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St Michael's at Hildesheim: Scripture Networks and the Perception of Sacred Space

1 The Abbey and Church of St Michael's

The abbey of St Michael's was founded by Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim (993–1022) on a hill north of the cathedral immunity.[1] The founder conceived it as a monastery following early medieval tradition, accomodating a convent of monks and clerics. This is indicated by the history of the foundation as well as by the architectural layout of the abbey church and the number of altars it housed, as Matthias Untermann has recently pointed out.[2] The process of foundation began in 996 with the consecration, in the north-eastern corner of what was to become the abbey precinct, of a chapel (*sacellum*) dedicated to the Holy Cross in which canons were to do liturgical service under the conduct of a provost (fig. 1). According to the date given on the foundation stone found in 1908 under the south-western transept arm (fig. 16), the construction of the great abbey church was begun in 1010. In 1013, Bernward had a monastic community installed on the site (either in a preexisting residential building or in an already finished section of the monastic complex), in 1015 the crypt under the western sanctuary with the altar of St Mary was consecrated, and in 1022 the consecration of the church was celebrated, although the building was not yet finished. Both consecration ceremonies, in 1015 as well as in 1022, took place on September 29th, the feast day of St Michael, patron of the church, to whom the main altar in the western sanctuary was dedicated. In that same year 1022, Bernward appointed an abbot as head of the entire convent, thus bringing the process of foundation to an end, before he himself died on November 20th 1022. He was buried in the crypt, in a tomb in front of the altar of St Mary, which he had prepared for himself while still alive (fig. 2).

1 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, passim, esp. 2, ch. 8; Binding 2008 and 2013; Schulz-Mons 2010, 17–144. For the history of construction see Beseler in Beseler/Roggenkamp 1954; Cramer/Jacobsen/von Winterfeld 1993; Cramer/von Winterfeld 1995; Braune 2008; Lutz 2012.

2 Untermann 2012, 53–54. Around 1078/79, contemporaries were still aware of the twofold nature of the convent of St Michael's, as can be seen by the entry in the *Chronicon Hildesheimense* concerning the monastery's foundation by Bernward: *Monasterium quoque sancti Michahelis construxit et ex parte dedicavit, in quo et abbatiam et congregationem monachorum instituit* (*Chronicon Hildesheimense*, 852; on the date of the *Chronicon* see Freise 2000, 240–241).

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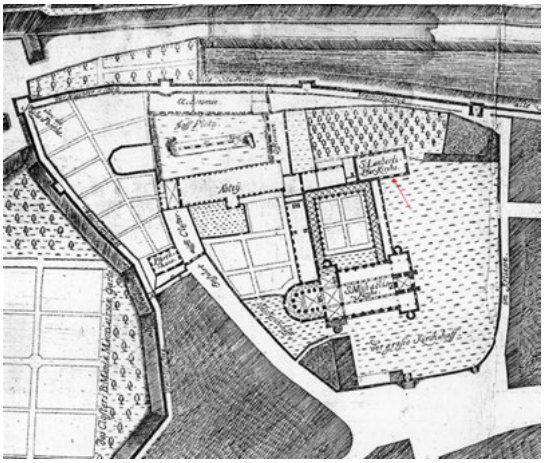

Fig. 1: Hildesheim, St Michael's: Plan of the abbey in 1729 with former chapel of the Holy Cross (*S. Lamberti Pfarrkirche*).

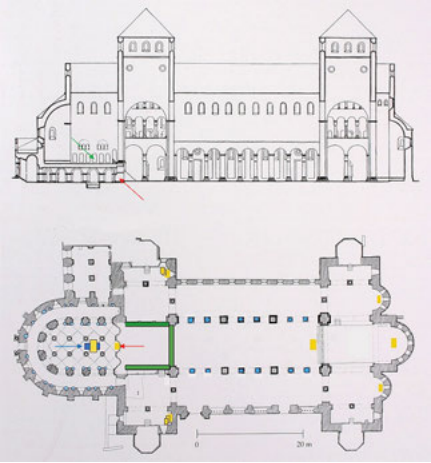

Fig. 2: Hildesheim, St Michael's: Plan and longitudinal section of the church: crypt and altar of St Mary consecrated in 1015 (red arrow); main altar of St Michael consecrated in 1022 (green arrow); tomb of Bishop Bernward (1022) (blue arrow); original position of monks' choir (green).

The convent had a hard time under Bernward's successor, Bishop Godehard of Hildesheim, who—probably in an attempt to separate monks and clerics—transferred the monastic community of St Michael's to a place outside Hildesheim, and alienated monastic property. Due to protests, the monks were called back after only a short time, but a part of the alienations persisted[3] and we have no proof of what became of the canons of the Holy Cross. They simply disappear from the sources, and from the 12th century onwards, the chapel in the north-eastern corner of the cloister is called St Lambert's church (fig. 1). However, the construction of St Michael's carried on

3 See the letter of the second abbot, Adelbert, to Godehard's successor, Bishop Thietmar, in *Urkundenbuch*, vol. I, 79–82.

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and the church was consecrated on September 29th 1033. The damage of a lightening induced fire in 1034 is reported to have been repaired one year later.[4]

During the Reformation, the Protestants, with the support of the city council gradually took possession of the church until the part of the church belonging to the monastic community was restricted to the western crypt alone.[5] As a consequence of this takeover and the ensuing disputes, the building and its liturgical furnishings suffered severe losses due to deliberate destruction and lack of maintenance during the 16th to 18th century (fig. 1).[6] After campaigns of reconstruction in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the church was heavily damaged by bombs in 1945. Today it has in many aspects been restored to its original form. It is a large basilica with transepts of identical shape in the east and west, which finishes in the east with three short apses and in the west with a deep sanctuary that rises above a crypt which is surrounded by an ambulatory (fig. 3–4). Most of the columns and capitals of the nave, the upper parts of the western sanctuary and the annex rooms above the ambulatory date from the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th century.[7] With the exception of the crypt, the apses, and the chapels at the outer end of the transept arms, the building is unvaulted. Part of its former, rich liturgical furnishings and a comparatively important number of liturgical objects donated by the founder, Bishop Bernward, are still preserved *in situ* or in other places in Hildesheim.[8]

2 Inscriptions and Artefacts in St Michael's from the Time of the Foundation to the 12th Century

In the following I will briefly review the inscriptions, artefacts, and liturgical furnishings from the time of the foundation up to the mid-12th century, that subsist in St Michael's or are known to have been there, proceeding in a roughly chronological order.[9] As there has been extensive publishing on many of the works of art in question here, I have limited myself to the essential information on the artefact, the inscription, the dating, and what we know about the original destination and function.

