

Bede's Commentary on the Six Days of Creation and the Six Ages  
of the World in *In Genesim* I.1093-1224: Sources and Analogues.

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Abbreviations

CCSL: Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnhout)

CSEL: Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna)

*DGCM*: Augustine, *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, PL 34

*DTR*: Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*, CCSL 123B

*EPs*: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, CCSL 38-40

*HE*: Bede, *Historica Ecclesiastica*, ed. C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Bedae: Opera Historica*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896)

PL: Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844-64)

*QVT*: Isidore, *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum*, PL 83

MGH Auct. Ant.: Monumenta Historia Germanica, Auctores Antiquissimi (Berlin)

THE TRANSMISSION OF *IN GENESIM*

Bede probably started work on *In Genesim* between the years 703 and 709. He finished this work over two decades later, before he completed the *Historia Ecclesiastica* in 731.<sup>1</sup> The surviving manuscripts seem to suggest several stages of composition and therefore may be grouped into different recensions. In listing the manuscripts, Laistner only mentioned two recensions, one consisting of two books (ending at I.2316, corresponding to what is now regarded as the second recension) and one of four books (as in Jones' edition, ending at IV.1761, corresponding to the third recension), though he notes that one manuscript ends at I.1224, 'transmutabitur'.<sup>2</sup> In his edition, Jones lists two more manuscripts which end at the same place (that is, I.1224), and he suggests that this forms another recension, the first.<sup>3</sup> All the recensions we have are prefaced with the *Epistola ad Accam*, in which Bede said that he had written two books about Genesis, commenting as far as Gen. III.24, which accurately represents what we have in the second recension. In the manuscripts of the second recension, Book II begins after I.1224, and ends at I.2316 (Book II in the printed edition begins after I.2332). This division in the current Book I between I.1-1224 and I.1225-2316 is also reflected by stylistic differences. The first recension, Jones' Book Ia (I.1-1224) is dominated by chronological considerations. It is most like *De Temporibus* and *De Natura Rerum*, which are dated to pre-708 by Laistner.<sup>4</sup> Book Ib, that is the second book in the second recension (I.1225-2316), is a collectaneum of excerpts from Augustine's works. In the *Epistola ad Accam*, Bede also wrote that it was his intention to look at more of Genesis, after he had

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<sup>1</sup> For the following discussion of the manuscripts, I am indebted to Jones' introduction to *In Genesim*, CCSL 118A.

<sup>2</sup> M.L.W. Laistner and H.H. King, *A Hand-list of Bede Manuscripts* (Ithaca, 1949), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> I will refer to I.1-1224 as recension I (Jones' Ia), I.1-2316 as recension II (Jones' Ib) and I.1-IV.1761 as recension III (Jones' II).

<sup>4</sup> Laistner, *Hand-list*, p. 25.

considered the book of the prophet Ezra, which suggests that the rest of *In Genesim*, which comprises the third recension, was composed after he wrote his commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah, which is usually dated 725-31.<sup>5</sup> This suggests we can date recension I to pre-725, and recension II to around the year 725, and books II-IV (the third recension) after the commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah, but before 731, for in the *Historia Ecclesiastica (HE)* V.xxiv, Bede included *In Genesim* in his list of works. Following Laistner's dating of Bede's Apocalypse commentary, because of similarity of content, Jones would date Ia to the years 703-709, and, using the reference to the commentary on Ezra, would date Ib to the year 725, as Bede began work on that commentary, and II to the period 725-731, after that commentary was finished, but before the *HE* was completed. Recension III of *In Genesim* is more usually dated to 720, because of a computistical statement in II.1926-38.<sup>6</sup> But a reference to the Saracens in Book IV.250-56, might suggest a date after 721, when they reached Narbonne.<sup>7</sup> Subsequent scholars have followed Jones' dating,<sup>8</sup> but it seems that his dating of the second and third recensions may be incorrect, and that the computistical statement, found at II.1926-1938, cannot easily be disregarded, despite Jones' attempts to do so. The passage runs:

Notandum quasi iuxta litteram quod annum solis integrum fuerunt in arca qui septima decima die mensis secundi eam ingressi sunt, et post annum vicesima septima die eiusdem mensis egressi. Si enim hodierna die, verbi gratia, per kal. Apr. esset luna septima decima, sequente anno, pridie kalendarum earundem vicesima septima esset luna ventura, discursis ex ordine diebus trecentis sexaginta quinque, quibus annus solis expletur.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *In Esdram* III.xvi (CCSL 119A) contains a reference to *De Temporum Ratione (DTR)*, which was written in 725.

<sup>6</sup> C. Plummer, ed., *Venerabilis Bedae: Opera Historica*, vol. I (Oxford 1896), p. cxlix, followed by Laistner, *Hand-List*, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> This may not be significant, since it is possible that Bede took more than a year to write the third recension of *In Genesim*.

<sup>8</sup> G.H. Brown, *Bede the Venerable* (Boston, 1987), p. 51.

<sup>9</sup> 'It should be noted that according to the letter [i.e. literally] they were in the ark for a whole

Bede was here trying to reconcile the Hebrew lunar calendar with the Julian solar calendar, showing how the ten day discrepancy can be accounted for.<sup>10</sup> If we interpret Bede's statement as meaning that he was writing in the month of April, and that on the first day of that month, the moon was in its seventeenth day, and that a year hence it would be on its twenty-seventh day, then by consulting the Paschal tables,<sup>11</sup> it can be seen that the only year which fits those dates is indeed 720. The other possible years, 701 and 739, are out of range, the latter because Bede was dead, the former because in his prefatory letter, Bede referred to Acca as a bishop, and Acca did not become bishop until 709. It is true, as Jones points out, that at any time when the moon is in its seventeenth day, one year later it will be in its twenty-seventh day; however, if Bede followed his usual custom of giving examples from the year in which he was writing,<sup>12</sup> we can confidently date Book II of *In Genesim* to 720. However, in his prefatory letter to Acca, Bede wrote:

Aliqua etiam de sequentibus sacrae historiae, si Deus voluerit auxilio vestrae intercessionis comitante, scripturus, dum primo librum Sancti Ezrae prophetae ac sacerdotis in quo Christi et ecclesiae sacramenta sub figura, solutae longae captivitatis restaurati templi, reaedificatae civitatis, reductorum in Hierosolimam vasorum quae abducta, rescriptae legis dei quae incensa fuerat, castigati ab uxoribus alienigenis populi, et uno corde atque anima in dei servitium conversi, ut propheta simul et historicus conscripsit, parum perscrutatus fuero, et aliqua ex his quae commemoravi sacramentis apertiora studiosis, Deo favente, reddidero.<sup>13</sup>

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solar year, since [translating 'qui'] they entered it on the seventeenth day of the second month, and after one year, they went out on the twenty-seventh day of that same month. For example, if today's date, the 1st April, were the seventeenth day of the moon, the following year, on the day before the same calends [i.e. the 31st March], the twenty-seventh day of the moon would come, when as usual 365 days had passed, with which the solar year is completed'.

<sup>10</sup> *DTR* ch. xx (CCSL 123B) provides the necessary information to make the calculation.

