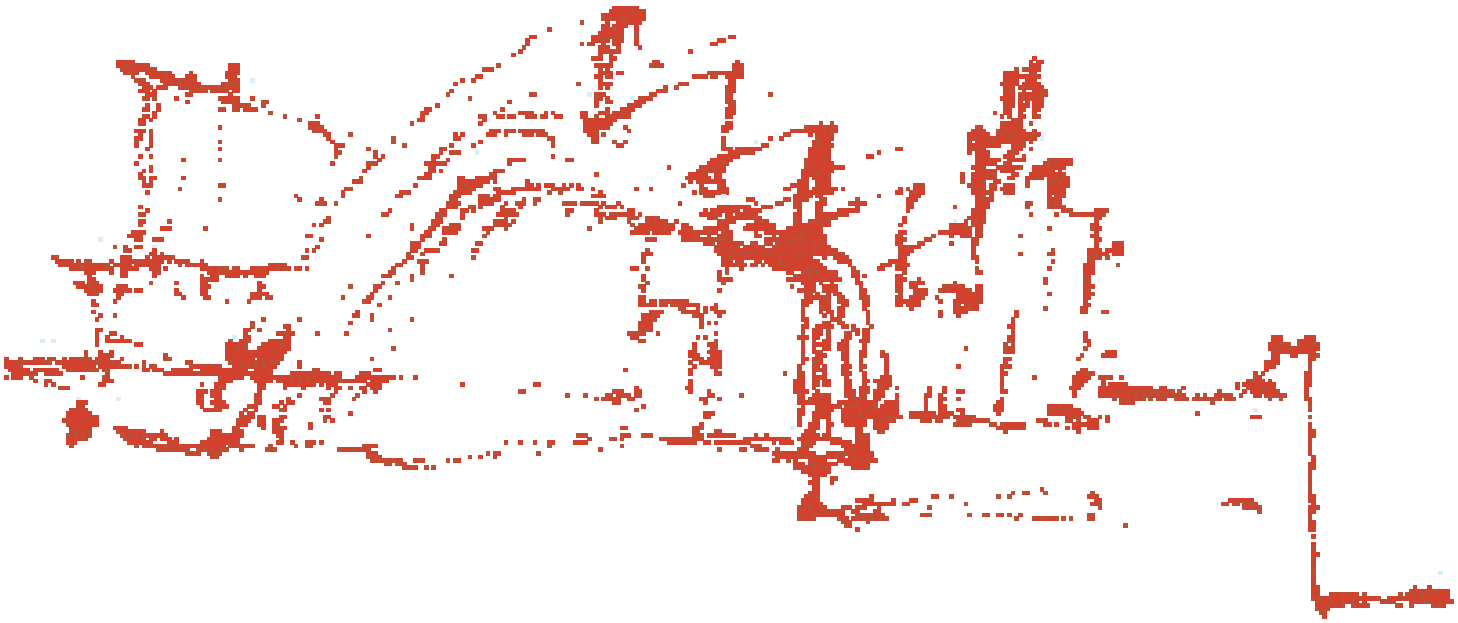
ARQUITECTURA

C.O.A.M.

311

3er TRIMESTRE 1997



CONSTRUIR UNA IGLESIA
ARQUITECTURA SACRA EN ESPAÑA, 1939 - 1975: UNA MODERNIDAD INEDITA
ARANTZAZU. UNA VOLUNTAD INTERDISCIPLINAR
ARQUITECTURA SACRA EN ESPAÑA, 1939 - 1975: QUIEN ES QUIEN
CONVERSACIONES CON EL PADRE COELLO DE PORTUGAL
ESPACIOS SACROS ESPAÑOLES, 1939 - 1975
SOBRE LA RECREACION DE LOS MODELOS ANTIGUOS EN EL ESCORIAL
OCHO IGLESIAS MADRILEÑAS CONTEMPORANEAS
LA CATEDRAL DE MANAGUA
RESTAURACION DE LA CAPILLA DE S. ISIDRO EN LA IGLESIA PARROQUIAL DE S. ANDRES
UNA IGLESIA PARA ROMA
ENTREVISTA CON CHARLES JENCKS

2.000 Pts.

On the reconstruction of El Escorial's old models

Juan Rafael de la Cuadra Blanco

"The source of a book is always another book, other books. In the genealogy of literature, books are always descendants to other books, and the absolute originality is just a Romantic myth, which is now merely supported by an underdeveloped cultural pool. It is precisely those who are nothing that want to be different from anyone. Originality is a modern concept, associated with the philosophy of individualistic "hubris"."

