights from Arthur's court in search of the Holy Grail seek guidance from "helpful" hermits, whose explanations of their mysterious adventures send them (and readers) on their way with only more questions. Albert Pauphilet, ed. (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1984); trans. P. M. Matarasso (London and New York: Penguin, 1969).

<sup>11</sup> Throughout this study I use the terms "Platonism" and "Platonist" in a broad sense to refer comprehensively to the larger tradition that includes figures, like Plotinus, whom many modern scholars refer to as "neoplatonists." Plotinus himself looked to Plato as the chief philosophic source of his own ideas, and he called himself not a "neoplatonist" but a Platonist. The term "neoplatonism" can be misleading since it does not distinguish any particular development of Plato's philosophy among many, both pagan and Christian.

<sup>12</sup> Erwin Panofsky, ed. and trans., *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

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as this thesis was to a generation of art historians, it was too general in its presentation and lacked sufficient practical or technical evidence to support it.

Scholars have continued, however, to study philosophical and theological traditions that can inform us of both the conception and the interpretation of medieval church architecture. Nigel Hiscock, for example, in his recent study offers compelling evidence to support a reconsideration of Platonic philosophical traditions in studies not only of the design and symbolic programs of medieval church architecture, but also of the relations between architecture and other medieval art forms.<sup>13</sup> His study of medieval number theory, geometry, and architecture leads persuasively to the conclusion that “the application of geometry to architectural design was an expression of metaphysical beliefs and . . . these [beliefs] were fundamentally Platonic in content.”<sup>14</sup>

Complementing Hiscock’s work, musicologists provide liturgical evidence for the Platonic influence on the symbolic meanings of medieval churches. Margot Fassler, for example, has studied Augustinian reform and the twelfth-century liturgy at the Abbey of St.-Victor in Paris. Anne Walters Robertson gives evidence for the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius’ writings on medieval liturgy at the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis just outside of Paris.<sup>15</sup> These prominent examples of Platonically informed liturgies can only be fully understood, of course, in terms of Christian salvation history. One clear liturgical confirmation of the apocalyptic and eschatological components of that history, and a subject to which I devote a chapter of this book, is the medieval liturgy for the dedication of a Christian church.

These examples of scholarly directions in the last decade or so on medieval architectural history and musicology support a premise of my own study: the medieval conception of the church building as a symbol of the New Jerusalem was informed and strengthened by a Christian adaptation of Platonic teachings on the symbol. The most sophisticated tradition of Platonism that is central to this adaptation is, I argue, represented in the writings of Plotinus (204/5–270). It is my contention, as well, that medieval liturgy facilitated the appropriation of Platonic thought by providing both a textual and a visual means for the builders and worshipers to qualify the Platonic symbol in terms of Christian faith.

In Part I of this study I provide a philosophical and theological foundation for my analysis of liturgy, architecture, and literature in the later chapters. In Chapter One, the philosophical focus is Plotinus’ masterful reworking of pre-

*ures*, 2nd edn by Gerda Panofsky-Soergel (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979). Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*, 2nd edn (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962).

<sup>13</sup> *The Wise Master Builder: Platonic Geometry in Plans of Medieval Abbeys and Cathedrals* (Aldershot, UK and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 39.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

<sup>15</sup> Fassler, *Gothic Song: Victorine Sequences and Augustinian Reform in Twelfth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); Robertson, *The Service Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis: Images of Ritual and Music in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

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vicious Hellenic ideas on art and the sensible world. Plotinus' teachings, collected and edited by his disciple Porphyry under the title *Enneads*, have received too little attention in studies of western medieval traditions; yet, they are the most important source for an understanding of Augustine's Platonism. Augustine (354–430), the chief figure in the transmission of Platonism to the medieval Christian west, learned from Plotinus how cognition of the sensory world moves the soul to recognize and return to its spiritual source. Plotinus' teachings are, therefore, vital to an understanding of how Platonism was appropriated by medieval Christians in the conception and symbolic interpretation of their church buildings. To further an understanding of medieval efforts to represent the New Jerusalem on earth, I begin this study, therefore, by returning to the main source of Augustine's Platonism, the writings of Plotinus.