<sup>11</sup> F. Wallis, trans., *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 1999), pp. 392-404.

<sup>12</sup> As he did in *DTR* ch. xxxix, for example.

<sup>13</sup> Pref., l. 35ff. 'For I will write some more about the continuation of sacred history, when I shall have first examined briefly ['parum'] the book of holy Ezra, prophet and priest, in which

This somewhat complicates the dating, since we know the book about Ezra to have been written after 725, because there are references therein to *De Temporum Ratione*, which was written in that year.<sup>14</sup> Jones uses this evidence to date the third recension of *In Genesim* to after 725. Plummer, however, thought that one did ‘not [have to] understand this as meaning that the Ezra had already been begun then’.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the simplest way to reconcile the difference might be to think that Bede began a preliminary study of the book of Ezra before 720, and then completed *In Genesim*, returning then to the commentary upon Ezra, which he completed after 725. The precise dating of the second and third recensions of *In Genesim* may, therefore, never be known.

There are eighteen manuscripts of *In Genesim* still surviving. Three of these manuscripts end at I.1224; one of these (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (BN) lat. 13373) being the earliest manuscript we have, dating from 817-35. The second recension, already referred to, is represented by two manuscripts, St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 255 (s. ix<sup>1</sup>), and Einsiedeln, Klosterbibliothek 376 (s. x), which is a direct copy of the St. Gall manuscript; the Einsiedeln manuscript is lacking many folios. The complete manuscript of the second recension ends at I.2316, just before the end of what is Book I in Jones’ edition (as already noted above). The third recension has all four books as we have them presented in the CCSL edition, and the remainder of the manuscripts all carry that recension. None of these manuscripts is earlier than the ninth century.<sup>16</sup>

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the sacraments of Christ and the Church are prefigured, in which is the ending of the long captivity with the restoration of the temple, the rebuilding of the city, the return to Jerusalem of the stolen vessels, the rewriting of the law of God which had been burnt, the punishment of the people by foreign women, and its return to God’s service with one heart and soul, as the prophet and also the historian wrote, and when I shall have rendered more open to students something of those mysteries which I have mentioned, with God’s help’.

<sup>14</sup> See p. 5, n.12, above.

<sup>15</sup> Plummer, *Opera Historica*, p. cl.

<sup>16</sup> C. W. Jones, Introduction to *In Genesim*, pp. i-iii.

What cannot be determined is whether Bede circulated the first recension before he completed the second. The manuscript evidence would suggest this, but because the first recension ends at the close of Book Ia,<sup>17</sup> this may suggest that Book Ib (that is I.1225-2316) was not copied.<sup>18</sup> However, manuscript Paris, BN lat. 13373 has the words ‘explicit exameron’ after I.1224. So we have a situation in which the section about the six ages was at the very end of the whole work (a work specifically called an ‘hexameron’);<sup>19</sup> and in the second recension, it is at the end of the first book. Only in the third recension does it lie in the middle of Book I.

Although not rubricated in many manuscripts, the passage on the six ages (I.1093-1224) stands out as a discrete section, therefore, because it does represent the termination of the first recension, and is marked out by its content, moving away from a literal commentary to an allegorical one, as Bede himself noted at the outset: ‘Huc usque de primordia mundi nascentis iuxta sensum litterae dixisse sufficiat’.<sup>20</sup> As such, it seems to contrast with the literal commentary surrounding it. Bede was very interested in the six ages, as can be witnessed by his *De Temporibus*, which was probably composed at around the same time as the first recension of *In Genesim*, and his later *De Temporum Ratione* and the many references in other works (see below). I therefore intend to examine this section about the six days and the six ages to see what its sources are and to examine how it relates to the rest of Bede's work.

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<sup>17</sup> That is, it ends at the current I.1224.

<sup>18</sup> Jones suggests that Bede did not ‘publish’ it before he sent it to Acca, because Bede stated in I.824-9 that the creation of mankind will be discussed more fully later. That cannot be true in the hexameron, so Jones suggests that those lines were written at the same time as recension II. However, now there is no way of telling whether Bede distributed the various recensions of the work. Introduction, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>19</sup> We cannot know whether it was Bede who gave it that name.

<sup>20</sup> I.1093. This abrupt change might also be considered sufficient reason for undertaking an analysis, but Bede does insert similar sections into *In Marcum* and *In Lucam*, as discussed below, p. 20.

## BEDE'S SOURCES

After using the CETEDOC database to discover some of Bede's sources, it is apparent that Bede cited from two main sources: the Bible and Augustine, as could be expected from examining his other works. I shall examine some of these verbal correspondences, and discuss how Bede used them to describe the connection between the six days and the six ages.

Parallels marked with an asterisk \* are those cited by Jones in his *apparatus fontium*.

*The Biblical sources*

The Biblical quotations used by Bede fall into two main categories. First, he often cited or echoed Biblical verses in his narration of the events of the six days and the six ages. Second, he used a verse from the Bible in order to make a point, using the verse as evidence to draw out a parallel between the days and ages. Both categories will be discussed further below. There are also occasions where Bede used the familiar words of the Bible, not for any specific reason, but simply because the language pervaded his thinking, as at I.1104, 'convallem lacrimarum', echoing the 'valle lacrimarum' of Ps. LXXXIII.7.<sup>21</sup>

Bede frequently paraphrased the words of Genesis in order to remind us of the verse's content.<sup>22</sup> This happens most often when Bede mentioned the events of the day in question;

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<sup>21</sup> Likewise, 'filii transmirationis' (I.1160) is also found at Dan. II.25, and 'filio iniquitatis' (I.1197) at I Par. XVII.9.

<sup>22</sup> 'Exi de terra tua et cognatione tua et de domo patris tui in terram quam monstravero tibi faciamque te in gentem magnam et benedicam tibi ... Atque in te benedicentur universae cognationes terrae' (I.1131-4). This is taken from \*Gen. XII.1-3: 'egredere de terra tua et de cognatione tua et de domo patris tui in terram quam monstrabo tibi faciamque te in gentem magnam et benedicam tibi ... atque in te benedicentur universae cognationes terrae'. Also \*Gen. II.8 (I.1098-9); \*Gen. III.8 (I.1105-6); \*Gen. VI.11 (I.1111-2); \*Gen. I.6 (I.1114); \*Gen. VII.11 (I.1117-8); \*Gen. I.20 (I.1158-60); Gen. I.24 (I.1175).

the words are borrowed for an essentially narrative purpose, either to recall the events of the day, or of the age (when other books of the Bible may be the source of the quotation).<sup>23</sup>

In the following paragraphs (a-d), Bede was using the text of the Bible as an inspiration for his thought.

a) I.1182-3: ‘verbum dei ruminare, unguam discretionis in via tenere’

\*Lev. XI.3: ‘omne quod habet divisam unguam et ruminat’

\*Deut. XIV.6: ‘omne animal quod in duas partes unguam findit et ruminat’

As well as echoing Leviticus and Deuteronomy, Bede also used a simile of which he was particularly fond, connecting the rumination of animals with the meditations of monks, which he used again in the *HE*.<sup>24</sup> The simile is also found in the works of Quodvultdeus,<sup>25</sup> but there seems no reason to suppose that Bede was acquainted with his writings.

