

Bede's de tabernaculo and de templo

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Abstract

The Temple of Solomon is the most frequently mentioned building in the Bible. The dimensions, a description of the overall plan and the artefacts of the Temple, are described in 1 Kings 6-8 and Ezekiel 40-42. However, the architectural plan and design of the features of the Temple are a forgotten memory that has been the subject of much speculation. Not a single stone or any contemporary image that can be identified with the Temple of Solomon has survived. However, this has not prevented the Temple from being one of the most important and influential buildings, in both philosophical and physical manifestations, throughout time. In 1 Corinthians, Paul of Tarsus claimed that he was like a master-builder laying the foundations of the temple of God; this temple was built of faithful souls. Paul turned away from a physical temple to the congregation and the spiritual temple. Solomon's Temple and Paul's master builder analogy become a powerful and enduring temple metaphor in Christian writings. Bede's *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo* reflect this tradition by claiming that the building of the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple signified one and the same Church of Christ. This paper explores Bede's vision of Solomon's Temple, the building and the metaphor.

The Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon

The plans of the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon are described in Exodus 25-27, King 6-8 and Ezekiel 40-43. The Tabernacle of Moses was a portable shrine in a nomadic tent that served as a temple of God among the exiled Israelites during their years of wandering in the wilderness. In Exodus 25-27 its architectural features and its contents are described in detail. It was erected for the last time when the Israelites settled in the land of Canaan and was eventually replaced by the Temple of King Solomon. After the erection of the Temple, the Tabernacle was not mentioned again in the Bible. However, its architectural features evolved into a strong symbolic architecture of exile through the ages.¹ The Tabernacle became linked with the history of the Temple of Solomon as its predecessor both spiritually and architecturally.

The Temple of Solomon is the most frequently mentioned building in the Bible: it is mentioned in 23 out of the 39 books in the Hebrew Scriptures and in 11 out of 27 books in the Christian Scriptures. Biblical scholars claim that Solomon reigned for 40 years, and the date given for the building of the Temple of Solomon is 959 BCE.² The destruction of the

¹ S Tigerman, *The Architecture of Exile* (New York, 1988).

² A Parrot, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, trans B E Hooke (London, 1957) 12.

main temple of Jerusalem by the Assyrians has been dated to 586 BCE, and tradition has it that this was Solomon's Temple.³

The Temple is thought to have been located a little lower than the surrounding hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built. It was opposite the Mount of Olives, and its remains would now be beneath The Mosque of Omar: the Dome of the Rock.⁴ However, not a single stone survives that can be identified as Solomon's Temple, nor does any contemporary image of the Temple survive. Excavators of significant archaeological sites that have been traditionally associated with Solomon at Megiddo, Gasor and Hazor have dated the sites to the ninth century, in the (Biblical) time of Ahab, 100 years after the reign of King Solomon.⁵ At an excavation at Tel Batash by archaeologist Amihai Mazar, a palace has been uncovered that has been dated to the tenth century BCE.⁶ However, that palace is exceptionally small and would not have been the palace of a glorious ruler and most certainly not the palace of a ruler who could have afforded the grandeur of the Temple described in I Kings and Ezekiel.

The destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and the forced enslavement and migration of the Israelites to Assyria had devastating consequences both politically and socially for the Israelites, and the image of the Temple came to symbolise the people of Israel.⁷ In 538 BCE, a decree was signed permitting all those who so desired to return to Palestine.⁸ Two other temples were subsequently built on the same (or what is considered to be the same) site.⁹ According to the Bible, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah began to rebuild the Temple,¹⁰ and it was completed in 515 BCE.¹¹ Little is known of this second Temple with the exception of the dimensions, which were 60 cubits in length and 60 cubits in height,¹² and that it no longer contained the Ark of the Covenant. This second

³ Parrot, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 56; L Waterman, 'The damaged "blueprints" of the Temple of Solomon', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 2/4 (1943) 212-298, at p 284.

⁴ G A Barton, 'The Jerusalem of David and Solomon', *The Biblical World* 22/1 (1903) 8-22, at p 16; R Ousterhout, 'The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior', *Gesta* 29/1 (1990) 44-53, at p 49; C W Votaw, 'The Temple at Jerusalem in Jesus' Day', *The Biblical World* 23/3 (1904) 169-179, at p 171.

