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## **Bede, Iconoclasm and the Temple of Solomon\***

### Abstract:

In Bede's lifetime (c. 673–735) the churches at Wearmouth-Jarrow were richly decorated with panel paintings from Rome. This essay examines the significance that those paintings held for Bede and his community, and it reveals the strategies that Bede employed to defend them in his commentary on the Temple of Solomon (*De templo*), which was written after images had become a contentious issue in Byzantium during the reign of Emperor Leo III (714–741). This has important implications for our understanding of Bede's place in the intellectual landscape of early-eighth-century Europe and it shows the ambitious nature and topical relevance of his mature exegetical programme.

### I. The Wearmouth-Jarrow artistic scheme

At the age of seven, Bede was entrusted by his kinsmen to the monastery of St Peter and St Paul at Wearmouth and Jarrow and he remained there until his death in May 735.<sup>1</sup> Bede was ordained priest aged 30 in c. 703, but did not advance any further in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Unburdened by the extra responsibilities that would have come

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<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (hereinafter cited as HE) V.24, ed. M. Lapidge and trans. P. Chiesa, *Storia Degli Inglesi (Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum)*, 2 vols (Rome; Milan, 2008–2010).

with promotion to abbot or bishop,<sup>2</sup> he appears not to have travelled very far or very often.<sup>3</sup> In their lifetimes Benedict Biscop (the founder and first abbot of Wearmouth) and Ceolfrith (the first abbot of Jarrow who also became abbot of Wearmouth upon the death of Benedict) established the monastery as one of the leading cultural and educational centres in Western Europe.<sup>4</sup> In the early eighth century Wearmouth-Jarrow housed a workshop for manufacturing coloured glass,<sup>5</sup> a productive scriptorium,<sup>6</sup> and a library unrivalled anywhere in Anglo-Saxon England for its collection of biblical and patristic texts.<sup>7</sup> The church buildings at Wearmouth and Jarrow were constructed 'in the

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<sup>2</sup> Bede expected bishops to travel frequently throughout their diocese, as his letter of November 734 to Egbert of York makes clear: *Epistula ad Egbertum 1*, ed. C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1896), I, pp. 405–23.

<sup>3</sup> Bede occasionally visited other monasteries for the purposes of study: *Epistula ad Egbertum 7*; *Epistula ad Wicthedum de paschae celebratione 1*, lines 3–9, ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C (Turnhout, 1980), pp. 635–42; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II I.13*, lines 93–7, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955).

<sup>4</sup> On the life and career of Benedict Biscop see: P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), pp. 141–69; E. Fletcher, *Benedict Biscop* (Jarrow Lecture, 1981), reprinted in M. Lapidge, ed., *Bede and His World: The Jarrow Lectures 1958–1993*, 2 vols (Aldershot, 1994), II, pp. 539–54. On Ceolfrith: I.N. Wood, *The Most Holy Abbot Ceolfrid* (Jarrow Lecture, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> R. Cramp, 'The Anglo-Saxon Window Glass', in R. Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow monastic sites*, 2 vols (Swindon, 2005–2006), II, pp. 56–155; L. Webster and S. Mills, 'Window Glass (Reconstruction)', in L. Webster and J. Backhouse (eds), *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600–900* (London, 1991), pp. 138–9.

<sup>6</sup> M.B. Parkes, *The Scriptorium of Wearmouth Jarrow* (Jarrow Lecture, 1982), reprinted in Lapidge, ed. *Bede and His World*, II, pp. 555–86.

<sup>7</sup> M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 34–7, 191–228.

Roman manner' by stonemasons (*cementarii*) imported from Gaul and dedicated to the optimal Roman saints Peter, Paul and the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>8</sup>

Bede's *Uita beatorum abbatum Benedicti, Ceolfridi, Eosterwini, Sigfridi et Hwaetberti*, an account of the foundation and early history of the monastery at Wearmouth and Jarrow, describes how Benedict made several journeys overseas to acquire spiritual treasures for the monastery, including: sacred vessels, liturgical vestments, fine textiles, relics, books and works of art.<sup>9</sup> Some of these items were obtained in Gaul, but those that could not be acquired there were sourced directly from Rome. The other great centres of Roman Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England at this time, St Peter and St Paul's Canterbury and the Wilfridian foundations at Ripon and Hexham, were similarly adorned with lavish luxury items.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> On the construction of the Wearmouth-Jarrow buildings *iuxta Romanorum morem* and the Frankish stone masons, see: Bede, *Uita beatorum abbatum Benedicti, Ceolfridi, Eosterwini, Sigfridi et Hwaetberti* (hereinafter cited as UBA) 5, ed. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, I, pp. 364–87. Bede mentions the existence of a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary at Wearmouth in UBA 9 and 17; the latter chapter also reveals that the Wearmouth site had an oratory for the blessed martyr Lawrence, another dedication with overtly Romanizing connotations.

<sup>9</sup> UBA 1–7, 9. Benedict made six journeys to Rome in his lifetime, five from Britain and one from Lérins, the Frankish monastery where he received the tonsure and took his monastic vows (UBA 2). See further: Bede, *Homiliarum euangelii libri II* I.13; Anonymous of Wearmouth-Jarrow, *Uita sanctissimi Ceolfridi abbatis* 9, 12, 13, 15, ed. Plummer, *Opera Historica*, I, pp. 388–404.

<sup>10</sup> The material splendour of the Wilfridian centres is described in grandiloquent detail in Stephen of Ripon's *Vita S. Wilfridi* chapters 17 and 22, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927), cf. HE V.20. The furnishings of the church dedicated to SS Peter and Paul at Canterbury are less well attested, but Bede records that it was enriched with various gifts (*diuersis donis*) from King Æthelberht soon after it was built: HE I.33.

Benedict made his fifth visit to Rome (his fourth from Britain) approximately five years after the foundation of Wearmouth in 674. In addition to books, relics and a letter of privilege for the monastery from Pope Agatho, Benedict brought the archicantor of St Peter's in Rome back to Wearmouth with him so that the nascent community could be instructed in contemporary Roman liturgical practices.<sup>11</sup> Benedict also acquired several sets of paintings to adorn the walls of St Peter's Church. These are described in the following terms by Bede:

Fifth, he brought with him paintings (picturas) of holy images to decorate the church of the blessed apostle Peter which he had built: there was an image (imaginem) of Mary, the blessed mother of God and virgin forever, together with the twelve apostles, with which he encircled the apse of the same church; the painted board stretched from one wall to the other. There were images (imagines) of the gospel stories with which he adorned the south wall of the church, and images (imagines) of the visions of the apocalypse of the blessed John with which he similarly decorated the north wall. His aim was that all who came into the church, even those who did not know how to read, should always gaze on the lovely sight of Christ and his saints wherever they looked, albeit in a picture (in imagine); they should either recall with a keener mind the grace of the Lord's Incarnation, or remember to examine themselves more closely, seeing the decisive nature of the Last Judgement as though they had it before their very eyes.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> UBA 6 (see also: *Homiliarum euangelii libri II* l.13, lines 128–38; HE IV.16). John served as Pope Agatho's representative at the council of Hatfield in 679, a preparatory meeting for the sixth ecumenical council where the Anglo-Saxon Church formally repudiated the Monothelete heresy. See further É. Ó Carragáin, *The City of Rome and the World of Bede* (Jarrow Lecture, 1994), pp. 15–19.

<sup>12</sup> UBA 6: 'Quintum picturas imaginum sanctarum quas ad ornandam ecclesiam beati Petri apostoli, quam construxerat, detulit: imaginem uidelicet beatae Dei genetricis semperque uirginis Mariae, simul et duodecim apostolorum, quibus eiusdem ecclesiae testudinem ducto a pariete ad parietem tabulato praecingeret; imagines euangelicae historiae quibus australem ecclesiae parietem decoraret; imagines uisionum apocalipsis beati Iohannis, quibus septentrionalem aequae parietem ornaret, quatinus intrantes

St Peter's Church at Wearmouth was a tall and narrow structure, and so the sets of images on the opposing longitudinal walls of the building would have had the effect of surrounding and enclosing the congregation.<sup>13</sup> The acquisition of these paintings would have been more or less contemporaneous with Bede's entry to the monastery as a seven year old boy in c. 680.

Another batch of pictures was subsequently purchased on Benedict's last visit to Rome; some of these were used to decorate the walls of the church dedicated to the Virgin Mary at Wearmouth and the rest were displayed at Jarrow:

On this occasion he brought the pictures (*picturas*) of the story of the Lord with which he could decorate the church of the blessed mother of God which he had built at the larger monastery (in *monasterio maiore*), placing them in a circle; and he also showed off pictures (*imagines*) which were intended for the adornment of monastery and the church of the blessed apostle Paul about the agreement of the Old and New Testaments, painted with the utmost skill: for example, one painting (*pictura*) juxtaposed Isaac carrying the wood with which he was to be burned and the Lord likewise carrying the cross on which he was to suffer, one image over the other. Another compared the Son of Man raised up on the cross to the serpent raised up by Moses in the desert.<sup>14</sup>

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*ecclesiam omnes etiam litterarum ignari, quaquaversum intenderent, uel semper amabilem Christi sanctorumque eius, quamuis in imagine, contemplarentur aspectum; uel dominicae incarnationis gratiam uigilantiore mente recolerent, uel extremi discrimen examinis, quasi coram oculis habentes, districtius se ipsi examinare meminissent*'. Text and translation cited (with slight modifications) from C.W. Grocock and I.N. Wood, *The Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> For the layout of St Peter's Church, see: Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow sites*, II, pp. 56–72.

<sup>14</sup> UBA 9: 'Nam et tunc dominicae historiae picturas quibus totam beatae Dei genetricis, quam in monasterio maiore fecerat, ecclesiam in gyro coronaret; imagines quoque ad ornandum monasterium ecclesiamque beati Pauli apostoli de concordia ueteris et noui Testamenti summa ratione compositas exhibuit. Verbi gratia, Isaac ligna quibus immolaretur portantem, et Dominum crucem in qua pateretur aequae portantem, proxima super inuicem regione pictura coniunxit. Item serpenti in heremo a Moyses

These paintings arrived in Jarrow when Bede was a youth, and he would have gazed upon them often. The images that decorated the Wearmouth and Jarrow sites were acquired immediately after the main church buildings were completed, and so the paintings had been in Northumbria for almost as long as the stone structures that housed them. The pictures acculturated the monastic community to Rome by making the Northumbrian churches look and feel like the places of worship that Benedict had visited there (for example: the painting of the Virgin Mary, which is given a prominent position in Bede's description of the artistic scheme at St Peter's, reflects the growing popularity of Mary's cult at Rome in Benedict's lifetime).<sup>15</sup> The images at Wearmouth and Jarrow were visible demonstrations of the community's Romanitas, physical reminders of the spiritual link between periphery and centre and core symbols of the monastery's identity.

Bede's description of the adornment of Wearmouth-Jarrow has attracted a great deal of interest because it is rare to have such a detailed written account of an Insular artistic scheme from so early in the Middle Ages.<sup>16</sup> By conducting a careful study of the

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exaltato, Filium hominis in cruce exaltatum comparavit'. Text and translation: Grocock and Wood, *The Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*.

<sup>15</sup> The generation in which Benedict repeatedly visited Rome saw the gradual introduction into the Roman liturgy of four new feast days connected with the Virgin Mary: Ó Carragáin, *City of Rome and the World of Bede*, pp. 19–24; M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> The only description of an early Insular church to provide a comparable level of detail is the account of the church of St Brigid in Kildare written in the mid-seventh century by Cogitosus. St Brigid's was adorned with painted tablets and divided into sections by decorated screens. The shrines of St Brigid and St Conleth were surrounded by numerous carved and painted scenes, although Cogitosus does not tell us

Latin terms used in the *Vita beatorum abbatum*, Paul Meyvaert has shown that the *picturae* referred to by Bede were panel paintings brought back from Rome intact rather than miniatures that served as templates for reproductions to be made directly onto the fabric of the churches.<sup>17</sup> Some of the interior walls of the Wearmouth and Jarrow buildings were faced with plaster and painted, but the archaeological evidence shows that they were adorned with geometric patterns and there is no trace of anything comparable to the complex representational images described by Bede.<sup>18</sup> Celia Chazelle has rightly emphasized that the panels mentioned in Bede's account were just one aspect of a multifaceted artistic programme, and were doubtless accompanied by many different types of Christian art and sculpture, some of which was produced locally and

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what was depicted in these images or how they were arranged. *Cogitosus, Vita Sanctae Brigidae*, ed. J.P. Migne, PL 72 (Paris, 1849), cols 775–90 at 788–90.