b) I. 1186-7: ‘secundus Adam, mediator Dei videlicet et hominum’

I. Cor. XV.45: ‘factus est primus homo Adam in animam viventem novissimus Adam in spiritum viventem’

Luke III.38: ‘qui fuit Adam qui fuit Dei’

Jud. XI.10: ‘qui responderunt ei Dominus qui haec audit ipse mediator’

Gal. III.19-20: ‘donec veniret semen cui promiserat ordinata per angelos in manu mediatoris mediator autem unius non est, Deus autem unus est’

Hebr. VIII.6: ‘quanto et melioris testamenti mediator est’

Hebr. XII.24: ‘et testamenti novi mediatorem Iesum’

I Tim. II.5: ‘unus enim Deus, unus et mediator Dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus’

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<sup>23</sup> As he used Ps. LXXXI.11 (I.1151-2); \*Matt. XXIV.12 (I.1194-5); II Thess. II.3-4 (I.1196); Matt. XXIV.24 (I.1199); \*Luc. XVIII.8 (I.1201-2).

<sup>24</sup> \*Bede, *HE*, IV.24: ‘quasi mundum animal ruminando.’

<sup>25</sup> For example, *Liber Promissorum* II.vii.1 (CCSL 60).

Here Bede was combining words found in a number of places in the Bible, in order to bring out the closeness of God and Man. He could have expected his readers to recall at least some of these verses when reading his words. It is another example of Bede's familiarity with the Bible, and of how he is using these compressed words to call up the associations of the analogous verses, to provide an additional authority.

c) I.1188-9: 'de latere eius in cruce dormientis exivit sanguis et aqua'

John XIX.34: 'sed unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua'

Bede here cited John, to emphasise certain aspects of the crucifixion, which he then described as the source and nourishment of the Church. In so doing, Bede turned narrative to allegory, as he did with the whole of the passage about the Six Days and Six Ages. However, here he adapted the commentary of the Church Fathers, as will be explained below.<sup>26</sup>

d) I.1192-3: 'Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem ... habet vitam aeternum'

John VI.55: 'qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meam sanguinem habet vitam aeternam'

Bede again cited John, to explain how Christ nourished the Church; this time he quoted a phrase which had become one of the central elements of the Christian faith.

### *Bede and Augustine*

Augustine was the base for the whole of Book I (in the current edition); Jones considers I.1-1224 to be a careful culling of Augustine, Basil and Ambrose, with I.1224-2316 being a collectaneum of Augustine's commentaries on Genesis. Books II-IV, composed much later, were a more mature reflection upon Genesis, again using a wide range of Patristic sources.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See below, pp.18-9.

<sup>27</sup> Jones, Introduction, pp. vii-ix.

Bede's ideas on the six days were heavily influenced by Augustine; both Jones<sup>28</sup> and Siniscalco<sup>29</sup> have discussed this matter. Jones further claims that Bede's thinking on the Six Ages was similarly influenced,<sup>30</sup> although he also states that Bede's comparison of the days and ages was a 'personal and original composition'.<sup>31</sup> Jones suggests that the fondness for number symbolism of both Bede and Augustine informed Bede's view of time and history, with Genesis as the beginning of history and the start of recorded time.<sup>32</sup> As will be seen later, much of Bede's comparison between the six days and their corresponding ages can be seen to arise from a numerological context. Jones lists many books which Bede could have read before composing this passage.<sup>33</sup> However, there are two more direct sources for this figural section: Isidore, *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum (QVT)*,<sup>34</sup> and Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos (DGCM)*.<sup>35</sup> However, Meyvaert<sup>36</sup> and others have pointed out that Bede had no great regard for Isidore, so although Bede may well have read *QVT*, it seems considerably more likely that he would have chosen the passage from Augustine as his model. It would be somewhat unlikely that Bede could have borrowed that amount of material unconsciously.

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<sup>28</sup> C.W. Jones, 'Some Introductory Remarks on Bede's Commentary on Genesis', *Sacris Erudiri* 19 (1970), 119-98.

<sup>29</sup> P. Siniscalco, 'Due Opere a Confronto sulla Creazione dell'uomo: Il *De Genesi ad Litteram libri XII* de Agostino e i *Libri IV in Principium Genesis* di Beda', *Augustinianum* 25 (1985), 435-52.

<sup>30</sup> Jones, 'Introductory Remarks', p. 193.

<sup>31</sup> Jones, Introduction, p. vii.

<sup>32</sup> Jones, 'Introductory Remarks', p. 192.

<sup>33</sup> Jones, 'Introductory Remarks', pp. 193-4, lists a number of Patristic works mentioning the Six Ages, including Ambrose *In Lucam* (CCSL 14), Jerome *In Michaeam* (PL 25), Augustine *De Civitate Dei* (CCSL 47-8), *Enarrationes in Psalmos (EPs)* (CCSL 38-40), *De Genesi ad Litteram* (CSEL 28), Cassiodorus *Expositio in Psalmos* (CCSL 97-8), Gregory *In Septem Psalmos Poenitentiales* (PL 79), *Moralia in Job* (CCSL 143).

<sup>34</sup> PL 83, cols. 213-4.

<sup>35</sup> PL 34, cols. 190-3.

<sup>36</sup> 'Bede the Scholar', p. 49.

The general background to the significance of the six ages can be found in all the Church Fathers: Ambrose, Gregory, and Jerome. Cassiodorus and Isidore also wrote about the six ages.<sup>37</sup> The use of this parallel to be able to predict the end of the world is strongly denied by all the major Christian writers, although most divide the history of the world into the same six ages as we find discussed in Bede: the first age from Adam to Noah, the second age from the flood to the collapse of Babel, the third age from the exodus to the rule of Saul, the fourth age from the rule of David to the capture of the people of Israel, the fifth age from their exile in Babylon to the Roman occupation of Palestine, the sixth age from the birth of Christ to the end of the world.

It is in Augustine and Isidore that we find an extended comparison between the six days and the six ages. There are striking verbal and conceptual parallels, most especially in Augustine, to the work of Bede, down to the detail of the evening of each day indicating the decline of each age. There is, as in Bede, a sense of *figura*, that the occurrences in the days of creation prefigure the events in the six ages of the world. These prefigurations are most fully developed in Augustine's work, though Bede also imitated them, in a more allusive fashion. It is this manner, contrasting with Augustine's relatively straightforward exposition, that makes me think that this passage was in the nature of a coda for the advanced student, or Bede exploring his own ideas. Bede was here linking the earliest parts of the Bible to contemporary history, though at the date Jones suggests for the first recension (703-709) Bede can only have begun to plan his major historical work:<sup>38</sup> nevertheless, we find here the connection between Biblical commentary and history which informs our consideration of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

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<sup>37</sup> See above, p. 11, n.33 and n.34.

<sup>38</sup> However, this may not be relevant, because at that time he was also working on *De Temporibus* and the accompanying chronicle.