⁵ B Halpern, I Finkelstein and D Ussiskkin, *Megiddo III, Set: The 1992-1996 Season* (Tel Aviv, 2000).

⁶ A Mazar, *Excavations (Tel Batash) I: Stratigraphy and Architecture* (Jerusalem, 1997).

⁷ H Rosenau, *Vision of the Temple* (London, 1979).

⁸ Parrot, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 70.

⁹ Parrot, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 70.

¹⁰ Ezra 5:1-2, Haggai 1:14-19.

¹¹ Ezra 6:15.

¹² Ezra 6:3.

Temple was besieged by Pompey's troops in 63 BCE, but it was not looted or destroyed. It was in a bad state of repair and was torn down in 20-19 BCE when King Herod built a further Temple.¹³ Accounts of Herod's Temple are in Josephus's *Antiquities* XV.2 and *Wars of the Jews* V.5.¹⁴ The area occupied by Herod's temple enclosure was approximately 35 acres,¹⁵ which was a substantial increase compared with the estimated area of the enclosure of Solomon's Temple of eight acres.¹⁶ According to Josephus,¹⁷ Herod had doubled the area that the second Temple had occupied. In 70 CE, after a general insurrection in Palestine, the emperor Titus caused this third Temple to be destroyed by fire, and now only that part known as the Wailing Wall remains. The Herodian Temple, and the remains of the previous temples, stood on the site which is now occupied by the seventh-century Mosque of Omar: the Dome of the Rock.¹⁸ This renders any excavation of the site extremely unlikely. Thus, any suggestion of archaeological proof of the existence of Solomon's Temple must remain speculative.

However, a significant body of philosophy, architecture and art has been based on speculative conclusions regarding the Temple. The Temple possessed a unique authority over architecture as well as the theological minds of both the Jewish and Christian worlds until at least the nineteenth century. In the Christian tradition writers such as Augustine have perceived Solomon's Temple to be not only an earthly Temple of divine proportions but also a symbol of the Temple in heaven having the same proportions.¹⁹ Abelard, a pupil of Thierry, compared the New Jerusalem described in the Revelation of John to the temple precinct of Solomon as God's regal palace: this analogy is found in the apocryphal Book of Wisdom 9:8. Abelard claimed that the Temple of Solomon was permeated by the divine harmonies in ways that reflected the celestial sphere.²⁰

The seventeenth century in England was an era of religious turmoil, civil and international war, plague and catastrophes such as the 1666 fire of London. Attempts to justify and explain what appeared to be an apocalyptic era (not helped by the number of the year of the fire) led to a strange

¹³ Parrot, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 78.

¹⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities and Wars of the Jews* trans W Whiston, *Josephus: Complete Works* (Grand Rapids, 1960).

¹⁵ Votaw, 'The Temple at Jerusalem in Jesus' Day', 174.

¹⁶ Barton, 'The Jerusalem of David and Solomon', 16

¹⁷ Josephus, *Wars* I, xxi.

¹⁸ Votaw, 'The Temple at Jerusalem in Jesus' Day', 171; Ousterhout, 'The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior', 49; Barton, 'The Jerusalem of David and Solomon', 16.

¹⁹ Augustine, *The City of God* ed and trans H S Bettenson (Harmondsworth, 1972) 17.3, 17.20, 18.45, 18.48, 21.26.

²⁰ P Abelard, *Theologia Christiana* II.384 trans V Cousin (Paris, 1859).

mixture of religious zeal and scientific discovery. In John Bunyan's *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized*, the architecture of the Temple was attributed to pure divine inspiration.²¹ Christopher Wren was interested in the physical properties and the technical requirements of the construction of the Temple of Solomon.²² Nicholas Hawksmoor had made an intense study of the Temple, producing several reproductions that he believed revealed its ethereal qualities and architectural purity.²³ The physical dimensions and building of Solomon's Temple were supposed to be where the Egyptian secrets of geometry had first been taught to masons. This became part of the lore of the Freemasons Society, with the first lodge being established in London in 1717.²⁴ Isaac Newton believed that Solomon's Temple was a divine inspiration and he perceived it as the blueprint of the universe. He thought that through undertaking fundamental mathematical calculations on the Temple it would be possible to understand the universe and the mind of God, as encoded in the architecture of the Temple.²⁵ This continuous chain of ideas through time, often resulting in different manifestations, stems from an ancient architectural description of a temple. Some of the links in this chain have been more significant than others. Bede's *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo* are two of the most enduring and influential books in this chain of ideas surrounding the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Solomon and they played key roles in the Christian appropriation of Jewish tradition. Bede used the construction of the Temple as a metaphor for the Universal Christian church. Yet unlike later tradition where this metaphor extends to other churches,²⁶ Bede only used this metaphor in relation to the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon.