CARLOS FUENTES, "El mal del Tiempo".

When Critilo visits El Escorial in "El Criticón" (the book Baltasar Gracián published fifty years after Philip the Second's death), his simple mention of King Solomon is intended for any learned reader to identify the, so called, Eighth Marvel: "And he found in that temple of catholic Solomon, astonishing for the Hebrew, not just satisfaction to his idea but awe from its own excess" (1). Because the comparison between both buildings and both monarchs was rather usual in those years. Friar Sigüenza, El Escorial's official chronicler, dedicated a complete chapter to that parallel (II.XXII), and mentioned the similarities between both works even in the very prologue. Thus, El Escorial was conceived as the last link of a chain which included Noah's Ark, the Tabernacle, and the Temple of Jerusalem. Philip the Second, "a new Solomon", imitated his model to the extent of asking the stonecutters to carve the stone blocks in the very quarry. Góngora called him Second Solomon in a sonnet dedicated to the Sovereign. The parallel was also present in the "Estebanillo González". It was also mentioned by Juan Gracián ("a new Solomon and prince of architects"; 1587), Covarrubias, Porreño, Santos and most of the chroniclers, specially Caramuel whose "Arquitectura recta y oblícua" was based on the study of both buildings.

Other traditions, nevertheless, as the renown Saint Lawrence's gridiron, the supposed celebration of the victory of Saint Quentin's battle, which took place in the Saint's day and the fortunate promotion of the monument as the World's Eighth Marvel, have circulated in many popular legends on the Monastery and overshadowed the evident presence of Judah's Kings on the Shrine's facade.

1. TRADITIONALLY ASSUMED REASONS FOR THE FOUNDATION

In relation to Saint Lawrence, who was supposed to have suffered martyrdom, burning on a gridiron, on the 10th of August of the year 248, and of whom it was told that he went so far as to ask his torturers to turn him hall round, we have to say that, nowadays, and thanks to Attwater, we know that he was in fact beheaded (2). Moreover, the original project for the monastery had nothing in common with the famous gridiron.

And about the battle at Saint Quentin, a small town near Paris (the conquest of the capital could have been a good justification for the erection of such a monument) which had been, seventy years before, a tiny Flemish state, we will just quote authors like Ferrero, who declare that the significance of such a dispute was somewhat modest in the 16th century Europe. In fact, the European panorama did not change a bit after it. On the other hand, it was true that the city resisted the attack of the French on the 10th of August, but the city was seized just two weeks afterwards, on the 29th of august (3). As seen from the French side, Saint Quentin's baffle was a heroic deed performed by the obstinate people of a besieged city before a clearly superior army. Nowadays, we have to admit that the commemoration of Saint Quentin's campaign was just an excuse for the monarch to present a project which had a much more meditated purpose and which responded to his familiar tradition of founding monasteries intended to be royal sepulchers and, therefore, memorials for all their victories. Nevertheless, we should not forget that to commemorate Saint Quentin was to outrage the French.

2. A MAUSOLEUM FOR THE AUSTRIA DYNASTY

We must evaluate now, beyond other symbolic factors (which in those days were, nevertheless, rather important), the need Philip the Second felt of an adequate building to contain his fathers remains (he had been dead since 1558). The members of the new dynasty, inaugurated by Charles, could not rest, as it happened with their Spanish ancestors, scattered around Spain, in different churches and cathedrals. Philip did still consider himself inheritor to the title of the Holy Roman Empire (an aspiration he finally resigned on behalf of his uncle Ferdinand), he had been King of England by means of his wedding with Mary Tudor and he had almost unified the Iberian Peninsula along with hall of the world's land around 1580.