<sup>17</sup> P. Meyvaert, 'Bede and the Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', *ASE* 8 (1979), pp. 63–77. For the view that Bede was referring to small images that served as pictorial guides for local reproductions, see: A. Goldschmidt, *An Early Manuscript of the Aesop Fables of Avianus, and Related Manuscripts* (Princeton, NJ, 1947), pp. 33–4; E. Kitzinger, 'The Role of Miniature Painting in Mural Decoration', in K. Weitzmann, W.C. Loerke, E. Kitzinger and H. Buchthal (eds), *The Place of Book Illumination in Byzantine Art* (Princeton, NJ, 1975), pp. 99–142, at pp. 118–19.

<sup>18</sup> R. Cramp and J. Cronyn, 'Anglo-Saxon Polychrome Plaster and Other Materials from the Excavations of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow: An Interim Report', in S. Cather, D. Park and P. Williamson (eds), *Early Medieval Wall Painting and Painted Sculpture in England. Based on the Proceedings of a Symposium at the Courtauld Institute of Art, February 1985*, *British Archaeological Reports* 216 (Oxford, 1990), pp. 17–30; Webster and Backhouse, *Making of England*, p. 139; Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow sites, II*, pp. 2–18 and pp. 53–4.



some of which may well have been sourced from centres other than Rome.<sup>19</sup> No physical traces of any of the Wearmouth-Jarrow panel paintings have survived, but Bede's descriptions tell us a great deal about the content, arrangement and function of these images, if not their visual appearance.

Bede's account of the Wearmouth panels in the *Uita beatorum abbatum* emphasizes their importance as devices for teaching the fundamentals of Christianity to those who could not read.<sup>20</sup> His words immediately make one think of illiterate adults, but the paintings would also have served a useful purpose in the education of children and it is intriguing to think that Bede himself could have been taught in this way at the very beginning of his time as a novice.<sup>21</sup> Images provided an especially effective means of meeting the educational aims of a missionary church in the Middle Ages because

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<sup>19</sup> C. Chazelle, 'Art and Reverence in Bede's Churches at Wearmouth and Jarrow', in M. Büchsel and R. Müller (eds), *Intellektualisierung und Mystifizierung mittelalterlicher Kunst: "Kultbild": Revision eines Begriffs* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 79–98, at pp. 82–6.

<sup>20</sup> UBA 6, cf. Bede's homily for the feast of Benedict Biscop: *Homiliarum euangelii libri II II.13*, lines 180–85. The idea owes something to Gregory the Great's letters to Serenus, a bishop of Marseilles who had apparently taken it upon himself to destroy images in some of the churches within his diocese because he was worried about idolatry: *Registrum epistularum IX.209 and XI.10*, ed. D. Norberg, *CCSL* 140–140A (Turnhout, 1982). For an examination of these letters, see: C. Chazelle, 'Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Serenus of Marseilles', *Word & Image* 6 (1990), pp. 138–53.

<sup>21</sup> Bede gives very little direct information about his education beyond saying that he received it at Wearmouth-Jarrow, naming Benedict and Ceolfrith as his principal mentors (HE V.24) and identifying Trumberht, a monk educated in the monastery of St Chad at Lastingham, as one of his instructors in the study of the Scriptures (HE IV.3). Presumably Bede's education began at the time of his oblation. See further: D. Whitelock, 'Bede His Teachers and Friends', in Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi*, pp. 19–39.

they could convey messages to many different types of viewer at once.<sup>22</sup> Pictures could connect with sections of the populace that texts could not reach, a benefit that was reportedly appreciated by the missionary party sent to Britain from Rome by Pope Gregory the Great (590–604). Bede's account of the conversion of King Æthelberht of Kent in the *Historia ecclesiastica* relates that the missionaries displayed a silver cross and 'an image of our Lord and Saviour painted on a panel' (*imaginem Domini Saluatoris in tabula depictam*) at their first meeting with the king, and again on their subsequent entry into Canterbury in 597. The veracity of Bede's account of these events has been called into question but it is nevertheless interesting that Bede places an image of Christ in the hands of a missionary party sent from Rome to convert a pagan, and possibly illiterate, king.<sup>23</sup>

The images displayed at Wearmouth and Jarrow performed many different functions at once.<sup>24</sup> One of their principle purposes was to act as a visual medium for biblical exegesis. The cycles of Apocalypse and Gospel images placed on opposing walls of the nave of St Peter's Church at Wearmouth are good examples of this. Bede would have appreciated that the two sets of paintings positioned the congregation

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<sup>22</sup> H.L. Kessler, 'Pictorial Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul', in H.L. Kessler and M.S. Simpson (eds), *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Washington, D.C., 1985), pp. 75–91.

<sup>23</sup> HE I.25. Ian Wood points out that it is unlikely that the missionaries would have known the Rogation anthem that Bede has them singing: I.N. Wood, 'The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English', *Speculum* 69 (1994), pp. 1–17, at pp. 3–4.

<sup>24</sup> C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Manchester, 1982), pp. 90–91; Chazelle, 'Art and Reverence', pp. 86–92. See further: C. Chazelle, 'Christ and the Vision of God: The Biblical Diagrams of the Codex Amiatinus', in J.F. Hamburger and A. Bouché (eds), *The Mind's Eye. Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ, 2006), pp. 84–111, at pp. 95–7.

between the Incarnation and the Apocalypse, the start and end points for the sixth age of the world.<sup>25</sup> The panels could therefore be used to explain the fundamental basics of Christian time to someone who could not read, but at the same time their strategic positioning could inspire deeper reflections on the relationship between the Revelation prophecy and the immediate New Testament past. Bede's description of the artistic scheme at Jarrow reveals that the paintings were arranged in such a way as to suggest typological relationships between Old Testament and New Testament scenes, and he gives two specific examples of how this worked in practice: an image of Christ carrying His Cross to Golgotha was placed immediately above a picture of Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice (Genesis XXII.6–7), and an image of Christ crucified was paired with a panel depicting Moses and the brazen serpent (Numbers XXI.8–9).<sup>26</sup> It is significant that Bede tells us about these two examples in particular, both of which relate to the Crucifixion. These depictions of Jesus carrying and suffering on the Cross made a clear Christological statement about the humanity of Christ and the reality of His suffering. Likewise, in the account of the Monkwearmouth images, Bede underscores the idea that the images affirmed the human nature of Christ on earth by stating that they allowed the viewer 'to put themselves more firmly in mind of the Lord's Incarnation'.<sup>27</sup> Anyone entering the churches to look at these pictures, and anyone reading about them in the *Uita beatorum abbatum*, could be assured of the monastic community's Christological orthodoxy; this was especially important in light of the on-going problem of Monothelism, a heresy which stated that Christ had two natures but

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<sup>25</sup> P.N. Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 219–21.

<sup>26</sup> UBA 9.

<sup>27</sup> UBA 6: '... uel dominicae incarnationis gratiam uigilantiore mente recolerent '.

one will that the leaders of the Anglo-Saxon Church took great care to distance themselves from in the late seventh century.<sup>28</sup>

## II. Bede's commentary on the Temple of Solomon

De templo Salomonis, Bede's commentary on the verses which describe the construction of the Temple of Solomon in 1 Kings V.6–VII.51, should be read with the rich visual culture established by Benedict Biscop and the lavishly decorated appearance of the Wearmouth and Jarrow sites in mind.<sup>29</sup> The scriptural description of the building and dedication of Solomon's Temple seems to have resonated especially strongly with Bede and his fellow Northumbrian monks.<sup>30</sup> The multiform allegorical meanings attached to the Temple are recurring themes in Bede's writings, especially his homilies on the Gospels,<sup>31</sup> but as we shall see De templo was written at a point in Bede's career when his longstanding interest in this subject acquired a new relevance.

In terms of its date of composition, De templo is intimately connected with two of the very latest works in Bede's canon: the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* and *Epistula ad Albinum*. De templo is mentioned in Bede's autobiographical list of writings

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<sup>28</sup> Chazelle, 'Art and Reverence', pp. 88–9.

<sup>29</sup> Bede, *De templo Salomonis* (hereinafter cited as DT), ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout, 1969), pp. 143–234.

<sup>30</sup> Wood, Abbot Ceolfrid, pp. 15–16 suggests that the proportions of St Peter's Church at Wearmouth may have been based upon the Scriptural description of the Temple of Solomon. See further: I.N. Wood, 'Art and Architecture of Western Europe', in P. Fouracre (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. I c.500–c.700 (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 760–75, at pp. 764–6; Meyvaert, 'Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', p. 65, n. 3. The dedication of St Peter's Church at Ripon was explicitly compared to the dedication of Solomon's Temple by Stephen of Ripon: *Vita S. Wilfridi* 17.

<sup>31</sup> *Homiliarum euangelii libri II* II.1, lines 178–294; II.24; II.25, lines 206–369.

in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.24, so the commentary must have been written before 731, the given year of completion of the *Historia*.<sup>32</sup> Soon after the *Historia ecclesiastica* was finished, Bede sent it to Albinus, the abbot of St Peter and St Paul's monastery in Canterbury (d. 732 or 733), along with a copy of *De templo* and a letter.<sup>33</sup> The letter to Albinus suggests that *De templo* and the *Historia ecclesiastica* were broadly contemporaneous projects: *De templo* is described as a volume that 'I have recently brought out' (*nuper edidi*).<sup>34</sup> It is therefore implied that the commentary on the Temple of Solomon was finished in the late 720s or early 730s.

Bede dedicated *De templo* to 'the most beloved of bishops' (*dilectissime antistitum*) and expressed hope that his addressee would find consolation in the Scriptures to ease 'the present anxieties of things temporal' (*praesentes rerum*

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<sup>32</sup> In HE V.24, DT is described as 'two books of allegorical exposition on the building of the Temple in the same manner as the others' (*De aedificatione templi, allegoricae expositionis, sicut et cetera, libros II*). 731 is given as the present *annus domini* in HE V.23.

<sup>33</sup> Although it was previously only known to have survived in early printed editions, and lingering doubts over its authenticity had persisted, versions of the letter to Albinus have recently been discovered in two twelfth-century manuscripts of DT: J.A. Westgard, 'New Manuscripts of Bede's Letter to Albinus', *Revue Bénédictine* 120 (2010), pp. 208–15. On Albinus, the principal informant for the *Historia ecclesiastica*, see: M. Costambeys, 'Albinus', in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereinafter ODNB); M. Lapidge, 'Albinus', in M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg (eds), *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 23–4 (hereinafter BEASE).

<sup>34</sup> Bede, *Epistula ad Albinum*, ed. Westgard, 'Bede's Letter to Albinus', p. 214: 'Propter quod et ipse tibi rectissime eandem hystoriam, mox ut consummare potui, ad transscribendum remisi. Sed et aliud, quod te pariter desiderare comperi, uolumen tibi uice remunerationis aequae ad transscribendum destinaui, uidelicet, illud quod de structura templi Salomonis atque allegorica eius interpretatione nuper edidi'.

temporalium angores).<sup>35</sup> This has traditionally been understood as a message to Acca, bishop of Hexham (710–731), diocesan bishop for Wearmouth-Jarrow and a regular recipient of Bede's writings.<sup>36</sup> Of the extant prefaces to Bede's works and letters, only two are written to a bishop other than Acca and neither of those are a suitable candidate to be the anonymous antistes mentioned in *De templo*: bishop Eadfrith, to whom the prose *Vita sancti Cuthberti* is addressed, is thought to have died in 721;<sup>37</sup> Ecgberht, bishop of York and the recipient of Bede's well-known letter of November 734, was not appointed until 732.<sup>38</sup> The case for Acca is strengthened by the strong resonance between the phrase *dilectissime antistitum* employed in the prologue to *De templo* and the forms used to address him in several of Bede's other exegetical writings.<sup>39</sup> The

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<sup>35</sup> DT prologue, lines 49–55.

<sup>36</sup> S. Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple* (Liverpool, 1995), pp. 2–3 n. 20; Westgard, 'Bede's Letter to Albinus', p. 211 n.8; I.M. Douglas, 'Bede's *De Templo* and the Commentary on Samuel and Kings by Claudius of Turin', in Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi*, pp. 325–33, at p. 325.