If we compare Bede's passage about the six days and the six ages in *In Genesim*<sup>39</sup> to Augustine's in *DGCM*,<sup>40</sup> we find that there are subtle differences in Bede's interpretation. In *DGCM*, the concept of encroaching darkness is not really introduced for the first day. For the second to the sixth days, the evening is presented as a time of failing, of darkness, actual and spiritual. However, the meaning of each correspondence between day and age is clearly explained, whereas in Bede it is left for us to deduce. For the second day, in Bede we have to infer that the ark means the firmament, in Augustine it is easier to make that connection.<sup>41</sup> In Bede, the emphasis was placed on the waters, providing a thematic link to the third and fifth days. In the paragraph about the third day, the passage in which the sea is compared to theological error is difficult to construe in Bede. Augustine stated that from the sea of idolaters, the family of Abraham is as dry land. Bede used the water to provide a thematic link to other days (as stated above), while concentrating upon the verdance of the earth and the flowering of the Lord's people. Bede may have emphasised the flowering because 'he was convinced that in his times too a Nehemiah could rise up and be capable of ... inspiring the people ... to build the city of God *now*'.<sup>42</sup> The evening of the day is made prominent by both authors: a clear warning against transgression. For day four, Augustine compared the kingdom of David to the sun. Bede made a verbal link between the two, 'luminaria' and 'claritate' - connecting the splendour of David to the light, perhaps wishing to suggest to us the light of wisdom, of which Adam was deprived on the first day.

In the section on the fifth day, Bede omitted all the connections between the birds and the exiles: Augustine said neither have 'certain and fixed abode', but Bede removed this.

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<sup>39</sup> See my translation, pp.27-31.

<sup>40</sup> *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, Book I, chs. xxiii-xxv.

<sup>41</sup> 'Et bene comparatur secundo die quo factum est firmamentum inter aquam at aquam; quia et arca in qua erat Noe cum suis, firmamentum erat inter aquas inferiores in quibus natabat, et superiores quibus compluebatur'. *DGCM*, ch. xxiii.

<sup>42</sup> J. Davidse, 'The Sense of History in the Works of the Venerable Bede', *Studi Medievali* 3<sup>A</sup> ser. 23<sub>2</sub> (1982) 657-95, on p. 670.

Augustine stresses the increase in the number of the people of God<sup>43</sup> - Bede described a return to religion by that people. And Bede did not discuss the Jews' 'failure' to recognise Christ, but their destruction by the Romans. Similarly, for the sixth age, by comparison with Augustine, Bede approached his work differently: the serpents and cattle do not represent nations to be converted so much as those who do not or do turn towards a monastic way of life.<sup>44</sup> Augustine did not comment much upon the identification of Christ with Adam,<sup>45</sup> whereas Bede devoted several lines to this. However, Augustine concentrated on the 'image of God' in Christ and Adam, whereas Bede made a link between the animals created on the sixth day and the animalistic traits in mankind. Their exegesis of the seventh day is slightly different, since Bede also added an eighth age not found in Augustine, but which is found in Gregory. Augustine's seventh age contains elements which Bede distributed across the seventh and eighth ages. There are relatively few verbal correspondences between the two passages, and we find that Bede considerably altered Augustine's ideas.

However, we do find specific verbal parallels to other works by Augustine, for example, Bede alluded to the story of Dives and Lazarus,<sup>46</sup> as an example of heaven and hell in the seventh age: 'Vbi vidit requiescentem pauperem dives ille, cum apud inferos ipse torqueretur'.<sup>47</sup> In a similar context, describing the difference between heaven and hell, Augustine used the same example in the same words: 'septima vero intellegitur... non in haec vita sed in alia, ubi vidit requiescentem pauperem dives ille cum apud inferos torqueretur, ubi non fit vespera'.<sup>48</sup> On occasions, Bede was clearly borrowing Augustine's words as well as his ideas.

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<sup>43</sup> Could this reflect Augustine's notion of a precise number of the elect?

<sup>44</sup> The life described, 'ruminating on the word of God ... keeping to the way of good works' seems to suggest the monastic life, rather than the secular.

<sup>45</sup> Though he did in *EPs*.

<sup>46</sup> Luke XVI.17-31.

<sup>47</sup> I.1210-2.

<sup>48</sup> \**Contra Faustum*, XII.viii. (CSEL 25).

Bede, when discussing the type of Christ as the second Adam, also used Augustine's words and ideas from *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, \*CXXXVI.vii.7:<sup>49</sup>

Quando dormivit in cruce, signum gestabat, immo implebat quod significatum est in Adam: quia cum dormiret Adam, costa illa detractata est, et Eva facta est; sic et Domino cum dormiret in cruce, latus eius lancea percussus est, et sacramenta profluxerunt, unde facta est ecclesia. Ecclesia enim coniux Domini facta est de latere, quomodo Eva facta est de latere. Sed quomodo illa non est facta nisi de latere dormientis, sic ista non est facta nisi de latere morientis.

This resembles Bede's words at I.1188-9: 'de latere eius in cruce dormientis exivit sanguis et aqua', and also I Cor. XV.20: 'nunc autem christus resurrexit a mortuis primitiae dormientum', which presumably provoked Augustine's exegesis. However, a parallel passage may be found in Caesarius of Arles' *Sermones*, CLXIX.ii.<sup>50</sup> This is verbally close to Bede's exegesis of the quotation, and it is found in a sermon which divides time into six 'ydria', which correspond to the ages of the world. Excepting other works by Bede himself, this bears the closest verbal resemblance to Bede's words here.<sup>51</sup> However, there is no evidence to prove that Bede knew *Sermo* CLXIX: there are no manuscripts from eighth-century England surviving. It may be that Bede could have also known Caesarius' writings about the Apocalypse, but the question has never really been discussed.<sup>52</sup> In Augustine's exegesis, the verbal parallels are not so close, and the context of the exegesis is

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<sup>49</sup> CSEL 40.

<sup>50</sup> CCSL 104: 'Prima ergo ydria impleta est temporibus Adam, quando Dominus emisit soporem in eo, et tulit unam de costis eius, et fabricatus est eam in mulierem ... Dormivit Adam et de latere eius tollitur costa, fabricatur Eva: inclinato capite dormivit in cruce Christus, et de latere eius formatur ecclesia. Cum enim percussus esset in latere, exivit sanguis et aqua; sanguis redemptionis, et aqua baptismatis ... Sed iam tunc in illo vetere Adam, de cuius costa fabricata est Eva, novus Adam significabatur'.

<sup>51</sup> Except that Caesarius, unlike Augustine, did not use the word 'sacramentum' about the blood and water.

<sup>52</sup> G. Bonner, 'St Bede in the Tradition of Western Apocalyptic Commentary' (Jarrow Lecture, 1966). It is usually assumed that in this case Bede and Caesarius had a common source, namely, Tyconius.

slightly different. However, the main thrust of the passages is the same. Bede and Augustine desired to emphasise the connections between Adam and Christ, and thence between Man and God. Since there is no concrete evidence to support the hypothesis that Bede knew Caesarius, we need to suppose tentatively that both derived this piece of exegesis from Augustine.