4 *Chronica episcoporum et abbatum*, 788 (15th c.); see also Schulz-Mons 2010, 161–162.
5 Alphei 1995, 45–47; Otte 2012, 315–323. This repartition of the church—with the crypt belonging to the catholic parish, the rest of the building to the protestant one—still continues today.
6 Alphei 1995; Otte 2012; *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 523–526.
7 Cramer/von Winterfeld 1995; Lutz 2012.
8 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, passim, esp. vol. 2, ch. 9; Brandt 2012; Lutz 2012.
9 The stucco figures in the south aisle, which extend scrolls that originally were inscribed with the Beatitudes, and the painted wooden ceiling of the nave are not included in this presentation, because they postdate Bernward's time. We have no indications about the original 11th-century ceiling, which might also have had figural painting.

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Fig. 3: Hildesheim, St Michael's from the south-east.

Fig. 4: Hildesheim, St Michael's: Interior looking West.

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Bernwardkreuz: The so-called "cross of St Bernward" is alleged to be the one which Bernward donated to his chapel of the Holy Cross founded in 996. According to his Vita, he received three particles of a relic of the true cross as a gift from the emperor Otto III, while the fourth particle was miraculously brought to him by an angel when he was working on the fabrication of the cross. A strip of parchment inclosed with the wooden particles has the words "lignu(m) d(omi)nicu(m)" written on it. The metalwork of the cross dates to the mid-12th century, but includes earlier elements (i. e. from before 1022). It has no inscription.[10]

Foundation stones (fig. 16): The foundation stone was discovered during reconstruction work under the south-eastern corner of the western transept in 1908. It bears the names of one of the twelve apostles (s. Matheus) and of one of the twelve tribes of the people of Israel (s. Beniamin) as well as the initials of Bernward (B Ep), a cross, and the date 1010 (MX). A fragment of a second foundation stone found nearby is lost.[11]

Kostbares Evangeliar: The Kostbares Evangeliar is the most famous and perhaps the most important among several illuminated liturgical books donated by Bernward to St Michael's. It is a Gospel book with a dedication verse to St Michael (on f. 231v°) written by Bernward himself. The back cover (with an inscription and a Madonna in silver repoussé work) and the double-page painting with the scene of the donation of the book to the Virgin lively illustrate that it was destined for use at the altar of St Mary in the crypt (fig. 5).[12]

66 relics laid down in the crypt: According to the *Vita Bernwardi*, during the consecration of the crypt in 1015 66 relics were laid down, but we have no indication concerning their location.[13]

Inscription of consecration (see fig. 12): A painted inscription reporting the consecration of 1015 was located on the inner ambulatory wall opposite to the modern portal at the west end of the crypt. It was documented in an already fragmented state

10 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 588–589 (Martina Pippal). On the legend of its miraculous fabrication and the altar and veneration of the Holy Cross in St Michael's see Gallistl 2012.

11 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 533–534 (Christine Wulf); Wulf 2003, 185–187; Bünz 2012; Untermann 2012, 43. On foundation stones in a wider perspective see Untermann 2003 and Keil 2014.

12 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 570–578 (Michael Brandt; Ulrich Kuder); for the inscriptions on the front and back cover see Berges 1983, 47–49; Wulf 2003, 181–183; on the manuscript in general Brandt (ed.) 1993; Kingsley 2014. See also, with special attention to the rendering of architectural space in the double-page dedication miniature, Wolter-von dem Knesebeck 2016.

13 *Vita Bernwardi*, ch. 47, 778.

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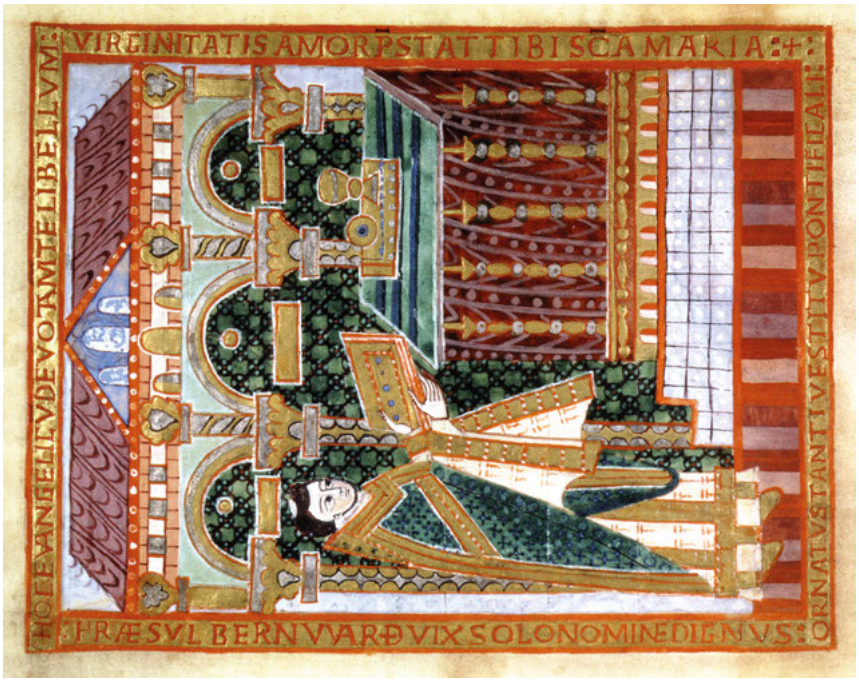

Fig. 5: Kostbares Evangeliar: double page with donation scene.

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Fig. 6: Bronze doors of Bishop Bernward (since 1035 installed in the west portal of Hildesheim Cathedral).

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in 1939 and was lost due to war or reconstruction. According to Berges and Wulf, it can be dated to the 11th or 12th century. Both think that it was probably executed in or shortly after 1015. However, due to the inscription's poor state in 1939, a firm dating is no longer possible.[14]

Bronze doors (fig. 6): A number of scholars consider the famous bronze doors of Bishop Bernward, which were installed in the west portal of the cathedral in 1035, as a work originally designed for St Michael's. This is due to the door's inscription which reads:

> AN(NO) DOM(INICE) INC(ARNATIONIS) MXV B(ERNWARDUS) EP(ISCOPUS) DIVE MEM(ORIE) HAS VALVAS FUSILES // IN FACIE(M) ANGELICI TE(M)PLI OB MONIM(EN) T(UM) SUI FEC(IT) SUSPENDI
> "In the year 1015 of the incarnation of the Saviour, Bishop Bernward, of blessed memory, had these cast doors hung up in the front of the angelic temple for his remembrance."

The location for which the bronze doors might have been destined in St Michael's church, however, is a question that is still under discussion.[15]

"Silbernes Bernwardkreuz" (fig. 7): The "Silbernes Bernwardskreuz" is a smaller crucifix of high quality, executed in silver and partly gilded. On its back, it bears the names of the saints whose relics were deposited in it and the inscription BERNVVARDUS PRESUL FECIT HOC. It is dated to 1007/22.[16]

Pair of candlesticks (see fig. 14): A pair of exquisite candlesticks made of silver and partly gilded carry both the same enigmatic inscription saying that they were cast on demand of Bernward but are neither of gold nor of silver:

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14 Berges 1983, 54–62; *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 534–535 (Christine Wulf); Wulf 2003, 192–195; for a dating around 1150 see Ueffing 1996.