<sup>37</sup> Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti* prologue, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne, and Bede's Prose Life* (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 142–306 (at pp. 142–3). A. Thacker, 'Eadfrith [Eadfrid]', ODNB; M.P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: Society, Spirituality and the Scribe* (London, 2003), pp. 104–10.

<sup>38</sup> *Continuatio Baedae, s.a. 732*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 572–3. M. Lapidge, 'Ecgerht', BEASE, p. 157; H. Mayr-Harting, 'Ecgerht [Egbert]', ODNB.

<sup>39</sup> In *Marci euangelium expositio* prologue, line 40 (*dilectissime antistitum Acca*), ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout, 1960), pp. 431–648; In *primam partem Samuhelis* prologue, lines 34–6 (*dilectissime ac desiderantissime omnium qui in terris morantur antistitum Acca*), III, line 8 (*dilectissime antistitum*) and IV, line 19 (*dilectissime antistes*), ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119 (Turnhout, 1962), pp. 5–287; *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis* preface, line 1 (*Dilectissimo ac reuerendissimo antistiti Acca*), ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnhout, 1967); *De mansionibus filiorum Israel* line 17 (*dilectissime antistitum*), ed. J.P. Migne, PL 94 (Paris, 1850), cols 699–702, pp. 29–34.

'anxieties of things temporal' mentioned in the preface to *De templo* probably allude to the problems that befell the kingdom of Northumbria following the accession of King Ceolwulf in 729, which apparently had significant implications for Acca.<sup>40</sup> Acca is listed as the present bishop of Hexham in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.23 but he fled from his see soon after that text was issued; the continuations to the *Historia ecclesiastica* preserved in the Moore manuscript list Acca's flight under the year 731 immediately after an entry recording the seizure, forcible tonsure and subsequent restoration of Ceolwulf.<sup>41</sup>

Bede may well have sent many of his works to more than one initial reader but *De templo* is a relatively rare example where that is certain to have been the case. The others are: the *Historia ecclesiastica* (dedicated to King Ceolwulf but also sent to Albinus, as already mentioned);<sup>42</sup> and the commentary on Revelation (sent to Acca but dedicated to Hwætberht, a fellow monk who would later become abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow in succession to Ceolfrith in 716).<sup>43</sup> The fact that *De templo* was quickly sent to two influential figures – Albinus and the unnamed bishop – suggests that Bede wanted

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<sup>40</sup> Plummer, *Opera Historica*, I, p. cl. Bede alludes to the political instability in Ceolwulf's Northumbria in HE V.23.

<sup>41</sup> The 'Moore annals' are preserved in Cambridge, University Library, Kk. 5.16, fol. 128r (see Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 572–3). See further: J. Story, 'After Bede: Continuing the Ecclesiastical History', in S.D. Baxter, C.E. Karkov, J.L. Nelson and D.A.E. Pelteret (eds), *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 165–84, at pp. 168–74.

<sup>42</sup> HE preface; *Epistula ad Albinum*.

<sup>43</sup> *Expositio Apocalypseos* preface, line 3, ed. R. Gryson CCSL 121A (Turnhout, 2001); *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, preface, lines 6–10, ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnout, 1983), pp. 3–99. In the preface to *Expositio Apocalypseos* Bede addresses Hwætberht as 'Eusebius', a name given to him on account of his zeal for piety (In primam partem *Samuhelis* IV, lines 12–20).

the tract to be circulated widely. In the *Epistula ad Albinum* Bede explicitly says that he is sending *De templo* to Albinus 'to be copied' (*ad transscribendum*), which may imply that Bede expected Albinus to assist in the wider circulation of the commentary.<sup>44</sup> Bede certainly wanted at least one additional copy to be held at Canterbury for Albinus and his brethren, and perhaps he also anticipated that Tatwine, the newly appointed archbishop of Canterbury, would have access to *De templo* as well.<sup>45</sup>

*De templo* occupies an important place in the history of Christian Latin exegesis because in choosing to write a discrete commentary on the part of 1 Kings that describes the building of the Temple of Solomon, Bede was undertaking a task that was at once bold, ambitious and self-consciously novel.<sup>46</sup> In the preface to the commentary, Bede adapts his familiar refrain that he is 'following in the footsteps of the fathers' (*patrum uestigia sequentes*),<sup>47</sup> instead positioning himself as 'following in the footsteps of the great treatises' (*sequens magnorum uestigia tractatorum*) but *De templo* draws upon relatively few patristic sources because there were no existing great treatises on the

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<sup>44</sup> It seems likely that Canterbury was indeed active in the early transmission of *De templo* amongst other centres: J.A. Westgard, 'Bede in the Carolingian Age and Beyond', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 201–15, at pp. 205–6.

<sup>45</sup> Tatwine's accession to Canterbury in the year 731 is documented in HE V.23.

<sup>46</sup> DT prologue, lines 55–6: 'Verum quia noua quaeque non numquam amplius delectant ...'.

<sup>47</sup> Bede uses *sequentes patrum uestigia* later in the commentary: DT I, lines 1753–4. On the meaning of this often used Bedan motif see: S. DeGregorio, 'Introduction: The New Bede', and R.D. Ray, 'Who Did Bede Think He Was?', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006), at pp. 1–10 and pp. 11–36 respectively. The phrase echoes 1 Peter II.21: 'Christus passus est pro vobis vobis relinquens exemplum ut sequamini vestigia eius).



Temple of Solomon to follow.<sup>48</sup> Bede's statement should therefore be taken as a declaration of intent: he was seeking to extend and develop the work already done by the Church Fathers and establish himself as their equal by writing a *magnus tractatus* of his own. *De templo* is a tightly focussed and coherently organized piece that displays all of the hallmarks of Bede's mature exegetical method: Bede shows a willingness to discuss the meanings of Greek words;<sup>49</sup> he makes regular and precise references to the eight-part world ages scheme;<sup>50</sup> and, perhaps most tellingly of all, *De templo* offers a very critical appraisal of the contemporary Church.<sup>51</sup> The programme of pastoral reform advocated in Bede's later commentaries has been brought into clear view in a series of essays by Scott DeGregorio, who concludes that for Bede exegesis was 'an important social tool conditioned as much by the needs of the present as by the traditions of the

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<sup>48</sup> DT prologue, lines 55–9. On the sources utilized by Bede in DT see: A.G. Holder, 'New Treasures and Old in Bede's *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo*', *Revue Bénédictine* 99 (1989), pp. 237–49. For a summary of how the Temple theme was treated by exegetes before Bede see: J. O'Reilly, 'Introduction', in Connolly, *On the Temple*, pp. xxiii–xxviii.

<sup>49</sup> DT I, lines 268–71; I, lines 1582–3; II, lines 832–3. On Bede's knowledge of Greek, which appears to have improved over the course of his career, see: W.F. Bolton, 'An Aspect of Bede's Later Knowledge of Greek', *The Classical Review* 13 (1963), pp. 17–18; A.C. Dionisotti, 'On Bede, Grammars, and Greek', *Revue Bénédictine* 92 (1982), pp. 111–41, at pp. 128–9; K.M. Lynch, 'The Venerable Bede's Knowledge of Greek', *Traditio* 39 (1983), pp. 432–9; G.H. Brown, *A Companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 9–10, 67, 72.

<sup>50</sup> DT I, lines 245–51; I, lines 807–11. The eight-part world ages scheme features exclusively in works written after the heresy allegation that Bede was subjected to in 708: Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, pp. 65–91.

<sup>51</sup> DT II, lines 589–603.

past'.<sup>52</sup> This insight is especially pertinent to *De templo*, a text which calls for teachers (doctores) and preachers (praedicatores) to stimulate the regeneration of a lethargic Christian society.<sup>53</sup> It will become clear that developments in the wider Christian world in the 720s led Bede to devote attention to a new set of urgent needs in his commentary on the Temple of Solomon.

### III. The opening stages of the image struggle

The dispute over religious images which flared up in Byzantium towards the end of Bede's lifetime warrants attention here because it can help situate *De templo* in its contemporary intellectual context. Over the course of the seventh and eighth centuries in the Byzantine Empire, Christian attitudes changed considerably towards icons<sup>54</sup> (a

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<sup>52</sup> S. DeGregorio, 'Nostrorum Socordiam Temporum': The Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis', *EME* 11 (2002), pp. 107–22, at p. 121; S. DeGregorio, 'Bede's in Ezram et Neemiam and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum* 79 (2004), pp. 1–25; S. DeGregorio, 'Bede's in Ezram et Neemiam: A Document in Church Reform?' in S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (eds), *Bède le Vénérable: entre tradition et postérité / the Venerable Bede: Tradition and Posterity* (Lille, 2005), pp. 97–107. Also: A. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', in P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (eds), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 130–53.

<sup>53</sup> On doctores and praedicatores, see: DT I, lines 334–43; I, lines 910–29; II, lines 257–62; II, lines 318–35; II, lines 341–7; II, lines 1413–24; and the comments of O'Reilly, 'Introduction', in Connolly, *On the Temple*, pp. xviii and pp. xxxix–xlvi.

<sup>54</sup> On the evolution of attitudes towards images in the era before iconoclasm, see: E. Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954), pp. 83–150, reprinted in W.E. Kleinbauer, ed., *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West: Selected Studies by Ernst Kitzinger* (Bloomington, IN, 1976), pp. 90–156; A. Cameron, 'The Language of Images: the Rise of Icons and

term broadly defined to include a wide range of visual artistic media, including: mosaics; frescoes; carvings; ivories; statues; textiles; and panel paintings).<sup>55</sup> A significant dispute over icons started in Byzantium in the 720s, escalating at some point thereafter to become a major source of conflict between Constantinople and Rome. The full magnitude of this dispute – often referred to as 'iconoclasm' (image breaking), or 'iconomachy' (image struggle) – would only become manifest in the period after Bede's death, but although he died before the imperial authorities promoted iconoclasm as an official state policy, Bede lived through a formative period in the quarrel over images during which ideas about the visual arts were developing rapidly in the Byzantine Empire. Recent historical appraisals of Byzantine iconoclasm have radically altered the way that the period is perceived, and the once held view that East and West were locked in a momentous and bitter struggle throughout most of the eighth century caused by conflicting views about images has been revised.<sup>56</sup> It is now common to see iconoclasm

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Christian Representation', in D. Wood (ed.), *The Church and the Arts*, Studies in Church History 28 (Oxford, 1992), pp. 1–42, reprinted in A. Cameron, *Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1996); L. Brubaker, 'Icons before Iconoclasm?', *Settimane* 45 (2000), pp. 1215–54.

<sup>55</sup> On the meaning of the term 'icon', see: R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (London, 1985), pp. 10–11; Cameron, 'Language of Images', pp. 4–15.

<sup>56</sup> The literature on iconoclasm is vast. For introductory overviews of the subject, see: P.A. Hollingsworth and A. Cutler, 'Iconoclasm', in A.P. Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 975–7; L. Brubaker, 'Icons and Iconomachy', in L. James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 323–37. The period has now been comprehensively re-evaluated in L. Brubaker and J.F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (c. 680–850): A History* (Cambridge, 2011), which forms a companion piece to the same authors' earlier *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680–850): The Sources: An Annotated Survey* (Aldershot, 2001). For the reception of the image controversy in the West, see: T.F.X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia, PA, 2009). The theological

as being enmeshed with other political, social, cultural and economic factors, and to stress that it was not a continuous conflict but instead developed in a series of occasional episodic flashpoints.<sup>57</sup>

In 692, when Bede was around nineteen years old, the Council in Trullo, also known as the Quinisext Council, issued a set of canons intended to complete the work of the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils (held in Constantinople in 553 and 680–681 respectively).<sup>58</sup> The 82<sup>nd</sup> Canon issued by the Council in Trullo discouraged the commissioning of symbolic depictions of Christ as the Lamb of God in favour of figural representations of His human form.<sup>59</sup> The Canons of the Council in Trullo represent the first conciliar attempt to subject Christian iconography to formal regulation, and they implicitly sanctioned the idea that works of art could convey important theological principles. There had been a long but sporadic discourse about religious images in both the eastern and western Christian traditions in the centuries before the council, and a certain amount of residual unease about the issue of figural representation had persisted, not least because of the Second Commandment (Exodus XX.4): 'You shall not make for

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discourse over icons in Byzantium is charted in: C. Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> The latter point is emphasized by Noble, who describes the development of Byzantine iconoclasm as 'a history with episodes but no plot', and 'episodic, not continuous': *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, pp. 85 and 61.