De Tabernaculo and De Templo

De Tabernaculo is considered to have been written in the period 721-725,²⁷ while its companion *De Templo* was written in the period 729-

²¹ J Bunyan, *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized* ed G Midgley, *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan* (Oxford, 1989).

²² C Wren, *Parentalia: Memoirs of the Family of the Wrens* (London, 1750).

²³ V Hart, *Nicholas Hawksmoor: Rebuilding Ancient Wonders* (New Haven, 2002).

²⁴ S Knight, *The Brotherhood: The Secret World of the Freemasons* (London, 1984) 22.

²⁵ I Newton, *Prolegomena ad Lexici Propheticum partem secundam in quibus agitur De forma Sanctuarii Judaici* (c1680) Babson College Massachusetts MS 0434.

²⁶ C Perrault, 'Unknown Designs for the "Temple of Jerusalem"' 143-157 in D Fraser and M J Lewine, *Essays Presented to Rudolf Wittkower* (London and New York, 1969).

²⁷ A G Holder, 'Introduction' xv-xxvi in A G Holder (ed), *Bede: On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool, 1994) xvi.

731.²⁸ In a brief autobiographical note in *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, Bede claimed that

I have spent all my life in this monastery, applying myself entirely to the study of the Scriptures; ... it has always been my delight to learn or to teach or to write ... I have made it my business, for my own benefit and that of my brothers, to make brief extracts from the works of the venerable fathers on the holy Scriptures, or to add notes of my own to clarify their sense and interpretation.²⁹

It would follow that Bede's purpose in writing scriptural exegesis such as *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo* was his own edification and that of his brothers. He carefully executed a verse-by-verse commentary on the Biblical texts of Exodus and Kings, which is largely composed of descriptions of architectural detail of the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Solomon. Every architectural feature, the measurements, the objects and the building material were examined in a systematic manner. To Bede, the plan and features of the Tabernacle and the Temple created a harmonious and balanced whole, which were an allegory of the Christian church.

Although both the sanctuaries were allegorical of the Christian church, Bede drew a notable distinction between them. He designated the Tabernacle the building of the present church, since it was built in the wilderness when the Israelites were on the road to the promised land, while he designated the Temple the repose of the future church, because it was built after the Israelites had taken possession of the promised land and the kingship of that land had been established. The Temple was to be interpreted as a 'vision of peace'.³⁰ For Bede, the difference in the features of the sanctuaries could be generalised as follows.

The workmanship of the tabernacle is the time of the synagogue (that is, of the ancient people of God), but the workmanship of the temple signifies the church (that is that multitude of elect which has come to faith after the Lord's incarnation). For Moses completed the tabernacle with the people of the Hebrews alone, but Solomon finished [building] the temple with a multitude of proselytes gathered

²⁸ J O'Reilly, 'Introduction' xvii-lv in *Bede: On the Temple* trans S Connolly (Liverpool, 1995) at p xvii.

²⁹ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* trans translator *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1994) Chapter 24.