15 On the inscription see Berges 1983, 109–116; Wulf 2003, 189–192; on its technical execution Drescher 1988, 71–75. For its interpretation see esp. the most pertinent remarks by von der Nahmer 1988. The vast literature on the doors and their location has been summarized by Schulz-Mons 2010, 280–352. For a possible location of the doors in St Michael's see Untermann 2012, 62. Recently, Brandt 2017 has pleaded for St Michael's as the doors' original destination, while Lutz 2017 left the question open. As a result of his recent excavations in the cathedral Kruse 2017, 204–206, proposes that Bernward had the west end of the cathedral reconstructed—prior to Godehard who is credited with this by his *Vita*—in order to locate the bronze doors in a newly created western portal—even if his *Vita* does not attribute any building activities at the cathedral to Bernward. However, on the basis of the evidence published, which rests largely undescribed in detail and open to interpretation, it seems difficult to follow Kruse's argumentation.

16 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 578–581 (Michael Brandt); Wulf 2003, 202–205; see also Lutz 2012, 221.

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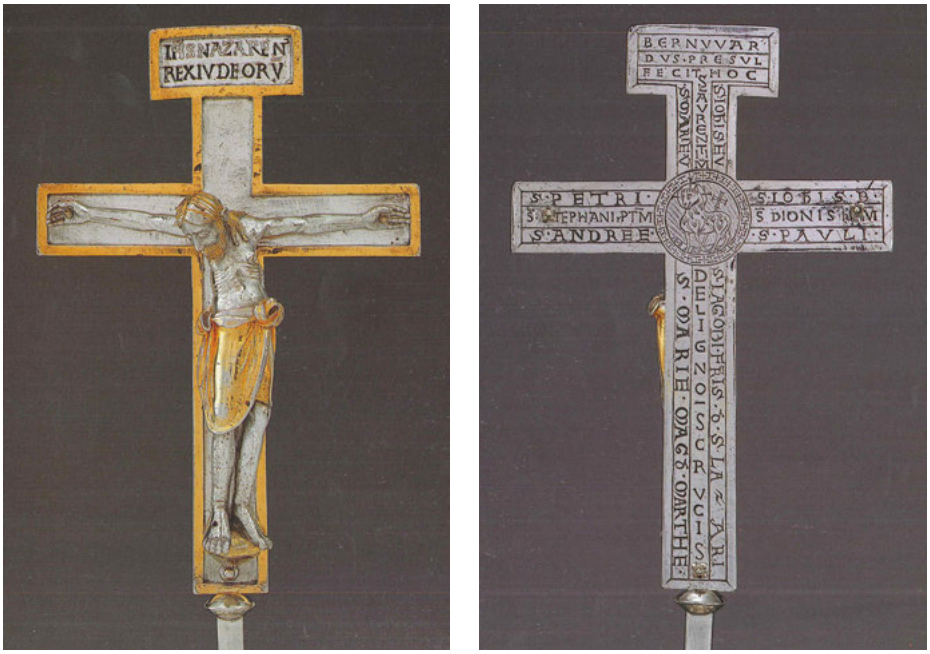

Fig. 7: Silver Cross of Bishop Bernward, obverse and reverse.

BERNVVARDVS PRESVL CANDELABRVM HOC //
+ PVERVM SVVM PRIMO HVIVS ARTIS FLORE NON AVRO NON ARGENTO ET TAMEN VT CERNIS CONFLARE IVBEBAT

The candlesticks are similar to the ones seen on the dedication page of the "Kostbares Evangeliar" by the side of the altar, but much smaller in height (42 cm). According to Joseph Braun, the use of candlesticks on the altar is exceptional before the end of the 11th century. The Hildesheim sticks might also belong to the category of akolyths' *candelabra* that were carried before the priest when he came to the altar in a procession with his ministers in order to celebrate mass.[17] However, with their exquisite tripods in the form of lions' paws or griffins' claws and their shafts surrounded by vine which delicate figures are climbing in, they seem to be made for standing rather than for being carried.

17 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 581–584 (Michael Brandt); Kingsley 2012; Frese 2015. For the inscription see Wulf 2003, 183–185; Wulf 2008, 8–9. For the place of candlesticks in use at the altar see Braun 1924, 173–174; for the different types of candlesticks and candelabra Braun 1934.

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Relics deposited in the capitals of the nave columns (fig. 8): Relics of diverse saints were deposited in the capitals of the 12 columns of the nave. The relics were recorded by inscriptions on the impost blocks above the capitals as can be seen in the two eastern columns on the north side, where the original capitals subsist. When new columns and capitals were executed in a restoration carried out before 1186, the relics were transferred to the new capitals, and painted inscriptions probably replaced the original engraved ones. The inscriptions were erased after the Reformation, but have been documented in an early 16th-century manuscript.[18]

Bronze column with monumental cross (fig. 9): The famous bronze column depicting Christ's Passion in reliefs, arranged in a spiral around the shaft in the manner of Roman triumphal columns, originally supported a monumental bronze crucifix. The crucifix (and later also the capital of the column) was melted down by the Protestants. There is no inscription on the column. However, there certainly was an inscription on the crucifix, as on all crosses, crucifixes, and surviving metal works donated by Bernward.[19]

Marble column with (bronze?) figure of St Mary (lost): A column of marble from the island Prokonnesos in the Marmara Sea, not far from Istanbul, had its place in the nave of St Michael's up to the Reformation. Today, it belongs to St Magdalene's church in Hildesheim.[20] A 16th-century document states that the column carried a figure of St Mary, donated by Bernward. This figure was later melted down by the Lutherans in 1543.[21] The wording of the document (*conflaverunt*) and the fact that the figure is mentioned along with the bronze Crucifix imply that it might have been a cast metalwork, too, and not a wooden sculpture with silver or gold fittings.

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18 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 538–540 (Hans Jakob Schuffels), based on a record by Henning Rose, a monk of St Michael's in the early 16th century (Hildesheim, Dombibliothek Hs 123b); on the inscriptions see Berges 1983, 62–64 and 173; Wulf 2003, 200–202. For the relics found in a capital from c. 1186 see Beseler / Roggenkamp 1954, 102, note 226.

19 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 540–548 (Rainer Kahsnitz). The bronze column is first mentioned c. 1510 in a chronicle written by Henning Rose (see preceding note), stating that it was "erected by St Bernward", see Giese 2012, 263–264, note 41. The crucifix was destroyed in a protestant iconoclasm in 1543 (Giese 2012, 252), the capital melted down in 1650 (Schulz-Mons 2010, 481).

20 *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 549–550 (Arne Effenberger).

21 The figure of St Mary is known from an addition by Henning Rose (see note 19) to ch. 8 of the *Vita Bernwardi* in which he extends the list of artefacts donated by Bernward according to his own knowledge, see Giese 2006, appendix III. 3., 114: *Imagines quoque diversas* [...], *de quibus in ecclesia sancti Michaelis imagines crucifixi necnon sanctissime dei genitrice reperiuntur* [...]. A later marginal note to this states: *S(ancti) Barw(ardi) b(eatae) virg(inis) imagi(nem) cives Lutera(ni) 1543 confla(verunt)* (Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, HS 123b, f. 8v°). On the iconoclasm of 1543 see Otte 2012, 318. According to documents of the 16th-18th century, the marble column then had its place in the nave to the west of the altar of the Holy Cross.