<sup>58</sup> The canons are published by: G. Nedungatt and F. Michael (eds), *The Council in Trullo Revisited* (Rome, 1995), pp. 41–186.

<sup>59</sup> L. Brubaker, 'In the Beginning Was the Word: Art and Orthodoxy at the Councils of Trullo (692) and Nicaea II (787)', in A. Louth and A. Casiday (eds), *Byzantine Orthodoxies: Papers from the Thirty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 95–101, at pp. 96–9; Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, pp. 39–59.

yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below'.<sup>60</sup> In the post-Trullo era the issue of what could and could not be depicted in an image and associated matters relating to the liturgical role of icons and their status within the culture of the Church would come to dominate Christian theology. Contrasting interpretations of Exodus XX.4 remained at the heart of a long-running intellectual dispute that continued to occupy the papal administration in Rome, the secular and religious leaders of the Byzantine Empire and the leading theologians from throughout Christendom until the mid-ninth century.

Leo III was made emperor in March 717 in a ceremony led by Germanos, patriarch of Constantinople (715–730). Leo's accession came at a time when the Byzantine Empire faced significant external pressures from the Arabs and the Bulgars. The new emperor successfully negotiated peace with the Bulgars, but he was immediately required to defend Constantinople against an Arab army that laid siege to the city for a year.<sup>61</sup> The *Chronographia* of Theophanes, a text hostile to Leo III written in the early ninth century, relates that the emperor began to speak publicly against

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<sup>60</sup> The development of the discourse concerning images before c. 725 and the central position that the 'Exodus prohibition' occupied in that discourse is charted by: Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, pp. 10–45.

<sup>61</sup> Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia* s.a. 6209, ed. C. De Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1883, 1885), trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, with the assistance of G. Greatrex, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and near Eastern History, AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997); *Liber Pontificalis* (hereinafter cited as LP) XCI.12, ed. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis: texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, 1955–1957); Bede, *De temporum ratione* (hereinafter DTR) 66, s.a. 4680, ed. C.W. Jones, *CCSL 123B* (Turnhout, 1977), pp. 263–544.

images in 724 or 725.<sup>62</sup> According to the *Chronographia*, the next stages of the controversy unfolded as follows: after interpreting a volcanic eruption in the Aegean Sea (c. 726) as a sign of God's dissatisfaction with Christian society, the emperor ordered the removal of an icon of Christ from the Chalke Gate (the ceremonial entrance to the Great Palace in Constantinople); the removal of the Christ icon sparked an uproar amongst the city's populace, but resistance to it was met with violent retribution from the state authorities; Leo's new policy brought him into conflict with certain senior ecclesiastical figures, most notably Patriarch Germanos and Pope Gregory II (715–731).<sup>63</sup> This familiar version of events has been thoroughly dismantled by Brubaker and Haldon who, after conducting a close examination of the relevant sources, conclude that there is little contemporary evidence to support the assumption that iconoclasm was originally an imperial initiative. Rather, they propose, the emperor's role in the earliest stages of the dispute has been amplified by a succession of late and hostile sources which styled Leo III as the architect of iconoclasm as part of a successful campaign to discredit his son and successor Constantine V (741–775), a committed opponent of icons.<sup>64</sup>

Whilst the contemporary evidence for imperial support for iconoclasm in the time of Leo III is admittedly scarce, longstanding feelings of uncertainty about icons

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<sup>62</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia* s.a. 6217.

<sup>63</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia* s.a. 6127–6128. Theophanes conflates Pope Gregory II (715–731) and his successor Gregory III (731–741) into a single figure: Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 558–9, n. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 69–155. Also: Brubaker, 'Icons and Iconomachy', pp. 323–30; G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 183–4.

were hardening amongst some members of the Byzantine clergy at this time. Three letters written by Patriarch Germanos offer an insight into the nature of the challenge to religious images which emerged in the mid-720s.<sup>65</sup> The first two relate to an incident involving Constantine of Nakoleia and are thought to have been written in c. 726;<sup>66</sup> the third, to Thomas of Claudioupolis, may well have been written after 730 when Germanos was no longer serving as patriarch.<sup>67</sup> The first letter addresses Bishop John of Synnada, and it documents the actions of Constantine of Nakoleia, a provincial bishop under John's metropolitan jurisdiction who had publicly expressed serious reservations about icons; Germanos, writing in his official capacity as patriarch, asked John to contain the issue and resolve it privately without convoking a regional synod.<sup>68</sup> Germanos also wrote directly to Constantine of Nakoleia to suspend him from his episcopal duties until the disturbance that he had caused could be resolved.<sup>69</sup> By the time Germanos addressed a much longer letter to Thomas of Claudioupolis, a bishop who had ordered images to be removed from his see, the burgeoning controversy seems

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<sup>65</sup> St Germanos, patriarch of Constantinople, *Epistolae*, ed. J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 98 (Paris, 1865), cols 155–88.

<sup>66</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 94–8 and 122–3.

<sup>67</sup> P. Speck, *Artabasdos, der rechtgläubige Vorkämpfer der göttlichen Lehren : Untersuchungen zur Revolte des Artabasdos und ihrer Darstellung in der byzantinischen Historiographie* (Bonn, 1981), pp. 267–81; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 98–105.

<sup>68</sup> Germanos, *Epistola* 2, cols 155–62. Suspicions have been raised over a portion of the letter which discusses the theology of images in terms that are much more common of a later stage of the iconoclastic controversy, but the core of this document is accepted as genuine: P. Speck, 'Die Affäre um Konstantin von Nakoleia. Zum Anfang des Ikonoklasmus', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 88 (1995), pp. 148–54, at pp. 150–51; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 94–8.

<sup>69</sup> Germanos, *Epistola* 3, cols 161–4.

to have escalated somewhat: the letter to Thomas suggests that the critique of icons had gathered considerable support amongst the clergy and caused widespread confusion amongst the general public.<sup>70</sup> The letters of Germanos do not suggest that the instances of open resistance towards icons that they document were initiated by the state (in fact: the letter to Thomas of Claudioupolis mentions that Leo III and Constantine V had arranged for an image of the apostles, the prophets and the Cross to be set up in front of the Great Palace in Constantinople).<sup>71</sup> The letters do, however, show that individual churchmen such as Constantine of Nakoleia and Thomas of Claudioupolis were able to speak out against icons in public without suffering any sanctions from the imperial authorities; this suggests that the state was prepared to tolerate the actions of the earliest iconoclasts even if the Patriarch of Constantinople was not.

According to the *Chronographia* of Theophanes, Germanos resigned from his position as Patriarch of Constantinople in 730 after refusing to formally subscribe to a condemnation of icons at a civic gathering of the emperor's chief advisors (silention) in January of that year.<sup>72</sup> The papal biography for Gregory II in the *Liber Pontificalis* suggests that the image quarrel had become a contentious issue between Constantinople and Rome by that point, diplomatic relations between the two foremost centres of Christendom having been strained by a dispute over the collection of imperial taxes that

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<sup>70</sup> Germanos, *Epistola* 4, cols 164–88. See: Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 98–105; P. Brown, 'A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy', *EHR* 88 (1973), pp. 1–34, at pp. 24–5.

<sup>71</sup> Germanos, *Epistola* 4, cols 185–6. Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, pp. 52–3.

<sup>72</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia* s.a. 6221. Compare LP XCI.23–4, which says that Germanos was removed from the position by the emperor.



had been brewing since the late seventh century.<sup>73</sup> A passage in the biography of Gregory II which is positioned before an entry recording the seizure of the fortified town of Sutri by the Lombards in 727 or 728 describes the following sequence of events:

In the mandates he [Leo III] later sent, the emperor had decreed that no church image of any saint, martyr or angel should be kept, as he declared them all accursed; if the pontiff [Gregory II] would agree, he would have the emperor's favour; if he prevented this being carried out as well he would be degraded from his office. So the pious man despised the prince's profane mandate, and now he armed himself against the emperor as an enemy, denouncing his heresy and writing that Christians everywhere must guard against the impiety that had arisen.<sup>74</sup>

It is not clear whether or not the decree referred to here should be connected with the pronouncements against icons supposedly made by Leo III in c. 725 according to Theophanes, or perhaps the author of this entry knew of a separate document concerning images which was sent to Rome by Leo III during the pontificate of Gregory

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<sup>73</sup> The dispute over territory and taxes is recorded in LP XCI.14–16. See further: D.H. Miller, 'The Roman Revolution of the Eighth Century: A Study of the Ideological Background of the Papal Separation from Byzantium and the Alliance with the Franks', *Mediaeval Studies* 36 (1974), pp. 79–133, at pp. 98–112; P. Llewellyn, 'The Roman Church on the Outbreak of Iconoclasm', in A. Bryer and J. Herrin (eds), *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975* (Birmingham, 1977), pp. 29–34; J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 328–30.

<sup>74</sup> LP XCI.17: 'Iussionibus itaque postmodum missis decreverat imperator, ut nulla imago cuiuslibet sancti aut martyris aut angeli haberetur; maledicta enim omnia asserebat. Et si adquiesceret pontifex, gratiam imperatoris haberet; si et hoc fieri praepediret, a suo gradu decederet. Despiciens ergo vir profanam principis iussionem, iam contra imperatorem quasi contra hostem se armavit, rennuens heresem eius, scribens ubique caveri se christianos, quod orta fuisset impietas'. Translation: R. Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes*, rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Liverpool, 2007), p. 11.

II.<sup>75</sup> The testimony of the *Liber Pontificalis* may well be tinged with a touch of hyperbole, but it nevertheless suggests that Gregory II was formally made aware of the unrest which was developing in the East and attempted to circulate news of that unrest to leading ecclesiastical centres in the West before his death in February 731.

Gregory III became pope in March 731; the *Liber Pontificalis* relates that the new pope convened a council in November of that year which prepared a compendium of scriptural and patristic testimonies in defence of icons.<sup>76</sup> The *Liber Pontificalis* also records that Gregory III restored murals at the church of St Chrysogonus the Martyr and commissioned sculptures and carvings for several other churches in Rome.<sup>77</sup> This extensive programme of decoration showed that the pope was willing to act as a patron of the visual arts; in carrying it out Gregory III was emulating the actions of many of his predecessors, such as Pope Sergius I (687–701) who had expressed his refusal to accept the edicts of the Council in Trullo by restoring the mosaic on the external façade of the

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<sup>75</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia* s.a. 6217. For the view that the statement in LP XCI.17 is an accurate and contemporary record of events which proves that Leo III did issue an edict against icons see: M. Anastos, 'Leo III's Edict against the Images of the Year 726–27 and Italo-Byzantine Relations between 726 and 730', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 3 (1968), pp. 5–41. Brubaker and Haldon suggest that the order referred to in the LP was specific to the pope and was not an empire-wide decree: *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 82, 119–125. Noble rejects the idea that Leo issued a formal edict against icons: *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, pp. 58–61.

<sup>76</sup> LP XCII.3. On the patristic florilegium issued by the council of 731, see: Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, pp. 119–23 and pp. 396–7, n. 34; A. Alexakis, *Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115 and Its Archetype* (Washington, D.C., 1996), pp. 37–41.

<sup>77</sup> LP XCII.5–13. J. Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages, 476–752* (London, 1979), p. 226.

atrium of Old St Peter's which depicted the Lamb of God,<sup>78</sup> and Pope Constantine (708–715) who had an image of the first six ecumenical councils placed in the portico of the same basilica to reject the heretical doctrine promulgated by the monothelete emperor Philippikos Bardanes (711–713).<sup>79</sup> After the challenge to icons had started to gather momentum in the East, publicly-visible artwork such as the panel paintings at Wearmouth and Jarrow would have assumed an urgent new symbolic meaning in the West, their display being an act of allegiance to the papacy and an expression of support for the Roman position on religious images.

To sum up: by the time that Bede came to embark upon his commentary on the Temple of Solomon, a dispute over the status of icons had emerged as a prominent issue in Byzantium. Although the movement against religious images was in its infancy in Bede's lifetime, support for it gathered pace in the East as the pontificate of Gregory II drew towards a close in the West. The critique of icons did not originate with Leo III, but his initial tolerance of it seems to have exacerbated an existing conflict between Constantinople and Rome in the 720s. The controversy over images had not abated at

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<sup>78</sup> LP LXXXVI.6–7 (reaction to Council in Trullo) and LXXXVI.11 (restoration of the mosaic on the external façade of the atrium of Old St Peter's). Sergius also restored the church of SS Cosmas and Damian, which had (and still has) a prominent mosaic of the Lamb of God on its triumphal arch: LP LXXXVI.13. For analysis, see: É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London, 2005), pp. 247–55.