³⁰ Bede, *De Tabernaculo* trans A G Holder, *On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool, 1994) 2.1.42.

together, and also with the help of the king of Tyre and his artisans, who were Jews neither by birth nor by profession.³¹

The building of the two sanctuaries represents different stages of the whole church, which continued to be built from the beginning of creation to the end of the world. They also depicted 'the glory of the life to come'.³²

Bede's Tabernacle and Temple of Solomon

The best-known image of the Tabernacle is from the Codex Amiatinus, dated c 715.³³ It was produced at Bede's monastery at Jarrow and is thought to have been modelled upon a no longer extant Italian manuscript, Codex Grandior, which was made at Cassiodorus's monastery at Vivarium.³⁴ Bede mentioned this image of the Tabernacle from Codex Grandior in the second book of *De Tabernaculo*.³⁵ The image of the Tabernacle (figure 1) shows the floor plan of the Tabernacle and its precinct. There are two chambers to the Tabernacle; the outer chamber contained the altar of incense, a seven branched lamp stand and the table for the shewbread. In the inner chamber was the Holy of Holies: here stood the Ark of the Covenant. Outside the entrance of the Tabernacle was the bronze laver for the priests to wash themselves. Next to the laver is the altar of burnt offerings. Below this altar are the names of Moses and Aaron. On the three sides of the Tabernacle are the names of the sons of Levi: Cath, Gerson and Merari. Finally, surrounding the precinct is a colonnaded wall with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, three on the outside of each wall. Bede also mentioned an image of Solomon's Temple from the same codex.³⁶ Unfortunately no copy survives, but presumably it was a floor plan of the same style. Yet despite defining all of the features of both sanctuaries in *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo* Bede described no overall floor plan for the Tabernacle or the Temple.

In fact, Bede did not describe any geographical position for the Tabernacle. He only described its architectural features together with the objects it contained. The Temple is vaguely located on Mount Moriah, the mountain of vision.³⁷ There is no description of surroundings or precincts for either of the sanctuaries, which leaves them cut off and isolated from the community. Bede's number symbolism and allegorical interpretation does not contain any factual material or literal interpretation. Neither the

³¹ Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 2.1.42-43.

³² Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 2.1.43.

³³ M Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Mediation, Rhetoric, and the Imaging of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge, 2000) plate 24: Codex Amiatinus, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana MS Amiatinus I folios IIV-III.

³⁴ Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 234.

³⁵ Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 2.12.

³⁶ Bede, *De Templo* trans S Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple* (Liverpool, 1995) 17.2.

³⁷ Bede, *De Templo* 5.3.