Saint Augustine is the vital link between Plotinian metaphysics and western Christianity. In Chapter Two, I focus on Augustine's transformation of Plotinus' sacramental view of the cosmos. Augustine's mature teachings in *De civitate Dei* receive my primary attention, since it is in this work that Augustine presents the most extensive theological foundation for the medieval representation of the New Jerusalem. As influential as Plotinus' philosophical system was on Augustine's understanding of the relations between the invisible, sacred realm and the temporal, visible realm, it was nonetheless inadequate for Augustine the Christian theologian. Central to Augustine's theology is a clear concept of Church, or a community of the faithful, whose members are full participants in the Christian drama of salvation history. Plotinus' system, by contrast, does not rely upon a concept of religious community, always on pilgrimage to a desired apocalyptic end. Augustine transforms the elaborate Plotinian journey of the soul to include an identification of the human being as a citizen of either one of two cities: the City of Babylon or the City of God. The Church on earth serves as a sacramental sign, carrying out Christ's incarnational mission.

Plotinian and Augustinian teachings on the symbol provide a philosophical and theological foundation for later medieval liturgical, architectural, and literary achievements that identify ecclesiastical buildings not only as sacred spaces, but more specifically as earthy representations of the New Jerusalem. Part II of this book treats liturgical and architectural contributions to the medieval effort to build Heaven on earth. In Chapter Three, I turn to an important application of this tradition: the thirteenth-century liturgy for the feast of the dedication of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis near Paris. This liturgy is a carefully crafted work of literary and dramatic art that serves to manifest its chief purpose as a model of applied theology. The prayers, readings, objects, images, ritual gestures, and processions all work together to identify the church building as an eschatological and apocalyptic landscape.

The medieval liturgy at St.-Denis is an especially appropriate one to examine in this context. Abbot Suger's famous writings on the twelfth-century rebuilding of this church, which include a commentary on its

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dedication liturgy, remain important documents for our understanding of St.-Denis' formative role in the development of the Gothic style.<sup>16</sup> In addition, even if Suger's writings do not reveal, as scholars have argued, a specialized, scholarly application of Dionysian Platonism such as we find in the writings of his monastic colleagues at the Abbey of St.-Victor in Paris, they do demonstrate his familiarity with the liturgy celebrated in his church.<sup>17</sup> This familiarity is especially evident in Suger's comments on the dedication liturgy itself.<sup>18</sup>

My interest in medieval representations of the New Jerusalem led me to a study of private chapels, which were an especially prevalent architectural genre in the later centuries of western medieval Europe. These miniature churches, most often built within existing churches, took formal – if not equivalent functional – inspiration from the royal chapels built in the Ile-de-France and in London. In England, a whole architectural sub-genre arose – the chantry chapels, where Masses for the souls of the dead were sung or “chanted.” The chapels were the specific locations in which worshipers practiced a distinct form of eschatology. Yet, the chapels and their accompanying spiritual components have been largely neglected in studies of architectural history and the literature of divine revelation.

The chantry movement in England, which I treat in Chapter Four, remained a dominant strain of Christian piety until the religious reforms carried out under Henry VIII (1491–1547) and Edward VI (1547–53). With the reforms, the chantry institutions were suppressed, and most of the chapels were dismantled or destroyed. As a result, little visual evidence exists today of the chantry movement's widespread popularity in late medieval England. This widespread loss of visual evidence of the architectural past partly explains why the chantry movement has received so little scholarly attention.<sup>19</sup> What needs to be more widely recognized, however, is that this movement represents a unique stage in the evolving medieval view of how the living and the departed faithful enter into the sacred community of the Celestial City.