<sup>79</sup> LP XC.8. Bede included this episode in the *Chronica maiora* and in both sources the erection of these pictures is presented as a direct response to the actions of Philippikos Bardanes. Bede adds the detail that the new emperor had taken down a similar set of images in Constantinople: DTR 66, s.a. 4667.

the time of Gregory III's accession in March 731, and the subject would therefore have been very current when Bede was working on *De templo* in c. 729–731.

#### IV. Bede's knowledge of contemporary world affairs in his maturity

By the time that Bede came to write *De templo* he had achieved technical mastery of many different types of Christian Latin literature and he had already completed the vast majority of his biblical commentaries, the most recent of which had advocated a comprehensive programme of ecclesiastical and societal reform.<sup>80</sup> In the late 720s Bede worked on his martyrology and the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* concurrently, projects that both required him to solicit material from his peers and then edit, adapt and shape that material as he thought appropriate.<sup>81</sup> In 725 Bede completed his *Chronica maiora* and issued it as Chapter 66 of *De temporum ratione*, the comprehensive manual of time reckoning which was arguably his most ambitious and impressive work.<sup>82</sup> Bede had a working copy of the *Liber Pontificalis* at his disposal whilst he was compiling the *Chronica maiora* and he used it extensively to guide his narrative of the sixth age of the

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<sup>80</sup> DeGregorio, "Nostrorum Socordiam Temporum".

<sup>81</sup> Bede, *Martyrologium*, eds J. Dubois and G. Renaud, *Édition pratique des martyrologes de Bède, de l'anonyme lyonnais et de Florus* (Paris, 1976), trans. F. Lifshitz, 'Bede, Martyrology', in T. Head (ed.), *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology* (New York, NY, 2000), pp. 169–98. That Bede's martyrology was completed and issued after 725 is clear from its reuse of material from the *Chronica maiora* (DTR 66).

<sup>82</sup> On the innovative nature of DTR and its utility see: F. Wallis, 'Si Naturam Quaeras: Re-Framing Bede's Science', in DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition*, pp. 65–100, at pp. 69–70. In terms of the number of extant medieval manuscripts, DTR is second only to the HE in Bede's canon: Westgard, 'Bede in the Carolingian Age and Beyond', p. 211.

world (defined by Bede as the period running from the Incarnation of Christ to the present day).<sup>83</sup>

The version of the *Liber Pontificalis* that Bede had access to in 725 included an unfinished biography of Gregory II.<sup>84</sup> That biography probably did not contain any information about the Byzantine image controversy, but it would have made Bede aware of the growing rift over taxation which had been developing between Constantinople and Rome since the late seventh century.<sup>85</sup> The very last entry in the *Chronica maiora* (sub anno 4680), which covers the opening years of Leo III's reign, includes details about international events that are not recorded in the papal biography of Gregory II as it has come down to us, for example: a conflict between the Bulgars (*vulgarorum gentem*) and an Arab army on the banks of the River Danube, which took place after the latter had attempted to besiege Constantinople.<sup>86</sup> Also, Bede relates that

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<sup>83</sup> The name '*Liber Pontificalis*' was popularized by the edition of the text by Duchesne but Bede referred to the papal biographies using the term '*in gestis pontificalibus*': In *Marci euangelium expositio* 4, lines 1674–8.

<sup>84</sup> This shows that contemporary records of Gregory's pontificate were being kept in Rome at that time: R. Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to Ad 715*, revised 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Liverpool, 2010), p. xiii.

<sup>85</sup> A week-long flooding of the River Tiber which Bede places before the accession of Leo III in 717 appears to be the latest event absorbed from the biography of Gregory II directly into the *Chronica maiora*: DTR 66, s.a. 4671; LP XCI.6.

<sup>86</sup> Bede's entry on the siege of Constantinople (DTR 66, s.a. 4680) is broadly similar to LP XCI.12, but Bede does not reuse the language of the papal biography as we have it, states that the siege lasted for three years rather than two and adds the information about the clash with the Bulgars. See: Davis, *Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes*, p. 2; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Europe (Jarrow Lecture, 1962)*, pp. 6–7, reprinted in Lapidge, ed. *Bede and His World*, I, pp. 71–85.

the bones of St Augustine of Hippo were translated to Pavia by Liutprand, king of the Lombards because their former resting place on Sardinia was no longer secure.

Although Bede took other details about Liutprand from the papal biography of Gregory II,<sup>87</sup> the tale of Augustine's translation is not recounted there or in any other near-contemporary source and it is not known how and in what form this information reached Bede.<sup>88</sup> These examples from the *Chronica maiora* show that, by 725, information about places at the far end of Christian Europe like Constantinople, Pavia and Sardinia could, and did, arrive with Bede at Wearmouth-Jarrow.

The far-reaching political, intellectual and cultural links between Anglo-Saxon England and the wider world present several different potential pathways for the transmission of important information to Northumbria in the early eighth century.<sup>89</sup> The

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<sup>87</sup> Bede knew about Liutprand's restoration of the patrimony of the Cottian Alps to the pope from LP XCI.4 (cf. DTR 66, s.a. 4670).

<sup>88</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Europe*, pp. 6–7. Bede places the translation of Augustine's bones from Sardinia to Pavia after the accession of Leo III in 717, but the exact year is not known. Hallenbeck suggests that it took place in 723 or 724, which would have made it a very recent event at the time of Bede's writing: J.T. Hallenbeck, *The Transferal of the Relics of St. Augustine of Hippo from Sardinia to Pavia in the Early Middle Ages* (Lewiston, NY, 2000), pp. 113–29. Augustine apparently had no compelling connection with Pavia: H.S. Stone, 'Cult of Augustine's Body', in A. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), pp. 256–9.

<sup>89</sup> On the political connections between Anglo-Saxon England and Francia before 750, see: J. Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, C. 750–870* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 26–41. Byzantine and Mediterranean cultural influences reveal themselves profoundly in the Insular art and sculpture produced in Bede's lifetime: P.J. Nordhagen, *The Codex Amiatinus and the Byzantine Element in the Northumbrian Renaissance* (Jarrow Lecture, 1977), reprinted in Lapidge, ed. *Bede and His World*, I, pp. 435–62; E. Kitzinger, 'Interlace and Icons: Form and Function in Early Insular

coastal locations of the monastic complexes at Warmouth and Jarrow helped both sites maintain a diverse array of international connections, especially Jarrow on the south bank of the River Tyne, which was recognized as an important harbour in the Middle Ages.<sup>90</sup> The provisional findings of an investigation into the origins of the glass used at Jarrow reveal that its materials ultimately derived from the Mediterranean and Near East,<sup>91</sup> and we catch a glimpse of Bede's own familiarity with luxury items from abroad in the personal possessions attributed to him in the *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae: piperum, oraria et incensa*.<sup>92</sup> In the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede tells us that many of his

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Art', in R.M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (eds), *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 3–15. For links between Anglo-Saxon England and the Islamic world, see: K. Scarfe Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 44–68. The importance of cultural connections between Anglo-Saxon England and the Near East are emphasized by M.P. Brown, 'The Eastwardness of Things: Relationships between the Christian Cultures of the Middle East and the Insular World', in M. Hussey and J.D. Niles (eds), *The Genesis of Books: Studies in the Interactions of Words, Text, and Print in Honor of A.N. Doane* (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 17–49.

<sup>90</sup> The mudflats close to the monastery (Jarrow Slake) were referred to in the Middle Ages as 'Ecgrith's port' (portus Ecgrithi): I.N. Wood, 'The Foundation of Bede's Wearmouth-Jarrow', in DeGregorio (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Bede*, pp. 84–96, at p. 91; I.N. Wood, 'The Origins of Jarrow; the Monastery, the Slake and Ecgrith's Minster', *Bede's World Studies* 1 (2008), pp. 6, 18–27, 32–3. See further: C. Ferguson, 'Re-Evaluating Early Medieval Northumbrian Contacts and the 'Coastal Highway'', in D. Petts and S. Turner (eds), *Early Medieval Northumbria: Kingdoms and Communities, AD 450–1100* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 283–302.

<sup>91</sup> I.C. Freestone and M.J. Hughes, 'The Anglo-Saxon Window Glass', in Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow sites*, II, pp. 147–55.

<sup>92</sup> Incense and pepper were both very rare and expensive and would have reached Anglo-Saxon England only after passing through an intercontinental network of trade routes. Pepper was used at Wearmouth-

Anglo-Saxon contemporaries were keen to travel to Rome, and it would seem that several of them did so, thereby emulating the actions of the early Northumbrian pioneers of overseas travel Benedict Biscop, Ceolfrith and Wilfrid.<sup>93</sup> The names of some of these travellers are known, such as Ine, the king of the West Saxons who abdicated and went to Rome where he died in 726, and Willibald of Eichstätt, a pilgrim, and later a missionary, who travelled to Rome, Jerusalem and Constantinople as a young man. According to his contemporary biographer Hygeburg of Heidenheim, Willibald resided in Constantinople between 727 and 729 and travelled from there back to Italy in the company of papal and imperial diplomats.<sup>94</sup> There is no evidence to connect Willibald directly to Bede,<sup>95</sup> but it is nevertheless intriguing to think that this

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Jarrow as a seasoning for food and to prevent illness (DTR 30). Incense was burnt in St Peter's Church in Wearmouth on the occasion of Ceolfrith's departure in June 716 (UBA 17) and there is evidence that the Anglo-Saxons used censers for this purpose: L. Webster, 'Censers', *BEASE*, p. 92; Webster and Backhouse, *Making of England*, p. 94. The meaning of orarium is not self-evident. It may refer to textiles used in the performance of the mass: N.J. Higham, (Re) *Reading Bede: The Ecclesiastical History in Context* (London, 2006), pp. 18–19. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the term refers to a priest's stole: D.J. Heisey, 'Bede's Pepper, Napkins and Incense', *Downside Review* 129 (2011), pp. 16–30, at pp. 22–3.

<sup>93</sup> HE V.7. See also: DTR 66, s.a. 4671. On travel between Anglo-Saxon England and Rome, see: S. Matthews, *The Road to Rome: Travel and Travellers between England and Italy in the Anglo-Saxon Centuries*, *British Archaeological Reports International Series 1680* (Oxford, 2007); D.A.E. Pelteret, 'Travel between England and Italy in the Early Middle Ages', in H. Sauer and J. Story (eds), *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent* (Tempe, AZ, 2011), pp. 245–74.

<sup>94</sup> Hygeburg of Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eichstetensis* 4, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH, Scriptores* (SS) 15 (Hannover, 1887), pp. 86–106 (at p. 101, lines 28–30).

<sup>95</sup> They may have had a contact in common in Daniel, bishop of Winchester: Daniel supplied Bede with information about the West Saxons for the HE, as the preface to that work makes clear; Willibald was



Anglo-Saxon traveller would have been well positioned to have personally witnessed the reactions of senior officials from Constantinople and Rome to the opening stages of the image controversy.

Presumably, many of those who made the journey to Rome returned to Anglo-Saxon England afterwards, as was certainly the case with at least some members of the large party that set out from Wearmouth-Jarrow in the company of Ceolfrith in 716.<sup>96</sup> One traveller who definitely did return to Anglo-Saxon England after spending time in Rome was Nothhelm, a priest of London who went on to become archbishop of Canterbury in 735 (d. 739). The *Epistola ad Albinum* mentions that Nothhelm acted as a courier of documents for the *Historia ecclesiastica*, transporting them from Albinus to Bede. Nothhelm's role as a messenger for Albinus is also made clear in the preface to the *Historia ecclesiastica*, which relates that after an initial visit to Bede, Nothhelm travelled to Rome and, with the permission of Pope Gregory II, searched through the archives of the Roman Church to find letters written by Gregory the Great and other popes. At Albinus's behest, Nothhelm returned to Wearmouth-Jarrow so that the documents he had copied in Rome could be included in the final version of the *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>97</sup>

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educated at the monastery of Bishops Waltham in the kingdom of Wessex, although he did not return to Anglo-Saxon England after leaving in c. 720.