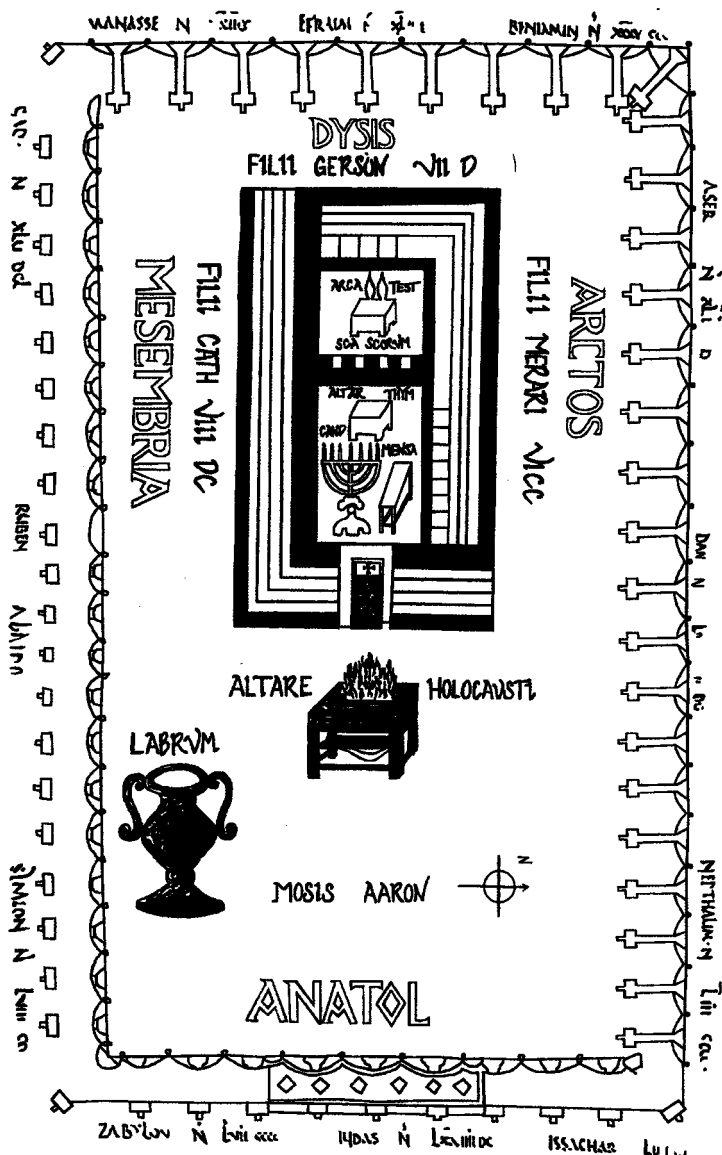


Figure 1: Floor Plan of the Tabernacle from the Codex Amiatinus, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana MS Amiatinus I, ff IIv-III, dated c715³⁸

³⁸ after Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, Plate 24.

Tabernacle nor the Temple is as a tent and a building but rather they are a series of symbolic metaphors that add to Bede's scriptural exegesis as allegories of the universal Christian church. Bede appropriated Jewish tradition and Christianised the interpretation of the Tabernacle and the Temple. To him they were no longer Jewish houses of worship full of Jewish ritual objects; they had become metaphors that created the allegory of Christianity's present and future.

Bede did not refer to Jewish rituals or uses of the objects in the sanctuaries: all Jewish ritual objects and architectural features are explained in terms of Christian symbolism. For example, the table of shewbread in the outer chamber of the Tabernacle and the Temple is rich in Jewish ritual and symbolism: on the table the priests displayed twelve fresh loaves or cakes daily, one for each of the twelve traditional Hebrew tribes.³⁹ But, for Bede, the table is the sacred scripture composed of the words and deeds of the holy fathers.⁴⁰ The twelve loaves on the table represent the twelve apostles.⁴¹ In the scriptural text, the table has four golden rings so that it can be carried by two poles. For Bede, the four rings were the four books of the gospel⁴² and the poles were to assist in the interpretation of the scriptures.⁴³

Bede referred to Josephus, not always by name, nine times in *De Tabernaculo*⁴⁴ and four times in *De Templo*.⁴⁵ He called Josephus a 'Jewish man of priestly descent, most excellent in ability and most learned in literature secular and divine'.⁴⁶ Bede referred to Josephus to clarify points of Jewish custom and ritual, or to confirm measurements. However, he used this clarification to add to his Christian analogy, thereby using Josephus's writings to justify his Christian appropriation of Jewish tradition. Josephus is consulted on the measurements of the Ark of the Covenant and the sacred cubit, which he designated to be the span of two hands. Bede took this to confirm that the

length of the ark suggests the long-suffering patience with which our Lord and redeemer lived among humankind; its width suggests the amplitude of that love with which He was willing to come to us and dwell among us; its height

³⁹ P L Garber, 'Reconstructing Solomon's Temple', *The Biblical Archaeologist* XIV/1 (1951) 12.

⁴⁰ Bede, *De Templo* 22.4; Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 1.6.21.

⁴¹ Bede, *De Templo* 22.4.

⁴² Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 1.6.24.

⁴³ Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 1.6.24..

⁴⁴ Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 1.4.13; 1.7.28; 2.1.43; 2.2.47; 2.6.63; 2.6.65; 2.8.71; 3.8.117 and 3.8.118.

⁴⁵ Bede, *De Templo* 4.6; 6.2; 8.2 and 17.1.

⁴⁶ Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 1.4.13.

suggests the hope of future sublimity, in which He foresaw either that He Himself would be glorified after His passion or that we shall be glorified.⁴⁷

However, it was through the construction and the measurements of the Temple that Bede was able to glorify Christian ideals. Although the Temple is described in both I Kings and Ezekiel, in Ezekiel the description is of a dream of the Temple. Bede does not refer to the passages of Ezekiel, preferring the description in I Kings. In I Kings 5-7 the Temple of Solomon's measurements, internal fittings, decoration and ritual objects are described in detail. The internal measurements were 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits in height.⁴⁸ The portico was 20 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and ten cubits deep.⁴⁹ The Temple had three floors and there were chambers around the sides and back of the Temple. The top floor chamber was five cubits broad, the middle floor was six cubits broad and the bottom floor was seven cubits,⁵⁰ thus the exterior walls sloped inwards. The interior had a similar floor plan to the Tabernacle. It had two chambers. The first chamber was 20 cubits wide, 40 cubits long and 30 cubits in height.⁵¹ The Holy of Holies that housed the Ark of the Covenant was in the shape of a cube, its height, width and length all 20 cubits⁵² and it was clearly elevated from the first chamber.