So he needed on specially outstanding receptacle, a monument fit for receiving the bodies of the Emperor and the rest of the members of the Austria dynasty, a family he craved to elevate to the highest position. And he also required an extraordinary temple in which to pray for their souls. It was this train of thought that lead him to the institution of a monastery for Hieronymite monks (surely influenced by his father's experience in Yuste). The temple had to compete, in grandiosity, with the one the Pope was erecting in Rome, but it had to bear a more private character as it was isolated from the city's uproar and even far from the usual roads. The palace character of the building is clearly expressed by the creation of a small chapel, under the main altar, which would house rather austere tombs. His successors transformed it into the Baroque mausoleum we know nowadays (4).

According to an old tradition, the Spanish Kings had apartments in the monasteries belonging to friendly orders. Philip the Second decided to establish his residence by these two chapels. Chueca has mentioned the importance of this confusing building program that had as a consequence the repetition of the convent scheme to the North of the Shrine. This decision would result in the addition of two new elements to the program, the palace for the court, as the monarch was to live there, and the Collegium for the monks that would attend the mausoleum in the following centuries(5).

Picture 1: Morphogenesis of the monastery according to Chueca and scale model of Herod's Temple

As we can see in Picture 1, the convent itself had the same scheme as Jerusalem's Temple under the Roman rule: a big court for the priests above four smaller and secondary courts. The similarities could even be greater if Chueca had decided to draw the six towers which we know were intended to be erected on the corners and the middle points of the long sides of the building in this stage of the design process. It was precisely the central tower of the South facade which was to contain the library, its "scar" can be seen nowadays on the facade. The temple at El Escorial was placed towards the North of the court in order to allow sunlight to reach the cloister. The rest of the differences are due to the use of diverse architectural and life styles.

In other articles (6), I have tried to demonstrate that it was precisely the necessity to design a building with such a varied and confusing program what made the King think about the best model any architect could dream of, for religious architecture. This model could not be other than King Solomon's Temple, which was built according to plans drawn by Yahve himself and which was reconstructed by Herod in the time of Jesus Christ. It was easy to think that a building with such an author should represent the divine order. The Roman rule over Palestine in the time of the Second Temple could justify the use of classical orders as an adequate architectural language.

Figure 1a: Reconstruction by the author of Herod's temple. Most of the features are taken from Flavius Josephus' "Wars" and the design is completed with the description contained in the Mishnah. In the lower pad, we sea the Women's Atrium which, as the four "domus culinarii" on the corners, had no roof. The Priests' Atrium was a perimetral stripe of just 15 cubits.

Figure 1b: Use of the traditional convent scheme in order to liberate the Priests' Atrium, placing the Temple forming an "L" and attached to the North wall, so as to made possible the sunlight to penetrate the court (according to Chueca's suggestion). The Evangelists' Pavilion would restore the scar produced by this process. We use in our reconstruction a 100x100 cubits temple which incorporates some features from Bramante's Saint Peter and from the Cathedral of Valladolid which enhance the idea of a central scheme.

Figure 1c: Plan of the monastery drawn over a grid of 19x15 modules of 20 cubits (54 cm by cubit, that is, 31 Castilian "fingers"). According to this module (20 x 31/16 Castilian feet), the monastery was a rectangle of 736 x 581 feet, which Father Sigüenza rounded off to 735 x 580 feet (drawings by the author).

Philip the Second wanted the likenesses of his inspiring figures to preside the entrance to the Temple. The inscriptions on the pedestals of these statues are rather significant: David's says "he received the design from the hands of the Lord" (OPERIS EXEMPLAR A DOMINO RECEPIT), on Solomon's, "he built the Temple and dedicated it to the Lord" (TEMPLUM DÑO (DOMINO) AEDIFICATUM DEDICAVIT). On the medallions carved under the portico below, the monarch declared himself King of Spain, of Jerusalem and the Two Sicilies (a kingdom which had provided him with the title of Successor to Solomon). The King, far away from complicated astronomical theories which some authors (7) try to reconstruct, orientated the temple simply to Jerusalem, 16º Southeast, and wanted the tombs to be likewise orientated, although this idea was not finally adopted by his grandson Philip the Fourth who probably did not understand it.

The complex assumption of

the literary inspiration and the traditional images of the Temple of Solomon required a theoretical basis which would suit the personality of the authors and the magnificence of the selected model. The texts which describes the successive Temples of Jerusalem insisted strongly on the modules used on the original project. Most of them assumed the measures of the building to be multipliers of a 20 cubits module. The use of 'anthropometry' was mentioned by Villalpando. The combination of such varied materials, based on so different sources as God himself, the Cosmos and man, made possible the creation of a theoretical Superstructure which would perfectly suit the ideal purpose of El Escorial.