<sup>96</sup> Some of Ceolfrith's party returned to Northumbria immediately after his death at Langres in Gaul but others continued on to Rome with the Codex Amiatinus and returned to Wearmouth-Jarrow with a letter from Pope Gregory II: Anonymous of Wearmouth-Jarrow, *Uita sanctissimi Ceolfridi abbatis* 37–9.

<sup>97</sup> HE preface: 'Qui uidelicet Nothelmus postea Romam ueniens, nonnullas ibi beati Gregorii papae simul et aliorum pontificum epistulas, perscrutato eiusdem sanctae ecclesiae Romanae scrinio, permissu eius,

Gregory II was intimately connected with the preservation of the papacy's historical documents and the upkeep of its archive, having served as bibliothecarius of the papal library before becoming pope.<sup>98</sup> By the eighth century the papal library and scrinium (centre for administration and record keeping) were both housed in the Lateran Palace.<sup>99</sup> Bede implies that Nothhelm sought permission directly from Gregory II to conduct his research and his choice of words in the preface to the *Historia ecclesiastica* places Nothhelm in the scrinium itself (*sanctae ecclesiae Romanae scrinio*). Nothhelm thus had access to the administrative nerve centre of papal Rome and would have worked in close proximity with papal officials of the highest rank. His admittance to the Lateran Palace complex makes it entirely possible that Nothhelm would have met Gregory II in person and made him aware of the reasons for his interest in the papal letters concerning the Anglo-Saxons. As the recipient of the Codex Amiatinus, a magnificent single volume Vulgate Bible produced at Wearmouth-Jarrow during the abbacy of Ceolfrith, Gregory was well aware that Bede's monastery was an important centre of theological expertise, ecclesiastical orthodoxy and Latin learning.<sup>100</sup> Gregory II had at least one further contact in Anglo-Saxon England: Bede's explanation of the

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qui nunc ipsi ecclesiae praeest Gregorii pontificis, inuenit, reuersusque nobis nostrae historiae inserendas cum consilio praefati Albini reuerentissimi patris adtulit'.

<sup>98</sup> LP XCI.1. Gregory combined the job of librarian with that of sacellarius (financial administrator).

<sup>99</sup> T.F.X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680–825* (Philadelphia, PA, 1984), pp. 219–20; Richards, *Popes and the Papacy*, pp. 290–91.

<sup>100</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Amiatinus 1. A complete facsimile of the manuscript is available on CD-ROM: *La Bibbia Amiatina / The Codex Amiatinus* (Florence, 2000). Gregory II wrote a letter to the Wearmouth-Jarrow monks thanking them for their gift: Anonymous of Wearmouth-Jarrow, *Uita sanctissimi Ceolfridi abbatis* 39.

term *simicinthia* in the *Retractatio in Actus apostolorum* – which, he proposes, refers to a napkin that the Hebrews wore on their heads – was derived from one of Gregory's answers to a set of questions that were asked of him by a friend from Britannia whilst he was still an archdeacon (that is before 19 May 715).<sup>101</sup> The identity of this friend (*amicus*) and their date of death are not known, nor is it apparent how Gregory's etymology was communicated to Bede, but this episode presents another direct link between Gregory II and the intellectual milieu of Anglo-Saxon England.

The preface to the *Historia ecclesiastica* makes it explicitly clear that Nothhelm's two visits to Bede were separated by the journey to Rome, and it is implied that the second visit took place at least a few years (*postea*) after the first. Meyvaert has suggested that the first visit to Northumbria could have been as early as 715, connecting it to the composition of Bede's *In Regum librum xxx quaestiones* (a short exegetical treatise addressed to Nothhelm).<sup>102</sup> The timing of Nothhelm's second journey to Northumbria is bound up with the issue of Bede's access to the resources included in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, particularly the papal letters of Gregory the Great and Honorius I. Bede appears to have acquired several important papal documents after he had completed the *Chronica maiora* in 725 which greatly enhanced his understanding of the

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<sup>101</sup> Bede, *Retractatio in Actus apostolorum* 19, lines 13–15; ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnhout, 1983), pp. 103–63: 'Multi nostrum quid *simicinthia* significant ignorant, uerum Gregorius, qui nunc est apostolicae sedis antistes, cum adhuc esset archidiaconus, sciscitante amico de Brittaniam et hoc inter alia rescripsit, genus esse sudarii quo Hebraei uterentur in capite'.

<sup>102</sup> P. Meyvaert, 'In the Footsteps of the Fathers': The Date of Bede's Thirty Questions on the Book of Kings to Nothhelm', in W.E. Klingshirn and M. Vessey (eds), *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honour of R.A. Markus* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1997), pp. 267–86, at pp. 274–7.

early history of the Church in England, especially the mission undertaken by Augustine of Canterbury at Gregory the Great's behest.<sup>103</sup> That the *Chronica maiora* relies upon the *Liber Pontificalis* for its information about Augustine's mission is a key indicator of this: first, Bede identifies Augustine, Mellitus and John as the leaders of the missionary party but nobody named John features in the account of the mission given in the *Historia ecclesiastica*; also, the *Chronica maiora* has just one group of missionaries leaving Rome and does not mention that Mellitus actually led a second party to augment the first, five years after Augustine had originally set out for Britannia.<sup>104</sup> It is hard to imagine why Bede would have relied upon the *Liber Pontificalis* in the chronicle if he had had all of the papal correspondence that underpinned his account of the Gregorian mission in books I and II of the *Historia ecclesiastica* at his disposal at the time of writing.

The implication must be that Bede's understanding of the shape and course of the Roman mission improved considerably in the period of time after 725 (when the *Chronica maiora* was issued) but before 731 (the given date of completion for the *Historia ecclesiastica*). As Nothhelm was in Rome with the specific purpose of researching material relating to that mission it is logical to assume that Bede's

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<sup>103</sup> P. Meyvaert, *Bede and Gregory the Great* (Jarrow Lecture, 1964), pp. 8–13, reprinted in Lapidge, ed. *Bede and His World*, I, pp. 103–32; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People. A Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 30–31; Lapidge and Chiesa, *Storia Degli Inglesi*, I, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii; J. Story, 'Bede, Willibrord and the Letters of Pope Honorius I on the Genesis of the Archbishopric of York', *EHR* 127 (2012), pp. 783–818.

<sup>104</sup> DTR 66, s.a. 4557; LP LXVI.3 (Augustine, Mellitus and John). HE I.29 and I.30 (mission augmented by second party led by Mellitus). See: Meyvaert, *Bede and Gregory*, p. 11; Wallace-Hadrill, *Historical Commentary*, p. 43.

understanding of its progress was revolutionized by Nothhelm and the materials that he brought with him on his second journey to Wearmouth-Jarrow. Nothhelm's departure from Rome must therefore have taken place after 725 but before c. 730 (a further six months to a year must be accounted for to allow time for Nothhelm to complete the journey across land and sea from Rome to Northumbria).<sup>105</sup> This places Nothhelm's research visit to the papal scrinium in the mid- to late-720s, meaning that he was there at the same time as the debate over the status of religious images was gathering pace in the East and starting to attract the attention of Gregory II. Nothhelm would have been well positioned to have observed the reaction of senior papal officials to the early stages of the dispute over icons at first hand, and his subsequent visit to Wearmouth-Jarrow presented him with an opportunity to relate the core features of the discussions that he had heard to Bede in person.

#### V. A statement concerning the visual arts in De templo Book II

In the second and final book of *De templo*, Bede interrupts his commentary on Chapter VII of 1 Kings to make the following pronouncement:

True it must be noted here that there are people who think we are prohibited by God's law from carving or painting, in a church or any other place, representations of either humans or animals or objects of whatever kind, on the grounds that he has

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<sup>105</sup> In 716 it took Ceolfrith's party 114 days (from 4 June – 25 September) to cross the Channel and reach Langres after setting out from Wearmouth: UBA 21–3. In terms of distance, Langres is about half way between Wearmouth and Rome. Nothhelm's travelling party was presumably smaller than the 80 or more men that made up the party of 716, and one assumes that Nothhelm could have travelled more quickly than the elderly and frail Ceolfrith who was carried some of the way in a horse-litter. On travel in the Middle Ages see: M. McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge, 2001), especially pp. 469–500.

said in the Ten Commandments of the Law, You shall not make for yourself a carved thing, or the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or of those things that are in the waters under the earth.<sup>106</sup> But they would not think any such thing if they called to mind either the work of Solomon by which he made palm-trees and cherubim with various carvings inside the temple and pomegranates and network on its pillars and also twelve oxen and chamfered sculptures on this Bronze Sea; as well as that, on the supports of the lavers, as we read in what follows, he made lions and oxen, palm trees, axels and wheels with cherubim and various kinds of paintings (picturarum) or, at any rate, [they would not think so] if they considered the works of Moses himself who at the Lord's command first of all made cherubim on the propitiatory and later a brazen serpent in the desert so that by gazing at it the people might be healed of the poison of wild serpents. For if it was permissible to raise up the brazen serpent on a tree that the Israelites might live by looking at it, why is it not permissible that the exaltation of the Lord our saviour on the cross whereby he conquered death be recalled to the minds of the faithful pictorially, or even his other miracles and cures whereby he wonderfully triumphed over the same author of death, since the sight of these things often tends to elicit great compunction in the beholders and also to make available to those who are illiterate a living narrative of the story of the Lord. For in Greek too a painting is called ζῶγραφία i.e. 'living writing' (viva scriptura). If it was permissible to make twelve bronze oxen carrying the sea that had been laid upon them to face in threes towards the four quarters of the universe, what objection is there to depicting how the twelve apostles went and taught all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, or representing this in a living scripture, as it were, for all to see. If it was not against this law for chamfered sculptures of ten cubits to be made in this Sea all the way round, how could it be considered contrary to the law if we carve or paint in

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<sup>106</sup> Exodus XX.4.

pictures the stories of the saints and martyrs of Christ, seeing that we have merited through the protection of the divine law to attain the glory of everlasting reward?<sup>107</sup>

The section of 1 Kings in question (1 Kings VII.23–26) describes the Temple's enormous laver, here referred to as the 'Bronze Sea' (mare aeneum), which was a large basin for ritual washings that stood in the courtyard of the Temple. The laver rested

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<sup>107</sup> DT II, lines 809–43: 'Notandum sane hoc in loco quia sunt qui putant lege dei prohibitum ne uel hominum uel quorumlibet animalium siue rerum similitudines sculpamus aut depingamus in ecclesia uel alio quolibet loco eo quod in decalogo legis dixerit: non facies tibi sculptile neque omnem similitudinem quae est in caelo desuper et quae in terra deorsum nec eorum quae sunt in aquis sub terra. Qui nequaquam hoc putarent, si uel salomonis opus ad memoriam reuocassent quo et in templo intus palmas fecit et cherubim cum uariis celaturis et in columnis illius mala granata et rete in mari quoque hoc aeneo duodecim boues et scalpturas histriatas sed et in basibus luterum ut in sequentibus legitur leones cum bubus palmas axes et rotas cum cherubim et uario picturarum genere fecit, uel certe ipsius moysi opera considerassent qui iubente domino et cherubim prius in propitiatorio et postea serpentem fecit aeneum in heremo cuius intuitu populus a ferorum serpentium ueneno saluaretur. Si enim licebat serpentem exaltari aeneum in ligno quem aspicientes filii israhel uiuerent, cur non licet exaltationem domini saluatoris in cruce qua mortem uicit ad memoriam fidelibus depingendo reduci uel etiam alia eius miracula et sanationes quibus de eodem mortis auctore mirabiliter triumphauit cum horum aspectus multum saepe compunctionis soleat praestare contuentibus et eis quoque qui litteras ignorant quasi uiuam dominicae historiae pandere lectionem? Nam et pictura graece zôgraphia~g, id est uiua scriptura, uocatur. Si licuit duodecim boues aeneos facere qui mare superpositum ferentes quattuor mundi plagas terni respicerent, quid prohibet duodecim apostolos pingere quomodo euntes docerent omnes gentes baptizantes eos in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti uiua ut ita dixerim prae oculis omnium designare scriptura? Si eidem legi contrarium non fuit in eodem mari scalpturas histriatas in gyro decem cubitorum fieri, quomodo legi contrarium putabatur si historias sanctorum ac martyrum christi sculpamus siue pingamus in tabulis qui per custodiam diuinae legis ad gloriam meruerunt aeternae retributionis attingere'.