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Fig. 8: St Michael's: Inscription naming the relics deposited in one of the capitals of the nave columns.

Fig. 9: Bronze Column of Bishop Bernward (capital dating from the 19th century; monumental crucifix on top lost).

Wheel-shaped chandelier (lost): A chandelier donated by Bernward, like the one he had executed for the cathedral, is attested to have hung in the nave. It disappeared during the Reformation.[22]

Tomb and tomb slab (fig. 10; see also fig. 13): Bernward's tomb in front of the altar of St Mary in the crypt carries several inscriptions which he himself conceived during his lifetime and in which he speaks to us. On the tomb slab, he complains about the narrowness of the grave, his being reduced to ashes and not having well discharged his duties as a bishop, and asks for intercession on his behalf. In the inscription on the sarcophagus, which paraphases a passage of the book of Job, on the contrary, he shows himself confident of salvation.[23]

***Venite concives*-inscription (see fig. 13):** An inscription on a stone slab, executed in tall letters, exhorts the citizens of Hildesheim to come and pray and remember their Bishop Bernward (i. e. his tomb in the crypt of St Michael's):

22 Gallistl 2004, 275–277, based on abbot Johann Jacke's report about destructions in the church from 1662, and on a manuscript from 1768 (Dombibliothek Hs 114b), which refers to the chandelier as hanging above the bronze column.

23 Berges 1983, 90–100; *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 590, 604 (R. Kahsnitz); for the dating 1022 see Wulf 2003, 195–200. On the interpretation of these inscriptions see, among others, von der Nahmer 1988; Wulf 2008, 13–16; Frese 2015.

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VENITE CONCI/VES NOSTRI / DEUM ADORA/TE VESTRIQ(UE) / PRAESULIS / BERNWARDI / MEMENTOTE
"Come our citizens, pray to God, and remember your Bishop Bernward"

By virtue of its message and the size of the letters, its original location is likely to have been on the outside of the building, near the church portal or maybe even at the monastery gateway. On epigraphical grounds it may be dated to the first half of the 11th century.[24]

Choir screen (fig. 11): The choir screen, of which only the northern part survived, was executed after the sanctuary platform had been extended into the crossing in order to house the monks' choir, probably at the end of the 12th century. It is decorated with stucco reliefs of apostles and saints, which are a common decor for choir screens. Therefore, it is very well possible that the 11th-century screen, which must have existed in the same place but at nave level, had a quite similar appearance.[25]

3 Artefact Networks

What picture emerges from this overview? First of all, most of the inscriptions are not elaborate verse tituli, but just give some rather plain information. The most ambitious as to form and content are the tomb inscriptions. The more elaborate inscription on the candlestick we do not fully understand.

There are a number of recurrent themes that are addressed by the inscriptions. These are the consecration of 1015 (fig. 12: inscription of consecration, bronze doors, Kostbares Evangeliar), Bishop Bernward as a founder (all inscriptions, foundation stone, cross, liturgical books, candle sticks, door + artefacts with lost inscription), and his tomb in the crypt (fig. 13: tomb slab + sarcophagus, *Venite concives*-inscription, door). However, even inscriptions of similar content are little related to one another in form and wording. Saints and objects of veneration that are addressed by the inscriptions several times or represented by painting and sculpture are St Mary (Kostbares Evangeliar, lost figure on marble column, door, relic inscription, inscription of conse-

24 Today, the stone slab measuring 107.5 × 89 cm is inserted into the south wall in the interior of the south arm of the eastern transept. The letters have a height of almost 10 cm and originally had some kind of (coloured?) inlay. On the inscription see Berges 1983, 102; *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen* 1993, vol. 2, 13–14 (Christine Wulf); Wulf 2003, 206–207; Schulz-Mons 2010, 270–275. Wulf's arguments for Bernward himself as the author and for a date before 1022 seem not altogether plausible. Instead, the convent of St Michael's might very well be the 'speaker' of the inscription and have ordered the execution of the slab.

25 For former choir screens with reliefs of saints standing under arcades, dated to the 11th-century, see Bâle and Trier. On the location of monks' choirs in general see Untermann 2009, 57–59.

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Fig. 10: Bishop Bernward's tomb: details of tomb slab and sarcophagus with inscriptions.

Fig. 11: St Michael's: northern part of 12th century choir screen.

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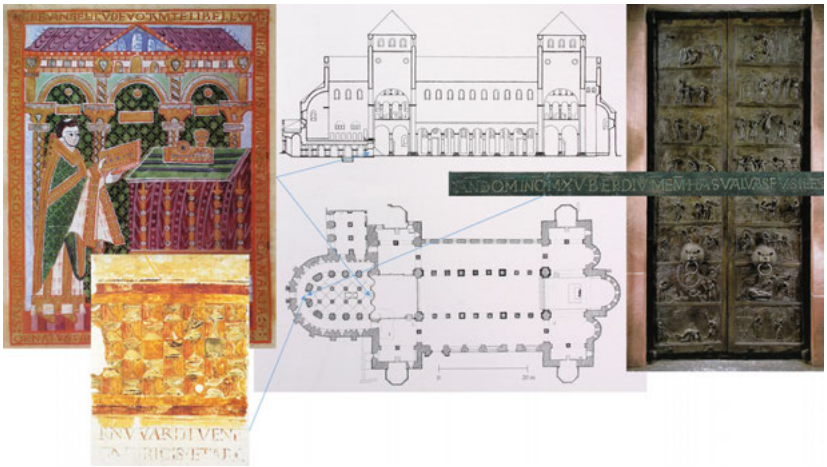

Fig. 12: St Michael's: artefacts relating to the consecration of 1015.