An outstanding exception to the near disappearance of the chantry movement's architectural expression survives in the Decorated choir of Tewkesbury Abbey in Gloucestershire, England. In Chapter Four I examine Tewkesbury Abbey's three stunning chantry chapels, two built in the fourteenth century, and one in the fifteenth century. The chapels were the private, miniature churches of the abbey's medieval patrons, the Despencers, whose tombs are housed in them. Along with other superbly constructed funerary monuments, the chapels are clustered around the high altar, facing a

<sup>16</sup> *Liber de rebus in administratione sua gestis; Libellus alter de consecratione ecclesie sancti dionysii, Ordinatio A.D. MCXL vel MCXLI confirmata*, in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 40–137.

<sup>17</sup> *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis in France*, Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine 526 (Fribourg, Switzerland: Fribourg UP, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> *Libellus alter de consecratione ecclesie sancti dionysii*, in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*.

<sup>19</sup> A general account of the chantry movement was introduced in 1947 by G. H. Cook, *Medieval Chantries and Chantry Chapels*, rev. edn (London: Phoenix House, 1963).



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fourteenth-century east window that depicts the Despencers standing alongside biblical figures at the Last Judgment. Directly overhead is a brightly painted liern vault, whose intricate crossings resemble the patterns of a great rose window. These architectural, iconographic, and decorative features identify the church as a late medieval apocalyptic and eschatological landscape. Not only does the Tewkesbury choir depend in part upon the earlier architectural innovations at St.-Denis, it also provides, I argue, an unusually specific link with a late medieval literary tradition.

This book concludes where my interest in the relations between medieval architecture, allegory, and revelation began to take shape: the philosophical and liturgical contexts of the late fourteenth-century English poem *Pearl* and its three companion poems, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Patience*, and *Cleanness* (or *Purity*). Since their earliest editions were published in the nineteenth century, these poems, which are written in a north Midlands dialect and exist in a single manuscript (British Museum MS. Cotton Nero A. x), have inspired a large body of scholarship. Most details about their creation, however, remain obscure. Overlooked by literary medievalists as a cultural force associated with the creation of these poems is the all but vanished art and spirituality of the chantry movement.

This association is revealed especially in *Pearl*, the main focus of Part III. A masterfully crafted dream vision, *Pearl* describes the spiritual progress of a man grieving over the death of a beloved young daughter. Near the end of the poem, just before the dreamer awakens, he is granted a vision of the New Jerusalem that is modeled closely on the vision of John in the Book of Revelation. The poem, I argue, is a uniquely stunning and sophisticated literary example of the architectural approach to divine revelation in the medieval west. Its author attempted to push the boundaries of literature beyond the spoken and the written word, to move literature aggressively into the realm of the visual, the liturgical, and the architectural. *Pearl* is a work of ecclesiastical architecture in literary form. Specifically, it is a remarkable attempt to give literary expression to the chantry movement, including its specialized architectural component. In *Pearl*, poetry becomes a reader's private New Jerusalem. The other three poems of the manuscript provide further evidence of these associations.<sup>20</sup> Taken together, this special collection of fourteenth-century alliterative poems reveals the author's immersion in the spirituality and architectural environment of the chantry movement, drawing yet another area of human endeavor into the medieval world of architecture, allegory, and revelation.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The fourteenth-century alliterative poem *St. Erkenwald* (British Library MS. Harley 2250 fols 72v–25v) also demonstrates close association with the chantry movement. I include discussion of the poem in Chapter Six.

<sup>21</sup> My study of the chantry movement, its manifestation at Tewkesbury Abbey and in the literary art of the *Pearl* poet, uncovers specific political contexts that helped shape late medieval apocalyptic eschatology in England. In a recent article, I provide evidence that links the author of *Pearl* with the Despencers of Tewkesbury Abbey and with the court of Richard II, placing this poet and at

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### Architecture and Allegory: Vitruvius, Virgil, and Bede

The complex relations between medieval architecture, allegory, and revelation may be usefully introduced by the writings of two Romans of classical antiquity and by the exegesis of Bede, the eighth-century Northumbrian monk and scholar, on the sacred architecture of the Hebrew Bible. The Roman authors, both motivated by the leadership of Augustus (63 BCE–14 CE), produced texts that have become fundamental to our historical understanding of architecture and allegory: Vitruvius' *De architectura* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Bede's commentaries on the Mosaic Tabernacle (Exodus 25–40) and Solomon's Temple (I Kings 5–8) initiated a rich medieval tradition of allegorical interpretations of the ancient Hebrew structures. When examined together, these writings of Vitruvius, Virgil, and Bede provide a conceptual way of entry into a vast and complex cultural achievement: the architectural approach to divine revelation in the medieval west.