Translation: Connolly, *On the Temple*, pp. 90–91.

upon supports carved as statues of oxen and was decorated with chamfered sculpture, as the excerpt above makes clear, but Bede's statement looks well beyond the immediate subject of these verses and he also discusses: other aspects of the Temple's decorative scheme; two incidents from the life of Moses; and pictures and carvings more generally (of animals, humans, martyrs and saints, and episodes from the life of Christ). In *De templo* this passage follows on from an interpretation of the capacity of the laver (1 Kings VII.26), but it does not directly engage with that pericope at all. Instead, Bede comments upon the decorative elements of the Bronze Sea that have been mentioned in the preceding three verses and celebrates the visual splendour of the Temple more generally. This discursive passage therefore feels very much like an interjection, a standalone statement on the legitimacy of religious paintings, carvings and sculptures. It is followed by a complementary paragraph which considers the received Vulgate wording of the Second Commandment in close detail: here, Bede argues that the idolatrous worshipping of images was prohibited by Exodus XX.4, not their making or display.<sup>108</sup>

In Bede's view, the paintings that adorned Solomon's Temple established a precedent for the elaborate decoration of sacred buildings with images, and it is significant that the Latin word used in the excerpt given above is *pictura* (the same term used to describe the panel paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow in chapters 6 and 9 of the *Vita Beatorum Abbatum*). As has often been noted, this part of *De templo* was evidently

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<sup>108</sup> DT II, lines 844–66. See the comments of Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, pp. 112–14, who describes the arguments in defence of images in this part of DT as 'familiar and traditional'.



written with the Wearmouth-Jarrow artistic scheme in mind.<sup>109</sup> Bede's keenness to establish that images of the twelve apostles were legitimate should be read in light of the fact that there were pictures of each of the twelve apostles fixed around the central arch of St Peter's Church in Wearmouth on a tabulatum; similarly, the reference to Moses and the brazen serpent recalls the painting of this scene from St Paul's Jarrow which was paired typologically with an image of Christ crucified.<sup>110</sup>

The explicit statement in defence of religious art in Book II of *De templo* is especially notable in light of the fact that a significant debate over images was taking place in Byzantium at the time of writing. It is not clear exactly who Bede's statement concerning the 'people who think that we are prohibited by God's law from carving or painting' was directed at, and considering the uncertainty regarding the extent of imperial involvement in the image controversy in the time of Leo III we should be cautious about assuming that Bede was referring directly to the emperor or his advisors. Nevertheless, it certainly seems as though Bede had become aware of some sort of challenge to religious art and perceived it to be a threat to the visually rich ecclesiastical culture which he had been immersed in since his oblation. It is clear that Bede associated this threat with an over-literal interpretation of the statement prohibiting the making of carvings and images in the Second Commandment (Exodus XX.4). *De templo* was one of the very last scriptural commentaries to be finished by Bede, and so

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<sup>109</sup> Meyvaert, 'Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', pp. 68–70; G. Henderson, *Bede and the Visual Arts* (Jarrow Lecture, 1980), pp. 15–16, reprinted in Lapidge, ed. *Bede and His World*, II, pp. 507–38; A.G. Holder, 'Allegory and History in Bede's Interpretation of Sacred Architecture', *American Benedictine Review* 40 (1989), pp. 115–31, at pp. 123–4; Chazelle, 'Art and Reverence', p. 80.

<sup>110</sup> UBA 6, 9. On the meaning of the term tabulatum see: Meyvaert, 'Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', pp. 70–74.

it is possible to compare its content with his back catalogue of completed exegetical writings in order to determine whether or not any of its interpretations were new. Bede's willingness to address Exodus XX.4 in *De templo* is one such example of a novel intellectual concern. According to the indices of the modern Latin editions of the relevant works, not once in all of the scriptural commentaries written before *De templo* did Bede comment upon Exodus XX.4 directly. The same is also true of Bede's wider body of work, including his educational treatises and all fifty of the Gospel homilies attributed to him.<sup>111</sup> Whilst it is true that Exodus XX.4 had been provoking disquiet amongst Christians for several centuries before iconoclasm,<sup>112</sup> it is hard to see why Bede felt the need to comment upon this verse in c. 729–731 after remaining silent about it before then unless he was prompted to do so by the contemporary dispute over icons. Bede's suggestion that the idea that pictures can function as *viva scriptura* ('living writings' or 'living scriptures') is expressed by the Greek word 'ζωγραφία' is markedly ironic given the contemporary circumstances, and this statement could be interpreted as subtle indication that Bede associated the threat to images that he was reacting to with the literate Greek culture of Byzantium.<sup>113</sup>

#### VI. *De templo*: a multifaceted response to the image question

The connection between Bede's spirited justification for the visual arts in the passage cited at length above and the contemporaneous outbreak of the image controversy has

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<sup>111</sup> Indices of scriptural citations in Bede's writings are published in CCSL vols 118A–123C.

<sup>112</sup> Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, pp. 10–45.

<sup>113</sup> DT II, lines 809–12; 831–3.

been noted before,<sup>114</sup> but the importance of this theme in the commentary as a whole deserves closer analysis. Whilst it is important to recognize that *De templo* tackles several important themes concurrently, including salvation history, eschatology and the need to strengthen the Church in the present, in many respects the commentary is driven by a need to address the image question, the most pressing theological issue in Christendom at the time of its composition. A simple search of the electronic Library of Latin Texts (LLT–A) published by Brepols shows that Bede used a singular or plural form of the word *pictura* 28 times in the works covered by the database: three of these are contained in the descriptions of the adornment of Wearmouth and Jarrow in the *Uita beatorum abbatum*; four are in *De tabernaculo* (a commentary on the Tabernacle of Moses which shares stylistic similarities with *De templo*); two pictures are mentioned in the *Chronica maiora*; and seven further Bedan texts employ the term just once. The fact that the remaining twelve references to *picturae*, nearly half of the entire sample, are found in *De templo* shows that the subject of visual images received far more attention in the treatise on the Temple of Solomon than in any of Bede's other writings.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Meyvaert, 'Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', pp. 68–9; Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp. 88–9; Ó Carragáin, *City of Rome and the World of Bede*, pp. 30–31; Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, pp. 112–16.

<sup>115</sup> Figures derived from the Brepols Library of Latin Texts (LLT–A) database using the search term '*pictura\**'. The database has an almost comprehensive coverage of Bede's writings, although it lacks electronic editions of the *Martyrologium*, the *Collectaneum* of excerpts from the writings of Augustine on the Pauline Epistles, and the short tract *De Octo Quaestionibus*. The latter work contains two further uses of the term *pictura* in the responses to questions 2 and 6: M. Gorman, 'Bede's VIII Quaestiones and Carolingian Biblical Scholarship', *Revue Bénédictine* 109 (1999), pp. 32–74, at pp. 64–5 and 68–9.

The content of *De templo* was planned in meticulous detail. Rather than write a commentary on the entire book of 1 Kings, or perhaps 1 and 2 Kings together, Bede focussed specifically upon the building and adornment of the Temple itself, detaching the relevant verses from their wider biblical setting. In this regard *De templo* is similar to *De tabernaculo*, but different from the commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah which considers the construction of the Second Temple and the rebuilding of the city walls of Jerusalem but does so within the context of a comprehensive treatment of the Old Testament books in which those events are described.<sup>116</sup> *De templo* does not pay much attention to the historical circumstances that led to the building of Solomon's Temple, and it overlooks entirely the events that followed its completion, including: the visit from the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings X.1–13); Solomon's reported 700 wives and 300 concubines (XI.1–3); the king's subsequent descent into idolatry (XI.4–13); and his disastrous campaigns against his adversaries (XI.14–40). And although Bede chose a very specific part of 1 Kings to comment upon (V.6–VII.51), he did not treat every verse within that range and subtly overlooked several that were deemed irrelevant to the intentions of the *De templo* project.<sup>117</sup> Bede passed over a small number of verses that describe the Temple's furnishings,<sup>118</sup> but the overwhelming majority of those omitted

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<sup>116</sup> Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout, 1969), pp. 237–392.

<sup>117</sup> T. Morrison, 'Bede's *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo*', *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 3 (2007), pp. 243–57, at p. 253.

<sup>118</sup> For example, Bede misses out 1 Kings VII.22: 'And upon the tops of the pillars he made lily work'. Similarly 1 Kings VII.33–4 and VII.36 (on the design and decoration of the ten movable stands of bronze) are not dealt with directly, although the stands are treated at DT II, lines 1104–26 (on 1 Kings VII.32 and VII.35) and VII.33 is tackled a few sections early in Bede's exegesis of 1 Kings VII.30 at DT II, lines

share something in common in that they do not directly refer to the Temple or the sequence of its construction. Rather, most of the pericopes obscured from view in *De templo* convey points of narrative detail, such as: King Hiram of Tyre's message to Solomon and the terms of their treaty (1 Kings V.7–12); the Lord's message to Solomon (VI.11–14); and the building of Solomon's royal palace (VII.1–12). This selective cutting focusses Bede's exegetical observations entirely upon the allegorical insights that can be derived from the design, construction and finished appearance of the Temple of Solomon itself.

In *De templo* Bede was setting his own agenda, treating only the verses from 1 Kings that were germane to his purposes, one of which was to reassert the importance of the visual arts to the culture of Christianity. The commentary is avowedly allegorical,<sup>119</sup> but it also pays very close attention to the historical sense of Scriptural interpretation and attempts to recreate an accurate visual image of the Temple in the mind of the reader by guiding them through the literal details recorded in the biblical account of its construction. In Bede's view the Temple had existed exactly as it is described in 1 Kings: it contained decorated cedar wood beams, it was adorned with images, carvings and fine textiles and a giant bronze laver had stood in its courtyard. In the course of *De templo* Bede ties every aspect of the Temple of Solomon into a series of theological principles and present day concerns. Several passages in *De templo* show that Bede found deep spiritual significance in the visual splendour of the finished structure. His treatment of the cedar wood beams, which according to an analogous

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1015–48. Bede also passes over 1 Kings VII.40–44a, a passage which summarizes King Hiram's contribution to the Temple's furnishings; this was probably motivated by a desire to avoid repetition.

<sup>119</sup> Bede describes DT as an allegorical treatise in its prologue, lines 55–9. See also: HE V.24 and *Epistula ad Albinum* (Westgard, 'Bede's Letter to Albinus', pp. 214–15).

passage in 2 Chronicles were partially gilded, stresses both their physical beauty and allegorical importance: the plain beams represent life on earth and the beams coated with gold stand for the resplendent vision of the Lord awaiting the elect in the afterlife. Only those who entered the Temple could see the parts of the beams that were gilded, Bede suggests, because only those who enter the kingdom of heaven will be able to look upon the Lord.<sup>120</sup> The reported aesthetic beauty of the beams is thus a crucial element of their spiritual meaning, and Bede similarly celebrated the magnificence of other key aspects of the Temple's decorative scheme, such as its panelled ceilings (1 Kings VI.9) and the multi-coloured veil at the entrance to the inner sanctuary (2 Chronicles III.14).<sup>121</sup> Bede thought that every aspect of the Scriptural description of the Temple of Solomon was laden with divine mysteries.<sup>122</sup> By layering the Old Testament text with allegories, his commentary subtly endorses the idea that the opulent decoration of sacred buildings is an entirely acceptable practice. For Bede, the Temple itself represented a historical precedent for the lavish decoration of a sacred space, but the individual elements of its decorative scheme were each significant in and of themselves because they could reveal important lessons for his audience, much like the typologically arranged sets of *picturae* at Wearmouth and Jarrow did for their beholders in eighth-century Northumbria.

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<sup>120</sup> DT I, lines 697–717 (drawing on 2 Chronicles III.7). The idea that the elect will be rewarded with a beatific vision in the kingdom of heaven is often emphasized by Bede: J.L. O'Reilly, 'Bede on Seeing the God of Gods in Zion', in A. Minnis and J. Roberts (eds), *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 3–29.

<sup>121</sup> DT I, lines 831–48 (panelled ceilings praised for their visual splendour); I, lines 1602–6 (on the decorative beauty of the silk veil).

<sup>122</sup> DT I, lines 1–33.