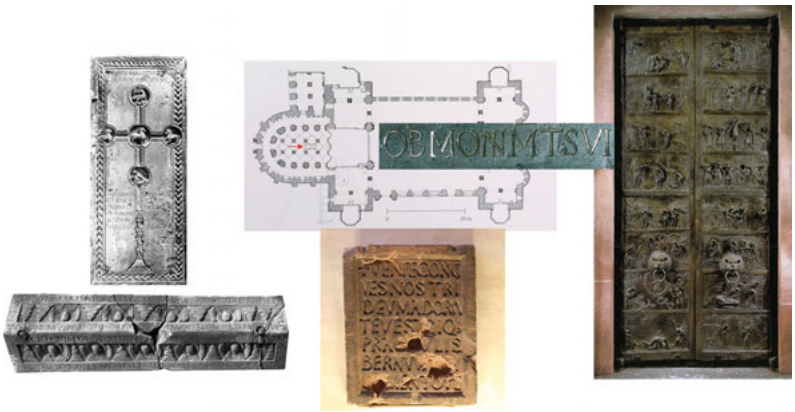

Fig. 13: St Michael's: artefacts relating to the tomb of Bishop Bernward.

cration), the Holy Cross (Bernwardkreuz, silver crucifix, bronze column (crucifix lost), door), and the archangel Michael as well as other angels (Bernwardkreuz (indirectly), inscription of consecration, door). Saints and themes are—at least partially—related to each other, and they are related to the architectural space by their permanent or temporary location, thus forming various flexible and interchanging networks. For example, the inscriptions and images each point to the altars of the saints they are naming or representing (fig. 14), and in doing so, they establish specific spacial relations. Moreover, we observe that the inscribed artefacts are more numerous in certain areas than in others—especially in the crypt with the altar of St Mary and the tomb of Bernward, and along the nave with the relics deposited in the columns. If we suppose that the relics deposited in the crypt were arranged in a similar way as in the nave, i. e. along a major route of circulation, they may have been located in the series of niches

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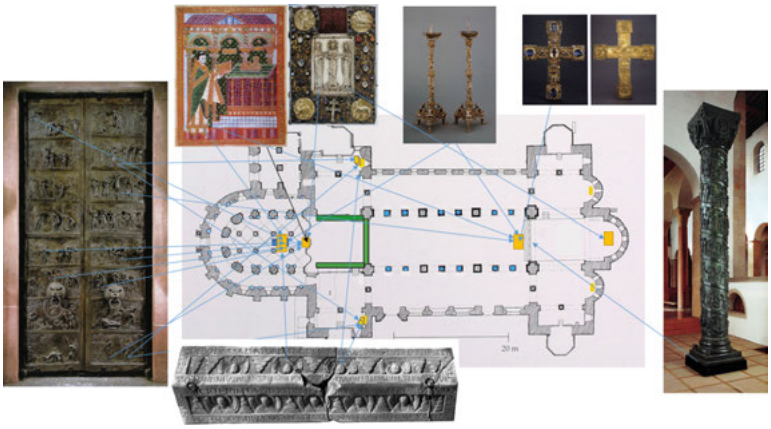

Fig. 14: St Michael's: artefacts donated by Bishop Bernward and their relations to altars.

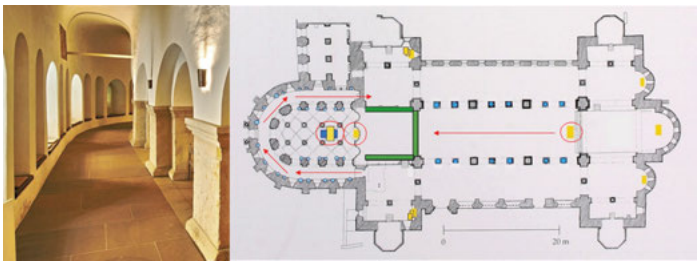

Fig. 15: St Michael's: axes of circulation and highlighted cult areas.

that are situated in the outer wall of the crypt ambulatory (fig. 15). However, they may, on the contrary, also have been assembled in one place—in an altar of All Saints established in an axial chapel at the west end of the church, to which the ambulatory originally may have led.[26] Thus we can say that the inscriptions highlighted the main

26 Brandt 2017, 246–247, believes that the relics were laid down in the altar of All Saints. However, this altar is not explicitly mentioned in the note on the consecration of the crypt (*Vita Bernwardi*, 778). According to the *Chronicon coenobii S. Michaelis* (16th/17th century) the abbots Segebert (d. 1079) and Conrad (d. 1124) had their tombs *ante altare omnium sanctorum sub choro fratrum*. This means that the altar was situated in the 12th-century extension of the crypt below the crossing with the monks' choir. In 1015, it would not have been situated in the crypt, but in the monks' choir. Therefore, it either was established only after the extension of the crypt or transferred there from another place in the crypt. Since burial in the middle of the choir usually is only accorded to abbots known as reconstructors or renovators of the sanctuary, the choir area or the church in general, the tombs are likely to have been transferred, too. There are two possibilities for the location of an altar of All Saints. If it had been situated in the western part of the crypt, its translation might have been caused by the new altar dedicated to Bernward that was erected to the west of his tomb after his canonisation in 1192. Or it might have had its place at the west end of the church, in an axial chapel to which the ambulatory

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axis of circulation, the main points of veneration and cult, and, maybe, also in a way encircled the architectural space. However, all this does not convey a broader, more profound meaning to the inscriptions themselves. Nor does a holistic pattern of interpretation show up in the networks of relations and the possible arrangements of the inscribed artefacts within the sacred space. It is therefore probable that we do not see the whole picture but only a part of it. In order to make sense of the inscriptions and works of art that seem to be yielding only fragments of meaning, we have to look for sources providing us with complementary information.

4 First Source, First Step: Liturgy

Liturgy and liturgical activities such as divine office, lecture of the Holy Script, mass celebration, processions, prayers, and chants, may add further layers of meaning to artefacts involved in these activities as well as to the architectural setting in which they take place. I will illustrate this by using the example of the commemoration of Bernward on the day of his death.

As we have no records of how Bernward was commemorated before his canonization in 1192, we are not informed about specific services, practices, and prayers that may have been performed at St Michael's according to Bernward's will. But we know what monastic communities usually did for a founder or abbot that was buried in the church. On the anniversary day of his death, the two conventual masses in which the whole community took part—morning mass and the main mass around mid-day—were especially dedicated to his memory by prayers recited on his behalf.[27] At St Michael's, main mass was usually chanted at the main altar, that of St Michael, situated in the sanctuary just above Bernward's tomb in the crypt (fig. 2), thus establishing a clear spatial relationship. On this occasion, if not generally so, morning mass may have been performed at the altar of St Mary in front of Bernward's tomb, making the spatial relationship become even closer. But most important, on this day the convent came to visit the tomb.[28] The monks left the choir and took part in a pro-

originally had given access, as was the case in the cathedral of Hildesheim itself and in most other churches with comparable crypt ambulatories. In this case, a large time frame for the destruction of the axial chapel and the translation of the altar and the burials would open up, between the extension of the crypt into the crossing prior to 1186 (Lutz 2012, 216) and the restriction of the convent's area to the crypt in the 17th century.

27 For the prescriptions concerning liturgical intercession for a deceased member of the community, see the Cluniac customs of the 11th century, esp. the *Liber Tramitis* (1st half of 11th century), 276–277.

28 Such processions to the grave of a commemorated dead are modeled on the processions to the altar of a venerated saint which were performed on his feast day after Vespers and Matins, see Rauwel 2014, 381. Since the vast majority of monastic or canonical customs which are preserved date from after Bernward's death, there is only written testimony of this practice from later times. Processions

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cession to the crypt where they assembled around the tomb and rehearsed psalms and intercessory prayers on behalf of Bernward (e. g. Psalm 130, *De profundis*). In doing so, they responded to the urgent request expressed by the inscription on the tomb slab (fig. 10): "for the peaceful rest of my soul, (I beg) you to chant amen" (*sit pia pax aminae, vos et amen canite*)! And as an answer to the intercessory prayers of the convent on his behalf, the inscription on the sarcophagus hidden by the sepulchral vault echoes Bernwards firm belief in his resurrection to eternal life: "For I know that my redeemer lives … and resurrected in my flesh, I shall see God, my saviour" (*scio enim quod redemptor meus vivit* […] *et in carne mea videbo deum salvatorem meum*).[29] When connected by the intercessory action at the tomb, the two inscriptions, which seem contradictory at first sight, reveal themselves as outlining a coherent sequence of events. Bernward clearly conceived them in order to function in this very way.