We can see from the material adduced above that here, as in the rest of the first recension, Bede used Augustine as a starting point for many of his ideas. However, he had altered those ideas in several places, giving a quite different impression from that gained from a reading of Augustine. And in this section, Bede seems to be creating a very allusive reading, difficult to understand in places, unless one is already familiar with Augustine. It would seem that this *recapitulatio* on the hexameron is therefore a little in the nature of a coda for the advanced student.<sup>53</sup>

#### *Other Sources*

Bede took his description of the evening of the seventh age from Isidore, who said that the fact that the seventh day had no evening means that the seventh age will have no evening either. Augustine adopted a very different exegesis, suggesting that the second coming (or the preceding events) are an evening to that day. So Bede had recourse to the authority of Isidore, which enabled him to expound also his own belief in the eighth age:<sup>54</sup> ‘Et ideo bene septimo diei vespera successisse non legitur, quia tristitiam qua terminetur septima haec aetas, nullam habebit; quin potius ampliori letitia, ut diximus, octavae aetatis perficitur, illius videlicet quae per gloriam resurrectionis tunc incipiens, cum haec tota vita transierit, nullo umquam fine, nulla rerum vicissitudine a contemlando Dei vultu transmutabitur’. This is derived from \*Isidore, *QVT*, PL 83, col. 213: ‘Septima vero intelligitur in requie

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<sup>53</sup> As mentioned above, p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> I.1218-24.

sanctorum, quae scilicet non habet vesperam, quia eam iam nullus terminus claudet. Pergamus ergo breviter per eas omnes mundi aetates, replicantes ordinem temporum eorum, et mystice differentias distinguamus’.

Jones also notes another point at which he considers Bede to be borrowing from Isidore,<sup>55</sup> but he also identifies some complementary passages in Gregory, one of which is closest to Bede’s words. Although Gregory is often considered to have influenced Bede greatly, there is little trace here of his influence, save this one passage of similarity, in the section about God leaving Adam in the Garden of Eden, and Bede’s writing about the eighth age, which he derived from Gregory. Gregory wrote a much longer commentary:

Quid est enim quod post peccatum hominis in paradiso Dominus non iam stat, sed deambulat, nisi quod irruente culpo se a corde hominis motum demonstrat? Quid est quod ad auram post meridiem, nisi quod lux ferventior veritatis abscesserat, et peccatricem animam culpae suae frigora constringebant? Increpavit ergo Adam deambulans, ut caecis mentibus requitiam suam non solum sermonibus, sed etiam rebus aperiret, quatenus peccator homo et per verba quod fecerat inconstantiam cernerat; et per auram, fervore caritatis expulso,<sup>56</sup> torporem suum animadverteret; et per declinationem solis cognosceret quod ad tenebras propinquaret.<sup>57</sup>

Bede wrote at I.1103-10: ‘quod etiam significatum est hora temporis illius cum Adam post culpam praevaricationis audivit Dominum deambulantem in paradiso ad horam post meridiem. Deambulavit quippe Dominus ut se ab homine in cuius corde quietus manserat, recessisse signaret; et hoc ad auram post meridiem, ut lucem in se homo divinae cognitionis fervoremque divinae dilectionis minoratum esse cognosceret’. Although the wording is

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<sup>55</sup> Isidore, *QVT*, PL 83, col. 220. The parallel is not as striking as the similarity to Gregory.

<sup>56</sup> This is similar to Gregory’s *\*Moralia in Job XXXIII.iii.v.25*: ‘Vnde primus homo post culpam inter arbores enim meridianum caritatis calorem perdiderat, iam sub peccati umbra quasi sub frigore aerae torpebat’. There is in both the suggestion that Adam and Eve lose heat rather than light. Perhaps it is possible that this exegesis was the origin for the idea of coldness in hell.

<sup>57</sup> *\*Moralia in Job XXVIII.i.vi.108*.

similar to that of Gregory, Bede also introduced a new idea: the notion of the prefix ‘de’ (as in ‘*deambulavit*’) meaning ‘away’. We can see that the concept of the Lord’s motion indicating a change in fortune for Adam and Eve (as expressed in Gregory and Isidore) has been maintained, but the interpretation of the word ‘*deambulavit*’ has changed, suggesting that the Lord took the light away with him, leaving Adam and Eve behind.

In his edition, Jones identifies a parallel between Bede and Alcimus Avitus. Bede writes at I.1100-3: ‘*sed hic dies ad vesperam iam coepit declinare cum protoplasti peccando felicitatem patriae caelestis perdiderunt atque in hanc convallem lacrimarum dimissi sunt*’. Avitus, in *De Originali Peccato* 35-7,<sup>58</sup> wrote:

His protoplastorum sensum primordia sacra  
Continuere bonis, donec certamine primo  
Vinceret oppressos fallacem culpa per hostem.

Apart from the use of the word ‘protoplastus’, and the context of original sin, there is nothing to link these passages. There is no other compelling reason to suppose that Bede was familiar with the work of Alcimus Avitus; it is most likely that the parallel here is coincidental. The thematic link of original sin is not sufficiently strong to override this.

After analysing the sources for this passage, it is evident that Bede had borrowed the basic concept of connecting the six days and the six ages in this particular figurative manner from the writings of Augustine. However, he diverged from Augustine in some significant details: a day may be equivalent to an age, but Bede drew from it different lessons from those drawn by Augustine, as discussed already. He also used as his authority works by Augustine other than those on Genesis, for example the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. Apart from a potential borrowing from Caesarius, Bede’s only other patristic sources are Gregory and

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<sup>58</sup> MGH Auct. Ant. 6.2 (Berlin, 1883), p. 213.

Isidore. And he continually used the Bible as a source of authority, supporting his words with its own.

## ANALOGUES IN BEDE'S OTHER WRITINGS

Bede often reused his own words and ideas elsewhere. The passage I.1188-91 appears in other of his works, including *De Templo* I.760<sup>59</sup> and *In Ezram et Neemiam* II.508. I shall discuss below the occurrences of the idea of the six ages elsewhere in his work.

Bede wrote about the chronological aspects of the six ages in *De Temporum Ratione* and *De Temporibus*, and also the *Epistola ad Plegwinam*. The passage in *De Temporibus* is wholly chronological, simply listing the events delineating the boundaries of the ages and how long those ages lasted.<sup>60</sup> The *Epistola ad Plegwinam* is similarly purely chronological. Chapter ten of *DTR* has a comparison between the six days and six ages, but it simply details the events of each day and age, without attempting to draw any profound comparison between the two.<sup>61</sup> However, in chapter sixty-six, Bede compared the six ages of the world to the six ages of man, drawing on Augustine's writings.<sup>62</sup> This produces a somewhat different exegesis, portraying the world in a terminal decline towards death in the sixth age, which there is not space to discuss. In chapter seventy-one, Bede likened the six ages to the days of the Lord's passion and resurrection, which he also did elsewhere.<sup>63</sup> The fact that Bede connected the six ages both to the days of creation and to the days of Holy Week suggests that the six ages formed a fundamental part of his concept of time, and of the relation of that time to his Christian faith. A typical example of this type of comparison is *In Lucam* III.ix.1495: 'Nam et ipse octava die, id est post sextam sabbati qua crucem ascendit et septimam sabbati qua in sepulchro quieuit, a mortuis resurrexit, et nos post sex huius saeculi aetates in quibus

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<sup>59</sup> CCSL 119A.