De Templo gives a verse-by-verse commentary on I Kings 5-6. However, Bede also included the description of the Temple in the apocryphal Books of Paralipomenon, relying on Josephus regarding the measurements of the Temple. II Paralipomenon does parallel many of the measurements of Kings but there is an occasional discrepancy. According to I Kings the height of the Temple is 30 cubits: this is generally taken to be the internal height. II Paralipomenon claimed that the external height was 120 cubits.⁵³ Bede corrected what would appear to be a massive inconsistency by explaining that the 30 cubits of Kings only reaches the middle storey externally and that according to Josephus's account the Temple roof was another 60 cubits.⁵⁴ Thus, Bede claimed that the total of the three floors and the height of the roof clearly were as II Paralipomenon

⁴⁷ Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 1.4.14.

⁴⁸ I Kings 6.2. The cubit is generally thought to be 18 inches or 45.72cm: W S Caldecott, *Solomon's Temple: Its History and Its Structure* (London, 1908). Josephus claimed that it was two spanned hands: Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.6.5).

⁴⁹ I Kings, 6.3.

⁵⁰ I Kings, 6.5-6.

⁵¹ I Kings, 6.17.

⁵² I King, 6.20.

⁵³ II Paralipomenon 3.4.

⁵⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.3.2.

stated – 120 cubits.⁵⁵ There are other minor inconsistencies between the accounts of Kings and Paralipomenon, but Bede adeptly converts them into consistencies.⁵⁶

In *De Tabernaculo* there is no description of the building of the Tabernacle. Bede's verse-by-verse commentary is on Exodus 24.12-30.31, which consists of a detailed description of the plan, and of the vessels which were given to Moses directly by God.⁵⁷ Bede does not leave out a single verse in his commentary on this passage. However, in *De Tabernaculo* Bede does not concern himself with the finished Tabernacle. He never goes beyond the description of the plan, which was given by God. Consequently *De Tabernaculo* has no connection with the community that it was to eventually be built for. This contrasts with *De Templo*, where the Temple as completed is highly significant. *De Templo* begins its commentary with I Kings 5.6 where Solomon asked for help from Hiram, King of Tyre. Solomon's kingdom lacked the skilled craftsmen and materials to build a temple on the scale that he intended. Hiram would supply both the skills and materials and Jew and Gentile would work together to construct the Temple. Solomon chose 30 000 workmen who would work in Lebanon.⁵⁸ There were also 70 000 labourers, 80 000 stonemasons and 3000 overseers, with a further 300 to supervisors all of the workers.⁵⁹ Instead of the 3300 overseers and supervisors of Kings, Paralipomenon claimed that there were 3600.⁶⁰ Bede explained that the 70 000 labourers represented the sabbath, the 80 000 stonemasons represented the hope of the resurrection and the 3300 overseers and supervisors symbolised the faith in the holy Trinity. He pointed to the fact that six is a perfect number and that

the perfect works of good people are rightly wont to be symbolized by the same number and because holy Scripture teaches that we must have the works of piety as well as true faith, the overseers of the Temple works are rightly said to be three thousand and six hundred.⁶¹

Thus number symbolism is utilised to render another apparent inconsistency from II Paralipomenon consistent with I Kings.

Paralipomenon gives more information on the workmen, information which Bede was keen to utilise:

⁵⁵ Bede, *De Templo* 8.2.

⁵⁶ for another example see Bede, *De Templo*, 6.2.

⁵⁷ Exodus 25.8-9.

⁵⁸ I Kings 5.13-14.

⁵⁹ I Kings 5.15-16.

⁶⁰ II Paralipomenon 2.18.

⁶¹ Bede, *De Templo* 3.4.

And Solomon numbered (census) all the proselytes in the land of Israel, after the numbering which David his father had made and they were found a hundred and fifty-three thousand and six hundred.⁶²

According to Paralipomenon some of these proselytes were included amongst the workmen of the Temple. For Bede, the sons of Israel, the proselytes and the gentiles worked on the house of the Lord. Among the gentiles were King Hiram and his slaves who worked with Solomon's slaves together cutting timber.