But, should we reduce the meaning of El Escorial to a more emulation of the Temple of Jerusalem? In that case wouldn't it become just a copy, as solemn as anyone would like? I will try to give an answer to all this questions, but before that, I would like to make a brief reflection on an as emulation.

3. OBLIVION OF OUR ROOTS

The re-creation or emulation of previous works is something rather common in the history of art, but problems arise when the sources are forgotten. For example, we know that West Side story is based on Romeo and Juliet but many ignore that Shakespeare based his play on the Greek novel "The Ephesian adventures of Anzia and Abrocomas" by Xenophon of Ephesus, a text that was enlarged by Masuccio of Salerno and by Luigi da Porto in the 15th and 16th centuries. We know now that the story circulated in Verona in the 14th century. Sources are easy to forget. The irregular verses by Xenophon have been disregarded for centuries now. There has neither been a complete edition of Plinius "Natural History" in Spain in the current century, although it was among the Most quoted authors in the Renaissance books of geography and history. There are many examples of this.

One of this books, neglected nowadays, is Flavius Josephus' "The Jewish Wars" (8). The text describes cubit by cubit the old Herod's Temple in Jerusalem and his destruction by Titus' troops in the year 70 a. C. The book was written in Rome on the 1st century, and has been read over and over from the 15th to the 19th century, as it was one of the historical evidences of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Some authors affirm that that particular fragment was the most studied paragraph in the whole western literature. There was a time in which in every home, in France, Holland and England, you could find a Josephus just by the family Bible. It was, according to Father Hardouin, "the Counter-reform's Fifth Gospel". Just our twentieth century, which has neglected Humanities, has overlooked it.

Figure 2: Seven ideal reconstructions of Herod's Temple according to Josephus' Wars and the Jewish Mishnah (drawings by the author). Each author has interpreted in a rather different way the scheme and measures describes by the texts: A) The first graphic reconstruction we know, made by the Rabbi from Cordoba Maimonides in the 'Mishnah Torah' (1180). B) Benito Arias Montano's (the librarian at El Escorial) interpretation in his Biblia Sacra (1572) C) The one by the Dutch orientalist and theologian Constantin L'Empéreur 1630), also reproduced by Juda Leon (1642). D) Sturm's (1694). E) Architect Claude Perrault's (1678). F) The one included in the Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971). G) Wilkinson's, in his "Jerusalem in Jesus Christ days" (1978).

The three treatises from the end of the 16th century which were most related to the works in El Escorial, those by Father Sigüenza, Arias Montano (librarian at the monastery) and Villalpando (disciple to Herrera), include numerous quotations of Josephus' work. Philip the Second, who gave the funds for those three books, did also know his Josephus rather well. It allowed him to discuss with Villalpando on the correct reconstruction of the Temple, as the author tells us. The "Jewish wars" the young prince just twelve years old (9). Roman historian is
one of the reasons why it seems so difficult to us to accept the influence of the Second Temple in the design of El Escorial.

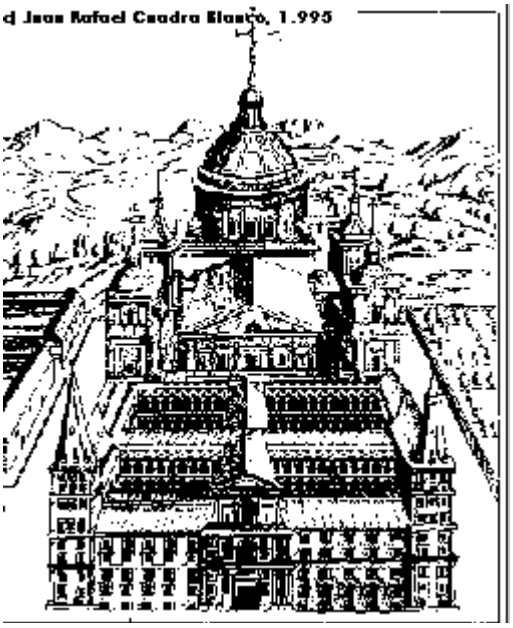
4. INSPIRATION AND THE RULES OF ARTISTIC CREATION

A simple look at the final plan of El Escorial would prevent us from taking its project as a mere exercise of "imaginary reconstruction", as those of the Parthenon, for example. The Temple had been lost for 1500 years and archaeology in the Holy Land was something unthinkable. It had to be replaced with the inspiration found in the bibles and illustrated books so fashionable at the time.