<sup>60</sup> Chapter xvi (CCSL 123C).

<sup>61</sup> Bede here drew upon Isidore's *QVT* rather more than Augustine; the exegesis of both is similarly terse and elliptical.

<sup>62</sup> F. Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool 1999), p. 158, n. 4.

<sup>63</sup> *Liber Homeliarum* II.vii and xix (CCSL 122); *In Marcum* III.ix (CCSL 120); *In Lucam* III.ix (CCSL 120); *In I Samuhelem* III.xvi (CCSL 119).

pro domino pati et laborare gaudemus et septimam quietis animarum quae interim in alia vita geritur quasi octava aetate resurgemus'.<sup>64</sup> He moved from a literal exegesis of Luke's words to his well-loved allegory of the days and ages.

It is noticeable that Bede very frequently provided an exegesis on the numerals six, seven and eight. In *In Epistolas Septem Catholicas*, II Petri II.92, Bede commented upon the number eight: 'Sex etenim sunt saeculi praesentis aetates, septima etiam nunc agitur aetas in illa vita ubi animae sanctorum sabbato felici, id est requie, perfruuntur aeterna, octava est ventura tempore resurrectionis omnium et universalis iudicii'.<sup>65</sup> And likewise, we find similar exegesis of the number six, very often in relation to good works: 'Nam senario numero solet perfectio boni operis designari vel quia dominus sexto die creationem mundi consummavit atque in septimo requievit vel quia nos in sex huius saeculi aetatibus bonis desudare operibus in septima autem quae est in alia vita sabbatismum animarum voluit sperare'.<sup>66</sup> If we also examine an example of Bede's exegesis focusing on the number seven, we begin to see some similarities emerging in his handling of the theme of the six ages. In *In I Samuhelem*, Bede commented on the verse 'Et ieiunaverunt septem diebus' (IV.xxxi.2563) as follows: 'Recte et ad litteram pro mortuis ut ad requiem pervenire valeant septem diebus ieiunatur qui<sup>67</sup> post sex huius saeculi aetates in quibus in carne laboramus septima est in illo

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<sup>64</sup> 'For also on that eighth day, that is after the sixth day of the sabbath in which he ascended the cross and the seventh day of the sabbath in which he lay in the tomb, he rose from the dead, and we after six ages of this world in which we rejoice to suffer and toil for the Lord and the seventh of the rest of souls which meanwhile is sustained in another life as it were we shall arise in the eighth age'.

<sup>65</sup> (CCSL 121). 'For six are the ages of the present world, for the seventh age now passes in that life where the souls of the saints enjoy a blessed sabbath, that is everlasting rest, and the eighth will come at the time of the resurrection of everyone and universal judgment'.

<sup>66</sup> *In Ezram et Neemiam* (CCSL 119A), III.951. 'For it is usual to designate the perfection of good works with the number six either because the lord achieved the creation of the world in six days and rested upon the seventh or because he wished us in the six ages of this world to exert ourselves in good works however to hope for the sabbath of the soul in the seventh, which is in another life'. See also similarly *De Tabernaculo*, II, 967 (CCSL 119A); *Liber Homeliarum* I.xxiv and II.xxv.

<sup>67</sup> For the translation to make sense, this must read 'quia', though there is no manuscript

saeculo aetas requietionis animarum carne exutarum in qua beatae tempus illud glorificum quando resurgere mereantur expectant'.<sup>68</sup>

From the above, we can see that Bede was using the opportunities of his text to discuss the question of the six ages of the world.<sup>69</sup> And 'in all the many instances, Bede seldom repeats himself';<sup>70</sup> he developed different aspects of the theme, sometimes using different Fathers for his inspiration.<sup>71</sup> He very frequently links those ages to the days of creation, and the days of the passion. The use of the particle 'huius', meaning 'this world', emphasises the fact that there is another world (at least to Bede's mind this would have been a fact). There is no need grammatically for the word: it is simply there to provide emphasis. It perhaps provides a hint of Bede's known interest in the day of judgment,<sup>72</sup> emphasising the difference between life in the world and life with God. A similar emphatic construction can also be found in Old English. In *The Wanderer*,<sup>73</sup> we find the words 'þas worold' and 'þisse worolde', in both cases giving an implication of another world - the Christian heaven. Bede, when discussing the six ages of *this* world, also wrote of the seventh and eighth ages of the otherworld. The seventh age runs parallel to the six ages of this world; the sixth and seventh ages have ended when the eighth age begins. The phrase 'in alia vita', referring to the seventh age stresses this divide, though when Bede discussed the eighth age he made it clear

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authority for this emendation, although palaeographically, it would be possible for abbreviations for 'qui' and 'quia' to become confused. I have used 'quia' in my translation.<sup>68</sup> "And they fasted for seven days". Rightly and literally it is fasted for seven days for the dead so that they might come to rest because after six ages of this world in which we toil in the flesh, the seventh age is in that world of respite of souls, having laid aside the flesh, in which the blessed await that glorious time when they deserve to arise'. See also *Homeliarum* I.xi and II.xvii.

<sup>69</sup> Bede also uses the phrase 'sex huius saeculi aetatibus' or similar in many other places: *De Schematibus et Tropis*, II (CCSL 123C); *In Lucam* II.vi; *In Marcum* I.ii; *In Ezram et Neemiam* II.1188 and III.1988; and in *Liber Homeliarum* I.xxiii.

<sup>70</sup> Jones, 'Introductory Remarks', p. 197.

<sup>71</sup> Principally Gregory, Augustine and Isidore, as discussed above, pp. 18-19.

<sup>72</sup> We can perhaps see this a little more clearly in *In Samuhelem* III.xvii, where Bede wrote about the last of the six ages.

<sup>73</sup> B. Mitchell and F. C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 5th edn. (Oxford 1992), p. 273

that the eighth age is somewhat different from the seventh, because of the resurrection of the body. And Bede very frequently mentioned that eighth age: the ages evidently were an essential part of his conception of the world and of time.

Bede also wrote a hymn about the six days of creation, once more making the link between the six days and ages.<sup>74</sup> Here we get a slightly different view of the connection between the two. Bede makes a primarily verbal link between the day and its corresponding age, thus sometimes creating a slightly different emphasis to that which we find in *In Genesim*.<sup>75</sup> For days two to five and day seven, we have two strophes, one about the day, and one about the age, with the first line of the former the same as the last line of the latter. So, for example, strophe eleven (about day five) begins ‘Nouum genus progignitur’, and that is how strophe twelve (about the fifth age) ends. This focus on the new race (‘nouum genus’) contrasts with the exegesis of day five in *In Genesim*, where Bede concentrated upon the waters as representing instability. In the strophes about the third day and age, instead of concentrating upon the green and growing world, we find an emphasis upon light, as expressed in the repeated word ‘lucente’.<sup>76</sup> In the second set of strophes about day six, we find that Bede has again brought out the link between the sleeping Adam and the sleeping Christ.<sup>77</sup> The rest of the hymn discusses the eighth age and the means of attaining it. It is a very optimistic hymn, as ultimately, is *De Die Iudicii*, and this conforms with the attitude we find in *In Genesim*.<sup>78</sup> The end of the sixth age may be feared, but the eighth age is so wonderful that we should all hope to attain it.