Every kind of person by whom the Church was to be built had already gone before in the building of the Temple. For the Jews and proselytes and gentiles converted to the truth of the Gospel build one and the same Church of Christ whether by upright living or by teaching as well.⁶³

Bede built an image of accord and unity in a common purpose. In using II Paralipomenon 2.17 the common purpose is extended beyond Jews and gentiles. However, unlike *De Tabernaculo*, in *De Templo* the verse-by-verse commentary is selective, and Bede omitted verses from the selected passage. Verses 5.7-12 were omitted, and they state that Hiram would deliver the skills, the cedars and the firs that Solomon desired in return for a payment of food: 20 000 measures of wheat and 20 measures of pure oil every year.⁶⁴ Bede's commentary implies that Hiram was assisting in the building of the Temple for the common purpose, and not negotiating a business contract. In addition, verses 6.11-14 were omitted by Bede. In these verses God commanded that Solomon execute God's judgement and keep his commandments, for then God 'will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel'.⁶⁵ Notably the gentiles and the proselytes were not included.

The remainder of *De Templo* is a description of the Temple that was built and completed. Like *De Tabernaculo*, it is a Christian appropriation of Jewish tradition using number symbolism and Christian allegory. Bede presented the Tabernacle as a divine plan, not as a sanctuary of worship. However, the image of the Temple that he represented was very different. For Bede, Solomon's Temple was a holy sanctuary, but of prophetic meaning heralding the universal church built for a united destiny.

⁶² 2 Paralipomenon 2.17.

⁶³ Bede, *De Templo* 3.5.

⁶⁴ I Kings 5.11.

⁶⁵ I Kings 6.13.

The Temple as metaphor

Saint Paul, in a key Christian text, outlined an enduring master-builder metaphor, which permeated medieval thinking.

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 ... Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.⁶⁶

Although this metaphor builds on the Hebrew Scriptures, the Tabernacle and the erection of the Temple of Solomon remained important elements in the Christian Scriptures. They were earthly manifestations of God. Paul turns the metaphor away from a physical temple to the congregation and to the spiritual temple within.

The master-builder metaphor permeated Christian theology; scholars such as Ambrose,⁶⁷ Augustine,⁶⁸ Gregory the Great,⁶⁹ Jerome⁷⁰ and many others used this metaphor extensively. The twelfth-century theologian Hugh of Saint Victor claimed that the sacred scripture was like a building: once the masons had laid the foundations Hugh built up the walls row by row, each course carefully considered and placed.⁷¹ In *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo*, Bede built on Paul's metaphor and the work of others, in particular that of Gregory and Jerome. He used the architectural metaphor as the perfect articulation of the universal church. However, Bede did not extend this metaphor to include any Christian church buildings.

In the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede described the erection and dedication of churches in St Albans,⁷² Canterbury,⁷³ York,⁷⁴ Lastingham,⁷⁵ Lindisfarne,⁷⁶ the churches of Jerusalem⁷⁷ and Hexham.⁷⁸ Whereas the

⁶⁶ I Corinthians 3: 10-17.

⁶⁷ J O'Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: the Lucan genealogy' 344-397 in F O'Mahoney (ed), *The Book of Kells: Proceedings of a Conference at Trinity College Dublin 6-9 September 1992* (Aldershot, 1994), 355-369, 383-388.

⁶⁸ Augustine, *The City of God*, 17.20, 18.45, 18.48, 21.26.

⁶⁹ Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2 trans T Gray, *The Homilies of Gregory the Great on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Etna California, 1990).

⁷⁰ Jerome, 'De Nominibus Hebraicis' *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latinorum* 72 (1959).

⁷¹ Hugo of Saint Victor, *Didascalicon* (New York, 1991) vi, 4.

⁷² Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* 1.7.

⁷³ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* 1.33.

⁷⁴ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* 2.14.

⁷⁵ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* 3.23.

⁷⁶ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* 3.25.

⁷⁷ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* 5.16.

Tabernacle and the Temple were earthly sanctuaries, they differed from other earthly sanctuaries since their plans were God-given. These other churches were houses of Christian worship built for the glorification of God and directed and planned by humans. For Bede, they were not symbols of the image of God or of the universal church.