5 Second Source, Second Step: Sacred Scripture

In the metaphorical language of the New Testament there are a number of allusions to the church building. Saint Peter is addressed as "the rock on which the church will be built" (Mt 16,18), the prophets and the apostles are called the foundation of the church (Eph 2,20), and in the epistle of Paul to the community of Galata the apostles John and James are referred to as columns (Gal 2,9). These passages have been interpreted as a direct reference to the church building since late antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, as has been shown in detail by Reudenbach.[30] At St Michael's,

to the grave on the anniversary day are documented for the Augustinian canons of Marbach, see *Consuetudines Marbach*, 250. At Marbach these processions are performed for each member of the community who is buried in the canons' cemetery or elsewhere in the convent. The grave is also visited in procession after morning mass on the 30th day after the burial, ibid., 247.—See also the additional prescriptions for the commemoration of a dead monk introduced by abbot Isembert of Saint-Martial de Limoges (1174–1198), which include a procession to the grave ("Chroniques Saint-Martial", 335–337; see on this Becquet 1986).—A close parallel to Bernward's case is provided by the chronicle of the Cluniac priory of Montierneuf at Poitiers (written 1101/07), where the anniversary of the abbey's founder is described in the manner of a saint's feast, with the convent assembling for Vespers at the founder's tomb and celebrating the *officium* there (*Recueil Montierneuf*, 435); see on this Sauer 1993, 150–152.

29 See also Frese 2015. As Wulf 2003, 196, pointed out, these words, going back to Job 19,25–27, were part of the office for the dead in the breviary and used for funerary inscriptions since late antiquity. However, instead of belonging to the first reading of the first nocturn, they occur on two different occasions in the *officium mortuorum*: as a response sung in the first nocturn (*Credo quod redemptor meus vivit: et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sum: Et in carne mea videbo Deum salvatorem meum.*), and as the eighth reading of the third nocturn (Job 19,20–27), see: http://medievalist.net/hourstxt/deadmatb.htm; http://medievalist.net/hourstxt/deadmatd.htm (last accessed 16.03.2018).

30 Reudenbach 1980. For relics deposited in architecture see Keller 1975, 105–108. Relics laid down in the nave capitals of St Benedict in Montecassino are described in the *Chronica monasterii Casinensis*,

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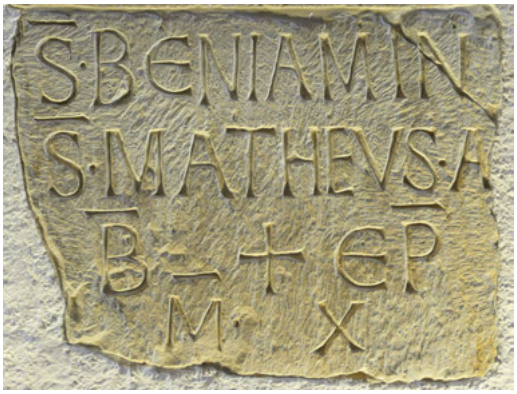

Fig. 16: St Michael's: foundation stone.

the metaphor of the apostles as the foundation of the church was obviously decisive for the conception of the foundation stone that was found in 1908 (fig. 16). However, in inscribing not only the name of the apostle Mathew, but also that of Benjamin, one of the twelve sons of Jacob after which the twelve tribes of Israel were named, on the stone, Bernward chose an explicitly typological perspective.[31] This typological approach interprets figures and events of the Old Testament as prefigurations of figures and events in the New Testament, i. e. the tribes of Israel as precursors of the apostles, and, in doing so, serves to incorporate the Old Testament into a Christian eschatological view of salvation. Thus, by placing the inscription on the foundation stone, Bernward opened up a category of space different from the ones we have been dealing with so far—the history of salvation—in order to firmly root his foundation—materially as well as spiritually—in this eschatological perspective of time and space.

6 Third Source, Third Step: Exegesis

There is not much exegetical literature dealing with architecture and sacred space in any other than a metaphorical sense. *De templo Salomonis liber* by Bede the Venerable (673/74–735), that was written around 730 and widely read during the Middle Ages, for the most part, is not an exception to this rule. In his exegesis of the two records of the construction of the temple by Solomon according to the vulgate (1 K 6–7 and 2 Chr 3–7)

III, ch. 29, 401: *In singularum columnarum eiusdem basilicae capitellis, tempore constructionis in aereis pixidulis reliquiae* [...] *locatae sunt*. We do not know if the description of the deposits (the relics were inclosed in a small metal box which was inserted into a cavity operated into the top of the capital) corresponds to what was found at St Michael's in 1951 (see note 18), since there seems to have been no documentation. Relics were also found in the nave capitals of St Godehard at Hildesheim in 1962; they were inserted into small clay pots instead of metal boxes, see Engfer 1965.

31 This was also seen by Berges 1983, 51–52 and Bünz 2012, 82. However, they centered more on formal aspects than on the question what idea guided this typological reference.

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Bede analyses the different meanings of the features of the building, its furnishings, and the sacred vessels without regard to questions of space. In one passage, however, in which he speaks about the different courts surrounding the temple (which are not mentioned in 1 Kings, but only in later texts and by Josephus Flavius),[32] he suddenly insists on spatial relations and questions of access. His interest centers on the inner atrium that was called the "court of the priests" (*atrium sacerdotum*) because the priests and Levites performed their services there. This inner atrium surrounded the temple on all sides but was most spacious in the east, in front of the temple (*in faciem templi*), where the sacred sacrifices took place. Here, the bronze altar of burnt offerings was located, here stood the ten bronze lavers for cleansing sacrificial offerings, and here was the large Brazen Sea for the priests' ritual purification. The *atrium sacerdotum* had an enclosure with a height of three cubits in order to deny access to the temple to all except the priests, and only one door on the eastern side:[33]

> *Atrium ergo interius, quod vocatur sacerdotum, eo quod sacerdotes et Levitae in eo ministrarent, ex omni parte erat templo circumdatum, sed ab oriente, unde templi ingressus, multo longius a templo, quam a ceteris tribus plagis secretum, quia nimirum in ea plaga, id est in facie templi, fiebant ministeria sanctorum. Ibi altare aeneum ad hostias Domino offerendas, ibi decem luteres ad lavandas easdem hostias, ibi mare aeneum erat positum ad lavandas manus pedesque sacerdotum, cum ad ministrandum intrarent.*[34]

Bede explains how access to the different areas of the temple is related to the status of the person and his or her purity: The Holy of Holies is accessible only to the high priest and the temple itself only to ritually purified priests and Levites. Purified and unpurified priests alike, Levites, and singers, stay in the *atrium sacerdotum*. Purified Jewish men have their place in the inner portico of the outer court (*in intimum atrium basilicae maioris*) and purified Jewish women in the outer portico (*in exterius atrium*).[35] In resuming the results of his interpretation of the temple's courts, Bede then

32 On the complex questions related to Bede's sources see Meyvaert 1996.

33 On the historical and archaeological reality of the Jerusalem Temple with its different courts and forecourts and the regulations of access to them see Branham 2006 (with all relevant literature on the subject).