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<sup>74</sup> (CCSL 122) *De opere sex dierum primordialium et de sex aetatibus mundi*, pp. 407-11.

<sup>75</sup> M. Lapidge mentions the hymn in *Bede the Poet* (Jarrow Lecture, 1993), p. 8, stating that the hymn is definitely by Bede, but that it ‘can be regarded as a metrical version of Bede’s chapter on the ages of the world in his *De temporum ratione*’. However, considering that chapter sixty-six of *DTR* does not compare the ages to the days of creation, I would consider the resemblance to *In Genesim* greater.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Lucente saecli tertia’, strophe 7, v. 1 and strophe 8, v. 4.

<sup>77</sup> ‘obdormiente’, strophe 15, v. 1, strophe 16, v. 4.

<sup>78</sup> See also Davidse, ‘The Sense of History’, p. 663.

## BEDE'S AIMS AND ATTITUDES

From what we have seen above, we can begin to consider why Bede wrote this section about the six days of the world and the six ages. Jones suggests that Bede was fond of numerological analysis,<sup>79</sup> which fact can easily be seen in his commentary *De Templo*, where great delight is taken in the expounding of the significance of the measurements of the temple. And as has been discussed above,<sup>80</sup> Bede often used the numbers six, seven or eight to initiate a comparison between the six days and ages. Likewise, Bede frequently connected 'bona opera' with the number six, which is the number of the days of creation.<sup>81</sup> The Late Antique fondness for number symbolism probably also explains the initial comparison between the six days and ages. Taking the verse from the second letter of Peter,<sup>82</sup> 'with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day', some Christian commentators interpreted this as meaning that since there were six days, there were therefore six ages lasting 1000 years each.<sup>83</sup> Both Augustine and later Bede refuted this,<sup>84</sup> using the text 'watch, for you do not know the day nor the hour', since if Christ had said that, then it could not be correct that human reckonings could give one the date of the end of the world.<sup>85</sup> However, they retained the idea of the six ages being in some measure equivalent to six days.

But Bede went beyond an automatic response to writing about the six days and, therefore, mentioning the six ages. As Jones put it, 'Bede tends to avoid modifying, obscuring, or negating the literal meaning ... but he regularly adds a second meaning.'<sup>86</sup> At

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<sup>79</sup> Jones, 'Introductory Remarks', p. 169.

<sup>80</sup> p. 21.

<sup>81</sup> See above, p. 21.

<sup>82</sup> II Peter III.8, also Ps. LXXXIX.4.

<sup>83</sup> Jones, 'Introductory Remarks', p. 192.

<sup>84</sup> The calculation Bede made also showing this caused him to be accused of heresy, cf.

*Epistola ad Plegwinam*.

<sup>85</sup> Matt. XXV.13; Mark XIII.32.

<sup>86</sup> Jones, 'Introductory Remarks' p. 169.

I.1093-1224, Bede did just that, creating a *figura* of the six days, in line with his own remarks in *De Schematibus et Tropis*: ‘Per historiam namque historia figuratur, cum factura primorum sex sive septem dierum totidem saeculi huius comparatur aetatibus’.<sup>87</sup> In Bede’s *Chronica*, we find confirmation of his view that all events in the Bible can be dated relative to the rest of world history. From the *Chronica Maiora* within *DTR* we can see that he dated the *annus mundi* from the creation of the world, and even assigned a date to the creation of Adam.<sup>88</sup> From this we can see that Bede had a strictly literal and historical view of creation, whereas Augustine, in his commentary *De Genesi ad Litteram*, despite trying to push back the limits of Biblical history, considered that anything before Genesis II.6 was non-temporal.<sup>89</sup> For Augustine, refuting commentators such as Origen, who had supported an allegorical reading of Genesis up to the expulsion from the garden, Paradise was a real place, and history began at Genesis II.6 with the generations of mankind.<sup>90</sup> Bede, in his Hexameron, was looking for a figure for creation, and chose the six ages, as befitted a man interested in history, as can be seen from the *HE*, and the *Chronica Maiora*. According to Jones, ‘Nearly all of the identifiable interests of Bede as a teacher attach themselves somehow to the doctrine of the Six, Seven and Eight Days of Creation’.<sup>91</sup> From that interest, one can derive Bede’s interest in history, his interest in the Last Judgment (from the same Patristic commentaries), his interest in the Easter question (which was also a favourite focus of Bede’s numerological expositions) and his interest in time. It seems to me that it was Bede’s interest in time which caused him to write this comparison between the days and ages, and this passage, and others analogous to it, could help us to understand more fully Bede’s sense of time. Jones states that

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<sup>87</sup> II.ii.239 (CCSL 123): ‘For through history, history is figured, when the creation of the first six or seven days is compared to just as many ages of this world’.

<sup>88</sup> *DTR*, chapter 66.

<sup>89</sup> S.E. Schreiner, ‘Eve, the mother of history’ in *Genesis 1-3 in the History of Exegesis*, ed. G. Robbins (Lewiston, 1988), pp. 135-86, on p. 145.

<sup>90</sup> Schreiner, ‘Eve, the mother of history’, p. 149.

<sup>91</sup> Jones, ‘Introductory Remarks’, p. 191.

‘Christian historians ... assumed all temporalities to be linear... Hence Christian historiography was basically chronological, and the chronicle was an essential form’.<sup>92</sup> Whilst this may be essentially true, Jones has neglected to mention the effect of *figura*, looping time back on itself, which some scholars have used to argue that medieval writers such as Bede had no ‘Zeitbewusstsein’ (sense of time).<sup>93</sup> However, from the evidence of the *Chronica*, and the *HE*, Bede had a very acute consciousness of passing time, whilst also being fully aware of the transitory nature of the time of the six ages, compared to eternity. And one could even argue from the nature of the comparison between the days and ages, that he had a sense of the repeated reversals of world history: the bright beginning fades in the evening of the age.

In conclusion, then, we can say that in his discussion of the six days and the six ages, Bede took material from the Church Fathers, especially Augustine, moulding it as he wished. This material was open to being used for many exegetical purposes, and can be linked readily to his other scholarly interests, especially his scientific works. Far from imitating, Bede was capable of innovating as well, and the consideration of the six ages may help us to understand his sense of time more fully, by examination of how he connected contemporary and Biblical chronology to his notion of eternity.

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<sup>92</sup> Jones, ‘Introductory Remarks’, p. 192.

<sup>93</sup> See Davidse, ‘The Sense of History’, p. 654, who refutes this view.

TRANSLATION OF *IN GENESIM* I.1093-1224

Concerning the Six Ages of the world.