Picture 2: An image of the Temple of Jerusalem, according to a German theologian from the 16th century. The six towers, the classical triangular pediment, the two detached columns crowned by spheres have their countered in this other image of the possible appearance of El Escorial in the first stages of the design process (image processed by the author).

Everything indicates that the idea was not to recreate in an strict way the Temple of Jerusalem. But this deepest source of El Escorial remains in its basic idea as a 'trigger' for the design. The real project would assume other functional aspects, though. The complex program of a palace-monastery required it. Although I assume the pivotal importance of that idea in the genesis of the design, a building with such a complex scheme could not be the outcome of just sudden inspiration. We cannot deduce El Escorial from just the emulation of its model.

The intricate development of the project along decades has much more to do with artisan tradition than with the artist's revelation of his own soul, as could be applied to painters or musicians. El Escorial's brilliance and modernity can precisely be found in its preservation of the original idea during the years of its debelopment which resulted in its powerful image.■



N 0 T E S

1.- Part 1, crisis XII, "Los encantos de Faisirena"; modern edition by Ramón Sopena, 1972, p.124.

2.- Juan Hernández Ferrero: "Consideraciones sobre los orígenes históricos de El Monasterio de El Escorial", in "Real Monasterio-Palacio de El Escorial. Estudios inéditos", pags 13-26, CSIC, Madrid, 1987

3.- Juan Hernández Ferrero, page 18.

4.- J. R. Cuadra: "La idea original de los enterramientos reales en El Escorial" in "Boletín de la R.A.B.A. de San Fernando"; included in *Academia*, Madrid (in Press), 40 pages.

5.- Fernando Chueca Goilia: "Casas reales en monasterios y conventos españoles", Xarait. Madrid, 1982.

6.- J. R. Cuadra: "El Escorial y el Templo de Salomón" in *Anales de Arquitectura* No. 7. Valladolid, ETSAUV (1996), pages 5-15, The basic thesis is that El Escorial is based on the Second Temple, the one rebuilt by Herod and describes by Josephus, not on the Third Temple, the one Prophesied by Ezechiel and describes in Villalpando's treatise. Further information on my Web page: hftp://www.ciudadfutura.com/escorial

7.- Some autors like Taylor seem not to take in account the changes introduced by the updating of the Gregorian Calendar in 1582, from the 4 to the 15 october.

8.- Flavius Josephus: "Jewish Wars and Destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem", specially Book VI, chap. VI "Notable description of the city and Temple of Jerusalem', volume II, pages 97109 (in the edition published by Iberia, Barcelona, 1972 of the translation by Juan Martin Cordero, first published in Anvers, 1557). In order to indicate the difficulties of a literal interpretation of the text, we have selected the most significant paragraphs: "because this pan of the temple was called the Holy temple and it was reached after climbing fourteen ranks, it was square above and surrounded by another wall which was twenty-five cubits. After these fourteen steps, there was a clear flat space up to the wall of three hundred cubits. This pan, this holy temple, was in the middle and it was reached after twelve ranks, the height and width were both of a hundred cubits. The whole height was a hundred cubits and the lower part was just forty cubits high. Those who entered the temple reached the lower extreme, which was sixty cubits high and of the same length and twenty cubits wide divided into forty again, the first part was separated forty cubits. The inner pan of the Temple had twenty cubits and it was separated from the outside by a similar veil. And this pan was called the Sancta Sanctorum".

9.- Archivo General de Simancas, section "Casas y Sitios Reales 36", fo. 8; entry on the 20th march 1540: 'Plus, to Juan de Medina, a bookseller from Madrid, fifteen 'reales' for the three volumes of "De Josepho de Bello Judaico y de Antiquitatibus', for His Highness, which add to five hundred and ten "murs". The other books were "Metamorphosis" and a Bible.