34 Beda, *De templo*, 192 (see also PL 91, col. 775). "But the inner court, which is called the court of the priests because the priests and Levites ministered in it, was completely surrounded by the temple but on the east, from where one entered the temple, it was much further removed from the temple than on the other three sides, because, of course, it was on that side, i. e. at the front of the temple, that the sacred functions were performed. There it was that the bronze altar for offering victims to the Lord was situated, there the ten wash-basins for washing these victims, and there the Bronze Sea for washing the hands and feet of the priests when they went to perform their duties." (*Bede: On the Temple*, 65).

35 Beda, *De templo*, 193 (see also PL 91, col. 775): *Namque in sancta sanctorum ingrediebatur pontifex, in ipsum templum sacerdotes purificati una cum levitis; in atrium sacerdotum sacerdotes purificati et non purificati una cum levitis et cantatoribus; in intimum atrium basilicae majoris viri Judaei purificati stantes et orantes sub divo, si serenum esset; si tempestas, in porticus proximas sese recipientes; in*

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switches from the wording of the Vulgate to architectural terms applying to the church and no longer speaks of the *atrium exterior* or the *porticus* but instead only of the *basilica grandis*, thereby conceptually merging the temple and the church building into one:

> *Unde apte basilica haec grandis, etsi plurimos capit, non eos tamen in interiora templi deaurati, non ad altaris officium, non in ipsum saltim atrium sacerdotum intromittit, quia carnales quique atque infirmi adhuc in ecclesia, etsi ob meritum castae fidei ac pietatis Deo devotae ad electorum sortem pertinent, longe tamen abest ut illis aequentur qui cum fiducia probantur.*[36]

Bede's account of the courts of the Jewish temple thus ends in a statement on the necessity of separating—Christian—priests from the faithful in the church, which is backed by the authority of sacred Scripture. In this way, the *atrium sacerdotum* is transformed from a forecourt of the temple of Jerusalem into a part of the church building, from an area located in the open in front of the façade of the temple—*in facie templi*—into a space reserved for clerics in the church's interior.

After all we know about Bernward, there can be no doubt that the *Liber de Templo Salomonis* was known to him and that he was familiar with Bede's exegetical ideas about the temple and its courts and their relation to the church building. What is the outcome when we apply Bede's interpretation to the church of St Michael's?

If we set the *atrium sacerdotum* and the monastic choir—i. e. the western crossing with the monks' seats, closed off by screens—in one, as did Bede, the elevated western sanctuary becomes the equivalent of the temple. The main altar dedicated to saint Michael, which is housed by this sanctuary, is, according to Bede, to be equated with the golden altar of incense situated in the main room of the temple in front of the door to the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies itself, however, is no place on earth but a metaphor for heaven—the *superna patria*, where God shall be revealed to the blessed in the presence of the angels—, as Bede explains.[37] The eucharistic sacrifice

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exterius atrium mulieres Judaeae purificatae; in extremum atrium gentiles et Judaei qui nuper venerant ex gentibus usque ad sextum purificationis diem. "For the high priest used to go into the Holy of Holiest, the purified priests together with the Levites into the Temple itself, the purified and non-purified together with the Levites and cantors into the court, the purified men of Juda into the innermost court of the greater hall, standing and praying in the open air, if it was fine, it not going into the colonnades nearest them, the purified women of Juda into the outer court, the gentiles and the Jews who had recently come from the gentiles, into the outermost court until the sixth day of purification." (*Bede: On the Temple*, 66–67).

36 Beda, *De templo*, 194–195 (see also PL 91, col 776). "Hence it is fitting that this great hall, even though it holds the majority, does not, for all that, admit them to the inner parts of the gilded temple, or to the service of the altar or even to the priests' court itself, because even though all the carnal and weak who are still in the Church have a share in the lot of the elect through the merit of pure faith and of piety which is dedicated to God, nevertheless, they are far from being fit to put on a par with those who have convincingly proved their fidelity." (*Bede: On the Temple*, 69).

37 Beda, *De templo*, 177 (see also PL 91, col 762).

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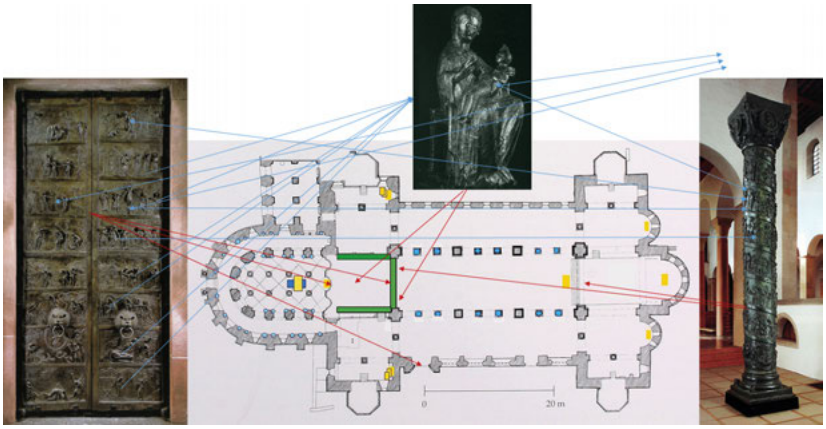

Fig. 17: St Michael's: possible locations of bronze artefacts and relations among them (with the Essen Madonna as a model for the lost bronze(?) Madonna).

performed at the altar functions as a connection to this heavenly sphere. Finally, the nave is equated with the interior and exterior forecourts of the temple to the east of the *atrium sacerdotum*, i. e. the monastic choir, which form the *basilica grandis* that is destined to the ordinary faithful. All this is absolutely coherent and comes as no surprise.

More interesting is what becomes of the artefacts in this scheme. If we assume that the sanctuary is the counterpart of the temple, the western arch of the crossing marks the *facies templi*. Furthermore, all bronze artefacts are likely to have been located within the area of the monks' choir in the western crossing (fig. 17). The two monumental columns carrying the crucifix and the lost figure of the virgin would therefore correspond to Jachin and Boaz, the columns in front of the façade of the temple. The lost wheel-shaped chandelier would have had its place in the crossing, thus hanging "in facie templi", that is in the same place where Bernward's chandelier in the cathedral is reported to have had its place.[38] And finally, the bronze doors would have to be located, according to the inscription which they bear, in that same "facie templi", i. e. installed between the western piers of the crossing above the west wall of the crypt, matching the engraved date of 1015, which was the year the crypt was consecrated (fig. 18).[39]

What insights do we gain by considering St Michael's church and its liturgical furnishings as conceived according to the model of the Jerusalem temple? Does this

38 *Vita Bernwardi*, 761.