An artist's right to create pieces of art depicting religious themes would be called into question and vigorously debated throughout the iconoclast era.<sup>123</sup> This challenge to the status of painters, sculptors and other skilled workers is anticipated in *De templo*; the commentary contains several passages that celebrate the valuable contributions made by artisans to the development of the Universal Church. Early in Book I of *De templo* Bede makes the following statement regarding the many thousands of stonemasons who were recruited to work for King Solomon (1 Kings V.15–16):

He calls the stonemasons *latomi*. These stonemasons, who also figuratively represent the woodcutters, are the holy preachers who train the minds of the ignorant by the work of the word of God and strive to change them from the baseness and deformity in which they were born, and when they have been duly instructed, endeavour to render them fit to join the body of the faithful, i.e. for the building of the house of God.<sup>124</sup>

Artisans and preachers were much alike in Bede's view: after completing a programme of instruction they become ready to make a vital contribution to the building of the house of God, whether literally or metaphorically. Preachers were fundamentally important to the development of the Church because their words could have a transformative effect on people's minds, directing them towards the contemplation of God like craftsmen who skilfully transform base resources into an array of attractive and useful materials. Much like the explicit statement in defence of paintings and

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<sup>123</sup> Barber, *Figure and likeness*, pp. 107–23; Brown, 'Dark-Age Crisis', pp. 9, 20.

<sup>124</sup> DT I, lines 214–18: '*Latomos dicit lapidum caesores. Idem autem lapidum caesores qui et lignorum figurate designant, hoc est sanctos praedicatores qui mentes insipientium de labore uerbi dei exercent eosque ab ea in qua nati sunt turpitudine ac deformitate transmutare contendunt ac regulariter institutos unitati fidelium aedificio uidelicet domus dei aptos reddere curant*'. Translation: Connolly, *On the Temple*, p. 11.

carvings from Book II of *De templo* considered above, this interpretation links back to Bede's own immediate environment because it recalls the *cementarii* brought from Gaul by Benedict Biscop to construct the monastic complexes at Wearmouth and Jarrow *iuxta Romanorum morem*.<sup>125</sup> Masons and sculptors made several important contributions to the development of the Church in early Anglo-Saxon Northumbria: they erected churches and other ecclesiastical buildings, fashioned dressed stone for the interior and exterior decoration of those buildings and produced magnificent freestanding monumental crosses that stood in the Northumbrian landscape like inanimate preachers made of stone.<sup>126</sup>

In a subsequent section of Book I of *De templo*, Bede further explores the contribution that craftsmen have made to the development of the Church. The first part of 1 Kings VI.29 relates that the internal walls of the Temple's inner and outer rooms were lavishly decorated.<sup>127</sup> Bede offers a multifaceted interpretation of this pericope, first proposing that the walls represent the minds of the people of God which are adorned with virtues in the same manner as the walls of the Temple were decorated with

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<sup>125</sup> UBA 5.

<sup>126</sup> For example, the Ruthwell Cross, which is intricately carved with vernacular runes, Latin inscriptions, visual images and decorative patterns and anticipates an educated, literate viewer: I.N. Wood, 'Images as a Substitute for Writing: A Reply', in E.K. Chrysos and I.N. Wood (eds), *East and West: Modes of Communication* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 35–46, at pp. 40–41. The comprehensive treatment of the Ruthwell Cross in Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood* shows that its complex iconographic programme was steeped in the ecclesiastical controversies and liturgical developments of its time. The Ruthwell Cross is connected to Bede's oeuvre by: R.N. Bailey, 'In Medio Duorum Animalium: Habakkuk, the Ruthwell Cross and Bede's Life of St Cuthbert', in E. Mullins and D. Scully (eds), *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly* (Cork, 2011), pp. 243–52.

<sup>127</sup> 1 Kings VI.29: '... et omnes parietes templi per circuitum scalpsit variis celaturis et torno'.



figures and etchings.<sup>128</sup> Bede goes on to suggest that those who are highly skilled in fashioning works of visual art perform an important role within the Church, and their flawless working practices represent the devout lives of the saints, the most virtuous and perfect of all of God's followers:

These walls are also chased with carvings when the faithful are endowed with a spirit ready to do all that the Lord has commanded ... They are chased with carvings when they concentrate their efforts on virtues alone so that they cannot be turned away from the pursuit of them by any obstacles posed by circumstances or by any enticements. For since the turner (tornator) both surpasses the other arts in speed and observes without error the rule by which he executes his work, by this [rule] is designated the devout life of the saints which is always ready to obey the will of God and has learnt by long practice of the virtues to fulfil this obligation of obedience without deviation.<sup>129</sup>

Attention turns next to Christ, who is presented as the most accomplished worker of all because His actions were performed quickly and faultlessly and can inspire people to turn their minds towards the kingdom of heaven.<sup>130</sup> Bede is here acting as the master exegete, building his commentary layer upon layer and presenting three different yet complementary allegorical interpretative scenarios for a single pericope. All three

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<sup>128</sup> DT I, lines 1454–68.

<sup>129</sup> DT I, lines 1468–80: 'Scalpuntur idem parietes et torno cum prompto pollent animo fideles ad faciendum cuncta quae dominus praecepit ... Scalpuntur torno cum in tantum uirtutibus operam impendunt ut ab harum tramite nullis circumstantium rerum contrarietatibus nullis possint blandimentis auerti. Quia enim tornator et ceteris artibus uelocitate praecellit et ipse sibi regulam qua sine errore opus perficiat seruat apte per hanc pia sanctorum uita signatur quae et parata est semper ad obsequium diuinae uoluntatis et hoc absque diuerticulo errandi complere longo uirtutum usu exercitata didicit'. Translation: Connolly, *On the Temple*, p. 53 (modified).

<sup>130</sup> DT I, lines 1480–90 (utilizing Song of Songs V.14). Compare: Bede, *In Cantica canticorum IV*, lines 726–32, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119B (Turnhout, 1983), pp. 167–375.

interpretations legitimize the visual arts and the craftsmen that fashion them by linking the description of the interior walls of Solomon's Temple to a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith: the carvings and etchings simultaneously represent the actions of Christ, the devout lives of the saints and the Christian community as a whole.

Next, Bede's commentary immediately turns to the second part of 1 Kings VI.29 where further details relating to the iconographic programme of the wooden walls of the Temple are given. The walls were reportedly adorned with carvings in relief of cherubim, palm trees and other diverse representations (*picturas varias*).<sup>131</sup> Bede develops the idea that these carvings represent Christian virtues, connecting them to the virtues mentioned in Paul's letter to the Colossians (III.12–14) and explaining:

These virtues when they become such a habit with the elect that they seem, as it were, to be naturally ingrained in them, what else are they than the pictures of the Lord's house (*picturae domus domini*) done in relief as if they were coming out of the wall, because they no longer learn the words and works of truth extrinsically from others but have them deeply rooted within themselves, and, holding them in constant readiness, can bring forth from their inmost hearts the things that ought to be done and taught.<sup>132</sup>

Once the Christian virtues become embedded in an individual's character they can convey messages to others because their life becomes an outwardly visible example for

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<sup>131</sup> 1 Kings VI.29: '*...et fecit in eis cherubin et palmas et picturas varias quasi prominentes de pariete et egredientes*'.

<sup>132</sup> DT I, lines 1509–15: '*Quae uidelicet uirtutes cum in tantam electis consuetudinem uenerint ut uelut naturaliter eis esse uideantur insitae quid aliud quam picturae domus domini prominentes quasi de pariete exeunt quia uerba et opera ueritatis non adhuc ab aliis extrinsecus discunt sed ut sibimet infixae radicibus parata semper ab intimis cordis quae sunt agenda siue docenda proferunt*'. Translation: Connolly, *On the Temple*, p. 54 (with slight modification).

people to follow. The virtuous therefore share the qualities of the *picturae* etched into the walls of Solomon's Temple (and, implicitly, the panel paintings at Wearmouth and Jarrow). This passage anticipates an instructional role for the visual arts, but it also turns the figures and carvings of the Temple into allegorical representations of the ideal Christian life and symbols of orthodox teachers (a pointed message when one considers the fractious effect that the controversy over images was having upon Christendom at the time of writing). The idea that carvings allegorically relate to the outwardly visible lives of the elect which are important tools for the instruction of other Christians is used elsewhere in Book I of *De templo* to interpret a separate reference to the Temple's engraved internal walls (1 Kings VI.18): in this instance, Bede cites the specific example of Paul the Apostle, whose personal sufferings and virtuous actions in preaching to the Gentiles ought to inspire all living Christians.<sup>133</sup> Bede's treatment of the bronze worker from Tyre (1 Kings VII.13–45) makes a similar point: this highly-skilled craftsman, who cast many of the Temple's furnishings from burnished bronze, is said to represent the ministers of Christ chosen from the Gentiles.<sup>134</sup> This linking of the visual arts to the instruction of Christians past and present anticipates an important aspect of Bede's interjectory statement on the Second Commandment from Book II of *De templo* where art is openly praised for its potent educative qualities.<sup>135</sup> Accordingly, that oft-cited passage should not be read in isolation, but rather be seen as a blunt

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<sup>133</sup> DT I, lines 1077–86 (and see further: I, lines 1583–90). By directly connecting the visual arts with Paul's preaching amongst the Gentiles, Bede implicitly reinforces the idea that images are useful tools for the conversion of pagans (cf. the account of the arrival of Augustine of Canterbury to preach to the people of Kent in HE I.25 where a visual image played a prominent role in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons).

<sup>134</sup> DT II, lines 239–62.

<sup>135</sup> DT II, lines 809–43.

pronouncement on a subject that is also addressed in a more subtle fashion in other parts of the commentary as well.

Bede's own richly adorned monastic environment seems never to have been far from his mind whilst he was working on *De templo*. Bede silently recalls the paired images of Isaac and Christ from St Paul's Church in a passage which explains the connection between the Passion of Christ and the story of Isaac.<sup>136</sup> In a subsequent interpretation, one of the Temple's two sets of five tables (2 Chronicles IV.8) is related to episodes from the lives of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Lot, Abraham and Joseph; the other set of five tables are said to be found when it is recognized that such episodes are fulfilled by more recent events. By seeking out such parallels, Bede suggests, we are able to learn by finding new meanings in the old.<sup>137</sup> This idea, that the Temple's intricately decorated furnishings should inspire the reader to appreciate connections between the Old Testament and post-Incarnation eras, is implicitly reminiscent of the Wearmouth-Jarrow artistic scheme itself, where paired visual images were intentionally arranged in such a way as to facilitate insights of exactly that nature.<sup>138</sup>

## VII. Conclusion

Bede's ambitious commentary on the Temple of Solomon is targeted piece of engaged exegesis; it shows that in his maturity Bede was aware of, and was willing to address, the most important theological issues in the contemporary Christian world. *De templo* was written at a time when a controversy over icons in Byzantium had come to the

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<sup>136</sup> DT I, lines 477–81; UBA 9.

<sup>137</sup> DT II, lines 1452–79.

<sup>138</sup> UBA 6, 9.

attention of the papal administration of Gregory II. Bede's novel concern to celebrate the value of the visual arts to the Christian Church in Book I of *De templo* and the interjectory statement in defence of carved and painted images in Book II both seem to have been inspired by the international topical relevance of these issues in the late 720s. The panel paintings brought back from Rome by Benedict Biscop were an important part of the Wearmouth-Jarrow community's collective identity and a physical reminder of their first class credentials as a leading centre of Roman Christianity. By tackling the image question in *De templo*, Bede was simultaneously protecting his community's right to decorate their ecclesiastical buildings and confirming his monastery's allegiance to the ecclesiastical culture of Papal Rome. As the accounts of the adornment of Wearmouth and Jarrow in the *Vita beatorum abbatum* make abundantly clear, Bede greatly valued the presence of art in church buildings for its aesthetic appeal and didactic usefulness. Moreover, Bede recognized that Benedict's panel paintings helped to meet two of the immediate aims of the Anglo-Saxon Church in his lifetime: the expansion of Christianity amongst the uneducated; and the training of teachers and preachers to sustain and develop that enterprise. The commentary on the Temple of Solomon should be regarded as an important aspect of Bede's own substantial contribution to the latter initiative. *De templo* ensured that Bede's perspective on the image question would be circulated amongst an audience of influential contemporary intellectuals. The commentary reached out, in the first instance, to individuals like Albinus of Canterbury, but the numerous medieval manuscripts of *De templo* show that

it was also read by successive generations of ecclesiastical leaders across Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent for several centuries to come.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> For a list of medieval manuscripts of *De templo*, see: M.L.W. Laistner and H.H. King, *A Hand-List of Bede Manuscripts* (Ithaca, NY, 1943), pp. 75–8.