WHEN DID THE LEGEND OF THE LAST EMPEROR ORIGINATE? A NEW LOOK AT THE TEXTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *THE APOCALYPSE OF PSEUDO-METHODIUS* AND THE *TIBURTINE SIBYL*

Christopher Bonura*

Abstract: The legend of the Last Emperor was influential in medieval and early modern apocalyptic literature, and yet its origins are uncertain. Was it first developed in the late seventh-century Syriac *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, or in a lost fourth-century version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*? Scholars have long been divided on this question, and yet the answer has implications for the understanding of the development of Christian apocalypticism, as well as the degree to which Islam was influenced by Christian eschatological beliefs. This article marshals a variety of evidence to prove the origin of the Last Emperor legend in Pseudo-Methodius in the seventh century. It argues that details of the description of the Last Emperor show a distinctive development from Syriac literary themes, and that the Last Emperor in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* is an early eleventh-century interpolation based on the ideas popularized by the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, likely having passed through a Byzantine Greek intermediary.
Keywords: Apocalypticism, Pseudo-Methodius, Tiburtine Sibyl, Last Emperor, imperial eschatology, Syriac literature, translation, textual transmission, Vaticinium of Constans, Visions of Daniel.

INTRODUCTION

From its beginnings, Christianity maintained an attitude toward Roman emperors that was at best ambivalent. For the first generations of Christians, the emperor of Rome was the representative of a suspicious and potentially hostile state or an active persecutor of the faith. An emperor such as Nero could be viewed as the very embodiment of evil. The Great Persecution at the end of the third century would have only entrenched this sense of hostility toward the ruler of the Roman state.

This changed somewhat abruptly with the conversion of Constantine and his elevation of Christianity as a favored religion. The praises of Constantine in the panegyrics of Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 340) could represent a Christian Roman Emperor unproblematically as the perfect meeting of church and empire, making "the Blessed One [Christ] present with the Empire itself" (τὸν μακάριον αὐτοῖς συνόντα βασιλέα ἐθεώρει).[1] Eusebius's characterization of Constantine, however, was the articulation of an as-yet-unrealized ideal. In reality the integration of the role of an emperor into the Christian religion was a fraught process with many false starts. Our sources suggest that the position of the emperor *vis-à-vis* Christianity had to be slowly felt out over the course of late antiquity.[2] Certainly, the emperor is hardly referenced in late antique

*Department of History, University of California, Berkeley, 3229 Dwinelle Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720. I offer my sincere thanks, first and foremost, to Andrea Sterk, who oversaw this project when it was my MA thesis and made it possible. Special thanks also to Nina Caputo, Florin Curta, and Bonnie Effros. In addition, this article would not be the same without the input and guidance of Maria Mavroudi. Jessica Yao provided invaluable assistance and caught numerous errors. Finally, I must extend thanks to Averil Cameron, Gian Luca Potestà, and Stephen Shoemaker, all of whom shared unpublished work with me—even, in the best spirit of academic openness and sharing of ideas, in cases in which they knew I was writing in disagreement with them.

[1] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.1.2, ed. Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Eusebius Werke, 1.1: Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin* (Berlin 1975) 15; trans. in Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford 1999) 67.

[2] Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge 2003) 129: "It remained to establish what precise position the Church was to occupy in the pre-existing structures of the empire and, even trickier, to define that of emperor in the new ecclesiology. This was not done at one go,

Christian eschatology, besides in the lingering fear that Emperor Nero would return as (or with) the Antichrist for one last great persecution.[3]

All of this seems to have changed in the late seventh century in the work known as the *Apocalypse* (or *Revelationes*) *of Pseudo-Methodius.* Written in the wake of the Islamic conquests, it gives an almost messianic role to a Roman Emperor, one whom it prophesies will come at the approaching end of time. This Last Roman Emperor will wage a great war in which he will personally lead his armies to victory, destroying the Ishmaelites (the term the author uses for the Muslim Arabs). He will then reign over a time of prosperity, briefly and unsuccessfully interrupted by the inroads of Gog and Magog, and then will travel to Jerusalem. There, according to the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*:

> The king of the Greeks [i.e., the Last Roman Emperor] shall go up and stand on Golgotha, and the holy Cross shall be placed on that spot where it had been fixed when it bore Christ. And the king of the Greeks shall place his crown on the top of the holy Cross, stretch out his two hands towards heaven, and hand over the kingdom to God the Father.[4]

With this act, the emperor will die and the last earthly kingdom will come to an end with Christ literally taking up the crown of the universal Christian empire, a necessary precondition for Christ's earthly reign upon the Second Coming. Thus the office of the Roman emperor had been integrated into the Christian eschatological scenario.