Hitherto it may have sufficed to speak literally of the origins of the growing world. It is pleasing, however, to intimate in a few words that order of those six or seven days in which the world was made correspond to its ages [p. 36] - which are of the same number. For the first day, on the which God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light', corresponds with the first age in whose beginning that same world was made and man was set in the pleasurable delights of paradise, where he enjoyed the presence of his maker's grace, free, and innocent of all evil. But that day already began to decline towards evening when the first people lost, by sinning, the happiness of the heavenly homeland and were sent into this vale of tears; that also signified the hour of that time when Adam, after the sin of transgression, heard the Lord walking away in paradise in the hour after noon. Indeed, the Lord walked away in the garden so that he might signify that he was going away from man, in whose heart calm had dwelt; and this happened 'in the hour after noon', so that man might recognise that the light of divine understanding and the fervour of divine love were diminished in him. However, the full evening of this day came when the whole earth was corrupted before the face of God, by the growing vices of the human race, and it was filled with iniquity, to such an extent that all flesh deserved to be destroyed in the flood, except those in the ark.

On the second day the firmament was made in the midst of the waters, and in the second age of the world, the ark, in which the remains of the human race and the seed of succeeding ages, so to speak, was preserved, was placed in the midst of the waters, which were quickly poured in by all the springs of the abyss bursting forth on the one side, the sluices of the sky opening on the other. But that day too declined towards evening, when the nations, forgetting the closeness of the anger or mercy of God, met to build a tower of pride;

but it attained full evening when, with the confusion of the languages of the human race, society was split asunder.

On the third day, when the waters flowed together into their places, dry land appeared and was soon covered with green grass and leafy groves; and with the beginning of the third age, when the races had separated into their own places, as for the idolaters, whose error, unstable and changeable by the vain doctrines of idols, as if by all the winds, is rightly signified by the term 'sea', [p. 37] the seed of the fathers was separated from their [the idolaters'] society and made rich with spiritual fruit, with the Lord saying to Abraham, 'Go out from your land and kindred and from the house of your fathers into the land which I will show you and I will make you into a great race and I will bless you', etc. until he said, 'And in you the kindred of the whole earth will be blessed'. In that race the different ranks of the faithful, just like green grass and apple-bearing trees, came forth from one and the same earth, receiving the celestial showers of holy speech. However, this day also began to decline towards eventide, when that same Israelite people, casting aside the faith of their fathers and the ceremonies of the law that had been given to them, were both polluted by the wickednesses of foreign races and were also oppressed by slavery. Now the evening came when that same people, together with a king which they had chosen for themselves, having neglected God, was for the most part wiped out by the sword of foreigners.

On the fourth day the heavens received the lights, and in the fourth age, the aforementioned people of God were made prominent by new light through the imperial power of David and of Solomon, of the other kings also ruling by God's authority - through that very noble temple which Solomon founded for God, through the signs of the prophets, which through all the time of those same kings did not stop flowering, and most of all through this, that to the first and most pre-eminent of the kings who pleased Him the Lord swore, saying, 'The fruit from your loins I will place upon my throne'. Truly even this day began to move

towards evening, when afterwards both the same kings and the people, spurning the temple and the laws of God, were destroyed and torn apart by enemies. But it was not only a most oppressive evening, but night followed, when all of the kingdom was destroyed, the temple burnt, all the people led captive to Babylon.

However, on the fifth day, the waters brought forth forms of living creatures and the birds of the air flying above the earth beneath the firmament of the sky; and in the fifth age, the sons of exiles grew and multiplied in Babylon, which is often called by the name of 'waters'. Very many of them stayed like fish in the waters, of those, however, there were not a few, who like great whales sought to dominate the great waves of the world, [p.38] rather than serve them, because by no terror were they able to be corrupted to idolatry.<sup>94</sup> Others, loosed from their captivity, as if receiving wings of freedom, returned to the land of Israel, and in the form of birds sought with all intent the heavens, in such a way that they strove to rebuild the temple and city of God, and also to restore His law with greatest perseverance. But evening was drawing near, when afterwards among other shadows of wickedness they disagreed amongst themselves in domestic conflicts and were themselves traitors of their own land to the Romans; it also came when it happened that they not only were made tributaries, but also were subjected to the rule of a foreign king.

On the sixth day, the earth brought forth draught animals and reptiles. On the which day, God also created man - first Adam in his image, and from his rib as he slept, He created the woman, Eve. In the sixth age of the world, among many false men who could be compared deservedly with serpents and beasts, namely on account of their savagery and because with their whole soul they cling to worldly cares and enticements,<sup>95</sup> also many saints

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<sup>94</sup> Jones's text reads 'ab idolatriam', which makes no sense. I have adopted the PL reading, which is 'ad idolatriam'.

<sup>95</sup> Jones has a full stop here, but the construction is easier if punctuated with a comma.

were born<sup>96</sup> among the people of God, who in the likeness of clean animals knew how to ruminate upon the word of God, to keep the hoof of discernment to the way of good works, to carry the yoke of divine law, and to keep the poor warm with the fleeces of their sheep, of both of whom [that is the false men and the saints] apt mention is made in the Gospel, among whom the second Adam, to wit the mediator between God and mankind, in whom was all the fullness of the image of God,<sup>97</sup> appeared in the world and, sleeping on the cross, blood and water came out from his side, from which sacraments the church is born and is nourished, which is the mother of all living a true life throughout the world, which is what the name of Eve means. Hence the Lord himself says of these sacraments, ‘Who eats my flesh and drinks my blood ... will have eternal life’. Now we perceive the evening of this day approaching, since with iniquity abounding through all, the love of many grows cold. However, a much more shadowy one than the rest will come, [p. 39] when with the appearance of the man of sin, the son of iniquity, who is lifted up and extolled above all that is called God or that is worshipped,<sup>98</sup> there will be such great tribulation that even the elect will be led into error, if that is possible. Immediately the following hour [will be that of] the judgment of all, about which it is written: ‘Coming like unto a son of man, you may consider, will he find faith on earth?’

On the seventh day God rested from all his works, and sanctified and blessed it; and the seventh age is eternal rest in another life, in which God rests with his saints in eternity after the good works, which He accomplished in them throughout the six ages of this world. However, this age of the height of peace and rest in God, is and will be everlasting; but then it begins for mankind, when the proto-martyr Abel with his body entered the rest of the tomb,

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<sup>96</sup> Jones has taken the reading ‘conati’ here, but if one follows the manuscript reading of BP, ‘nati’, it is easier to translate.

<sup>97</sup> ‘toto’ is acting adverbially, but it is virtually impossible to include it in a translation, without it being impossibly clumsy.

<sup>98</sup> Again, Jones punctuates with a full stop, but a comma makes better sense.

but with his soul [entered] the joy of eternal life. There that rich man saw the poor man resting, while he himself was twisted in hell [reference to 'Dives and Lazarus'].<sup>99</sup> This sabbath of the holy souls will last until the end of the age; and when the last age of the world, after its evening about which we have already spoken, will have attained its end when the Antichrist has been killed by the Lord Jesus, then also that sabbath [rest] will be granted to the bodies rising to life eternal with greater blessing and sanctity. And therefore indeed it is right that no evening [is said to] follow the seventh day, because the way in which the seventh day was ended, it will not have sadness; indeed, rather it will be perfected by the greater happiness, so we have said, of the eighth age, which indeed, beginning then by the glory of the resurrection, when the whole of this life will have passed over, without any end, with no changeableness of things, will be transformed by contemplation of the face of God.

Here ends the exposition of the work of the six days.

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<sup>99</sup> As mentioned above, p. 14.

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