Many writers and artists have perceived the Christian church as an image of God. In the fourth century, Eusebius hailed the Bishop of Tyre as the second Solomon for his rebuilding of the cathedral of Tyre.⁷⁹

... one should call thee a new Bezalel the architect of a divine tabernacle, or Solomon the king of a new and far goodlier Jerusalem, or even a new Zerubbabel who bestowed upon the Temple of God that glory which greatly exceeded the former.⁸⁰

In the twelfth century, Abbot Suger of Saint Denis claimed that the light of God permeated the cathedral that he built at Saint Denis and that the upper chapel of the western bays was 'most beautiful and worthy to be the dwelling of angels'.⁸¹

In Bede's description of the churches of Jerusalem in his *De Locis Sanctis*⁸² he closely paraphrased Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis*.⁸³ However, whereas Adomnán compared the 12 hanging lamps in the holy sepulchre with the 12 apostles, Bede leaves out this description. Adomnán claimed that in the entrance on the southern side:

... according to the number of the twelve holy apostles, twelve burning lamps shine always day and night. Four of them are placed low down at the bottom of the sepulchral bed: the other eight are placed higher up above the margin towards the right-hand side.⁸⁴

For Bede:

The entrance is on the south side, where twelve lamps burn day and night, four within the sepulchre and eight above it on the right edge.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* 5.20.

⁷⁹ Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* X.iv trans. J. E. L. Oulton (London, 1949).

⁸⁰ Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* X.iv, 3.

⁸¹ S McKnight Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis: From Its Beginnings to the Death of Suger, 475-1151* (New Haven and London, 1987) 222.

⁸² Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 5.16.

⁸³ Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis* ed D Meehan (Dublin, 1958).

⁸⁴ Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis*, 47.

⁸⁵ Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 5.16.

The difference between Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis*, Bede's *De Locis Sanctis* and more particularly the metaphoric description in Bede's *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo* is striking.

Conclusion

Throughout both *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo* Bede promoted the idea that the Tabernacle and the Temple were allegorical of the present and future church respectively. Bede's Christian appropriation of Jewish tradition is completed by his references to Josephus, whom Bede used to confirm his Christian analogies. *De Tabernaculo* is the divine plan of God and although the architectural features are described in great detail, Bede appears to consider its construction irrelevant. *De Templo* finishes with Solomon's completion of the Temple: the construction and descriptions of the architectural features constitute the entire book. The only community of the Temple, according to Bede, was the unity of the Temple workers, the Jews, the gentiles and the proselytes, working towards the common goal of the universal church. His selective cutting of text from the scriptural sources he used assisted in this view of unity. There was no selective cutting of text in the scriptural source used in *De Tabernaculo*.

Of the three textual cuts in the passage used in *De Templo*, the first cut relates to the payment given to Hiram for building the Temple,⁸⁶ the second cut removes text that says that the Temple was exclusively for the people of Israel,⁸⁷ and the third cut refers to the construction of Solomon's own house.⁸⁸ The latter has no relevance to the Temple, but the two former texts were both highly relevant to the analogy of construction of the Temple. Their exclusion gives a clearly distorted view and their inclusion would have rendered Bede's analogies unconvincing.

In *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo*, all numbers of objects or measurements are explained in terms of number symbolism. Numbers such as four, eight and 12 are representative of the gospels, the resurrection and the apostles respectively. Yet when the same numbers are associated with the holy sepulchre they are the mere number of lamps and have no metaphoric qualities. In *De Templo*, the Temple as metaphor permeates the entire book: there are no church buildings mentioned. The Temple is purely a metaphor for the universal church, whilst in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* the church buildings have no metaphoric qualities. The Temple as metaphor is clearly restricted to Bede's scriptural exegesis and not to the building of Christian churches.

Bede's *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo* built on existing texts and became an important part of a chain of thought and writings that drew on

⁸⁶ 1 Kings 5.7-12.

⁸⁷ 1 Kings 6.11-14.

⁸⁸ 1 Kings 7.1-12.

representations of the Temple of Solomon. As a house of worship, and later as a metaphor, the Temple of Solomon, it has been one of the most important and influential buildings in the western historical tradition.