39 Several authors dealt with the expression *in facie(m) templi* of the doors' inscription, coming to different results concerning its meaning and a possible location of the bronze doors—or denying that it had any topographical relevance at all, see Berges 1983, 115–116, Gallistl 2007/2008, Brandt 2010, 11–12, Gallistl 2015, esp. 83, and Lutz 2017, 180–181. So far, none turned to Biblical exegesis.

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approach shed new light on the artefacts and their inscriptions, does it provide us with a better understanding of their meaning?

First of all, it transforms individual artefacts without any relation to each other into an ensemble which is united by the same material—cast bronze—and destined for a common location—the part of the church reserved for clerics or monks—, and which, by referring to the temple of Solomon, gives meaning to the sacred space of the church as a whole. Furthermore, the bronze artefacts display a variety of iconographic relations, both among themselves as well as to other works of art and altars in St Michael's (fig. 17). This is especially true of the two bronze works placed on top of a column, the crucifix and the figure of saint Mary, which, by their mediating role, establish a close connection among two important altars situated on the main axis of the church, the altar of St Mary in the crypt and that of the Holy Cross in front of the eastern crossing. While the bronze and marble columns might represent Jachin and Boaz erected in front of the façade of the temple, the crucifix and the Madonna would be pointing—in an impressively monumental manner—to the central doctrines of Christian faith, the incarnation of the son of God and the redemption through his death on the cross. However, it is difficult to imagine them set up *in facie templi*, i. e. within the monks' choir in the western crossing: On the one hand, there would hardly have been sufficient space, and on the other hand, the symmetrical disposition would have highlighted the inequalilty of the 'pair' with regard to the material of the columns and their height. If the original arrangement indeed consisted of the marble and bronze columns alone,[40] an axial disposition with one of the columns at the entrance of each of the two choirs would seem aesthetically more satisfying. At the same time, it would also be more convenient in regard to the location of the respective altars—St Mary in the western crypt and the Holy Cross at the east end of the nave. Integrated into the front of the choir screens, they would have been very well visible to monks and laymen alike.

The bronze doors were tightly linked to the crucifix and the Madonna on the two columns—visually as well as theologically—by their material and their images. Due to the iconography of their reliefs and the theological message conveyed by them, close connections also existed to the main altar dedicated to the archangel Michael and all the angels, as well as to the altar of St Mary in the crypt. In fact, the full impact of the theological meaning of the bronze doors as a symbol of the door of paradise that was sealed off by the original sin and re-opened by the incarnation of Christ, only unfolds if they are located in front of the main altar, where the sacred space of the church and

40 The late medieval German *Vita Bernwardi* also attributes the donation of a calc-sinter column in the cathedral, the so-called "Irmensul", to Bernward, see Giese 2012, 252, 257 (appendix 3.3.). Since late medieval times it had its place in front of the stairs leading up to the canons' choir, see Kratz 2013, 260–265. The report on the 1543 iconoclasm in St Michael's mentions a marble column, which was removed ("weggenommen", see Otte 2012, 318). It is unclear, if this column is identical to the one that has been preserved.

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Fig. 18: St Michael's: Bronze doors between the western piers of the crossing.

the heavenly sphere—the *superna patria*—establish a salvific communication during the celebration of the Eucharist in presence of the monastic community. The doors' location above the altar of St Mary would not only show their intimate connection with Mary, whose role as the mother of God is fundamental to the story of salvation which is recounted on the doors' reliefs; but the doors' position above the altar would also translate their theological relation to St Mary into a stringent spatial relation. If the doors were once installed *in facie templi*, the dedication page of the "Kostbares Evangeliar"—showing the Madonna enthroned behind her altar and framed by two door wings—has to be understood as representing the bronze doors which, while actually situated immediately above the altar, were projected on crypt level with their wings wide open in a spatial arrangement not far from reality (fig. 5).[41] And finally, when set up in front of the sanctuary, i. e. between the piers of the crossing above the crypt, the doors' inscription would for the first and only time be completely coherent with regard to its content, its figurative meaning and its dating to the year of the consecration of the crypt.

41 For the dedication page, the spatial relations represented in it, and the architectural space of St Michael's, as well as its relationship to the bronze doors, see also Wolter-von dem Knesebeck 2016, 164–172.

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Fig. 19: St Michael's: inner sides of the western piers of the crossing with Bronze doors (drawing by Christoph Forster).

There is no question that the outcome of applying Bede's exegetical interpretation of the temple to St Michael's is contrary to our usual ideas about the appearance of a medieval church interior. However, it seems premature to dismiss the relevance of Bede's interpretation for the internal organization and liturgical furnishing of medieval sacred spaces without thorough further examination. On the one hand, this applies to the material setting of the doors' proposed location: The pilaster-like wall piers regarding each other on the inner sides of the western crossing piers show marks of repair at a height that corresponds to that of the bronze doors when installed on the original level of the sanctuary (fig. 19).[42] On the other hand, this applies to textual sources dealing with the church interior: Descriptions of works of art and liturgical furnishings that refer to the front of the temple or the temple itself are not at all rare during the 11th and 12th century—even if in most cases we only have the textual sources while the artefacts themselves have perished.[43] Nevertheless, from this same period monumental columns, menorah-like chandeliers with seven branches, and bronze artefacts that are bearing evident similarities to the furnishings of the Jeru-

42 The actual (post-war) floor is about 18 cm higher than the original floor level, which is indicated by the bases of the wall piers.
43 See e. g. the examples cited in Lehmann-Brockhaus 1938.

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salem temple are preserved not only in Hildesheim but also in Essen, Braunschweig, Würzburg, Lüttich, and Milan; such temple-related artefacts are also known to have once existed in a number of further places, among which Corvey, Lorsch, and Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire can be counted.[44] It is therefore very well possible that the temple as a model—not for the architectural features of the church, but for the spiritual conception of the church interior as a sacred space and for its perception, its subdivision, and its liturgical furnishings—was much more present in the minds of Bernward's contemporaries than we are accustomed to suppose.[45] If this is correct, scripture and inscriptions had a four-fold role in constituting sacred space: Holy Scripture served for laying out the foundations, exegesis for the conception of models, inscriptions for creating an enclosure, marking the ground, and setting up barriers within and around the sacred space; and, in conclusion, liturgy served as the enactment of the sacred.

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44 On the chandeliers with seven branches, see Bloch 1961.

45 The present article is intended to be a case study opening up a path for further reflection on the subject. It is part of an ongoing broader investigation.

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Fig. 3–4, 8–10b: Wilfried E. Keil.
Fig. 5: *1000 Jahre St. Michael in Hildesheim* 2012, Fig. 137.
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