#### *The Roman Authors*

After Octavian defeated Marc Antony at Actium in 31 BCE, the victorious *princeps*, soon to take the sacral title of Augustus, engaged the talents and ambitions of artists and public officials to restore Rome politically and culturally. During the subsequent period of Roman peace, restoration, and creativity – a period historians refer to as the *Pax Augusta* (or *Pax Romana*) – Octavian sought to create a new world order. He wished to show the Roman Empire that peace and prosperity were the hallmarks of his reign, not civil wars, which had plagued the Roman world for more than two decades. Among the most powerful means Octavian used to convey these ideas were the public arts of architecture and literature.<sup>22</sup>

Vitruvius (born c. 80/70 BCE) wrote his treatise *De architectura libri decem* (*Ten Books On Architecture*) during the first decade of the *Pax Augusta* (c. 30–20 BCE).<sup>23</sup> He had been a staff architect under Octavian's adoptive father, Julius Caesar, and under Octavian, Vitruvius received a *commoda*, or stipend, which allowed him time to study and write. His completion of *De architectura*, which he dedicated to Octavian, may have helped secure him a position as an architect on the *cura aquarum*, the system of

least one of the alliterative masterpieces of the late English Middle Ages more firmly in a specific social and political context. See Ann R. Meyer, "The Despensers and the *Gawain* Poet: A Gloucestershire Link to the Alliterative Master of the Northwest Midlands," *Chaucer Review* 35 (2001): 413–429.

<sup>22</sup> P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. A. Shapiro (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1988), esp. ch. 3; D. Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 110–111.

<sup>23</sup> Frank Granger, ed. and trans., *Vitruvius On Architecture*, 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library 25 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1970). For the most recent translation, see Ingrid D. Rowland, *Vitruvius: Ten Books on Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

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Roman aqueducts.<sup>24</sup> In his preface to Book IV, Vitruvius takes fond credit for being the first author to set out (*producere*) in a systematic, coherent way the discipline of architecture “in its full order” (*disciplinae corpus ad perfectam ordinationem*). It remains the only complete treatise on architecture that survives from classical antiquity.

Vitruvius’ work, perhaps conservative in its architectural vision compared with the forms that emerged in the subsequent century, is a foundation text for a scholarly understanding of architectural history in the western world.<sup>25</sup> Its influence in classical antiquity and the Middle Ages was limited, but according to one architectural historian, a judgment that reflects scholarly consensus, “the whole literature on architectural theory from the Renaissance onwards has been based on Vitruvius or on a dialogue with his ideas.”<sup>26</sup>

The vibrant political and cultural environment in which Vitruvius worked also witnessed the great flowering of Augustan poetry, whose chief representative is Virgil (70–19 BCE). According to one familiar tradition of interpretation, Virgil’s epic poem, the *Aeneid*, is a literary monument to the glory and promise of Rome’s rebirth under Octavian’s leadership. In Book VI Aeneas, led by the Sybil-prophetess at Cumae and with golden bough in hand, journeys to the underworld, to the world of the dead and yet unborn. He meets the shade of his father, Anchises, who shows him the Elysian fields, a place of peace enveloped with its own light and reserved for souls judged to have lived virtuously on earth. Anchises reveals to Aeneas the spiritual composition of the universe and the progress of human souls from death through purgation to rebirth. These mysteries are disclosed to Aeneas through images specific to his identity and to the nation he is to found. He views a pageant of Roman heroes – his own descendants – and learns of the divinely ordained destiny of Rome to rule the world. In Virgil’s poetry, the golden age of Augustus is one of the most formidable glories of that destiny:

Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,  
Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet  
Saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva  
Saturno quondam, super et Garamantas et Indos  
Proferet imperium; jacet extra sidera tellus,  
Extra anni solisque vias, ubi caelifer Atlas  
Axem umero torrquet stellis ardentibus aptum. (791–97)

<sup>24</sup> L. Callebaut, ed., *Vitruve de l’Architecture* (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1973), ix–x.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Rowland, 11–13 and Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory From Vitruvius to the Present*, trans. Ronald Taylor, Elsie Callander and Antony Wood (New York: Princeton Architectural P, 1994), 20–29. Kruft’s work was originally published under the title *Geschichte der Architekturtheorie: Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1985).

<sup>26</sup> Kruft points out that one plausible example of Vitruvian influence on a medieval building is the Ottonian architecture of St Michael’s, Holdesheim (31).

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[This, this is the man, whom often you hear is to be promised to you, Augustus Caesar, the offspring of a god, who again shall build up the golden age in Latium, through lands once ruled by Saturn, and shall extend his empire over the Garamantes and Indians; their land lies beyond the stars, beyond the yearly course of the sun, where heaven-bearing Atlas on his shoulder turns the heavens studded with burning stars.]<sup>27</sup>

Book VI of the *Aeneid*, the pivotal center of the poem, is a book of prophecy and revelation where the mysteries of life, death, and rebirth are unveiled to Aeneas. Whereas his time of love with Dido, Queen of Carthage, is a time so heightened by unseen forces that the advance of human civilization is suspended, Aeneas' journey to the underworld is a moment out of time when a beloved father discloses to his son the meaning of past, present, and future.

Coinciding with the *Pax Augusta* in Rome was another revealed prophecy: the birth of Christ in Judea (7–6 BCE).<sup>28</sup> Medieval Christians in the west viewed this historical correlation not as mere coincidence but as a sign of divine Providence. Their allegiance to papal Rome found justification in the view that the *princeps* of the Christian church was the rightful, corrective successor to the ancient Roman emperors. Further, the extraordinary influence that Virgil's poetry had on medieval literature was a result, in part, of the historical association between the *Pax Augusta* and the birth of Christ. In his *Fourth Eclogue*, Virgil wrote verses that foretell the birth of a male child – a leader and savior. Medieval Christians interpreted these verses as a prophecy of Christ's birth. Hence, the medieval west embraced the pagan Virgil as a prophet in the Hebrew tradition, setting him in company with David and Isaiah.<sup>29</sup>

To defend Virgil's poetry against its own pagan roots, medieval Christians applied to it the same interpretive methods they used to read the Hebrew Bible. Allegory transformed Hebrew scripture into the Christian Old Testament, a preparation for the fulfillment of the Old Law through Christ and his Church. Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue* and the *Aeneid* thus became among the most frequently allegorized works of secular literature in the Middle Ages. While the eclogue was interpreted as a prophecy of Christ's coming, medieval commentaries interpret Aeneas' journey from Troy to Italy as an allegory of the soul's ascent to divine truth.<sup>30</sup> In the fourteenth century, Dante bestowed

<sup>27</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>28</sup> In the sixth century a Roman monk known as "Dennis the Short" calculated the birth of Christ to have occurred in 754 of the Roman era (*ab urbe condita* [AUC] "from the founding of the city" of Rome), which is generally fixed in terms of the Christian era at 753 BCE. Dennis' estimate has been proven to be inaccurate; modern scholars set the birth date of Jesus at about 6 BCE). See, for example, the article, "Reckoning Time," *The New English Bible* (New York: Oxford UP, 1976), 35–37.

<sup>29</sup> Domenico Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, trans. E. F. M. Benecke (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997), I, ch. VII, esp. pp. 102–3.

<sup>30</sup> Bernardus Silvestris and Fulgentius produced two of the major medieval commentaries in this tradition. See *The Commentary on the First Six Books of the "Aeneid" of Vergil Commonly Attrib-*

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