The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* circulated widely in a number of languages, and the concept of a positive (as opposed to evil) eschatological emperor found fertile ground in medieval Christian traditions, where the legend grew in new and independent directions. The legend of the Last Roman Emperor (later often called the "Last World Emperor") eventually gained some prominence in medieval and early modern

but gradually, by successive adjustments as problems emerged, in what was often a contradictory manner." Dagron explores many of these developments in ibid. 80–82, 127–157.

[3] Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 2.4, during the reign of Constantine, asserts that while many Christians still believed Nero would come back with the Antichrist at the end times, this notion was not true. In the early fifth century, Augustine, in his *De Civitate Dei* 20.19.3, mentions that some Christians believed that Nero would return from the dead as the Antichrist, or else that he was not really dead but hidden and waiting to return to rule the Roman Empire toward the end of the world. Augustine dismisses these ideas, but his protégé, the exiled African bishop Quodvultdeus, still seems to put some stock in them, discussing in chapter 8 of the *Dimidium temporis* section of his *Liber promissionum et praedictorum*, in *Opera Quodvultdeo Carthaginiensi episcopo tribute*, ed. René Braun (Turnholt 1976) 201, how the Antichrist would perhaps take the form of Nero, or share similar characteristics with Nero. Another contemporary, Sulpicius Severus in Gaul, reports in his *Dialogues* 1.2.14, ed. Karl Halm, *Sulpicii Severi libri qui supersunt* (Vienna 1866) 197, that his monastic hero, Martin of Tours, had taught that at the end of time Nero would return and rule over the Western Roman Empire while the Antichrist would rule over the eastern half of the empire; the Antichrist would eventually kill Nero and take over all the world (*ipsum denique Neronem ab Antichristo esse perimendum, atque ita sub illius potestate universum orbem cunctasque gentes esse redigendas*).

[4] Pseudo-Methodius 14.2–3, ed. and trans. in *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius,* ed. G. J. Reinink (Leuven 1993): 44 (Syriac), 71–72 (German translation). There are several English translations of Pseudo-Methodius, though all but the most recent are based on a single manuscript instead of Reinink's critical text: they are by Francisco Javier Martinez, "Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius" (Ph.D diss., Catholic University of America 1985) 58–203; by Paul Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley 1985) 36–51; a partial translation in *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, ed. Andrew Palmer, Sebastian Brock, and Robert Hoyland (Liverpool 1993) 230–242; and another partial translation in Michael Philip Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam* (Oakland 2015) 116–129, which is based on Reinink's critical edition (though it includes only chaps. 5 and 10–14).

political theory.[5] Over 800 years after the composition of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, the future chancellor of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (r. 1519-1556) could credibly appeal to its well-known trope of eschatological kingship when he exhorted his monarch to fulfill this prophecy, stating:

> The empire will be restored to Christ; this monarchy will continuously send forth the spirit, as the Blessed Methodius is said to have predicted, when he says in his revelations: "The King of the Romans will ascend to Golgotha, upon which the wood of the Holy Cross was fixed, in which place the Lord endured death for us. And the king will take the crown from his head and place it on the cross and stretch out his hands to heaven and hand over the kingdom of the Christians to God the Father." ...May the fear of death not deter you, O Catholic King, for here is a glorious end.[6]

The Last Emperor legend elevated monarchy to a sacral position integrally tied to the events of the End Times, and the Last Emperor became a model of the ideal Christian king.[7] At the same time, since the Last Emperor would be monarch of the God-appointed universal Roman Empire, the legend became particularly important as numerous rulers vied for the status of legitimate inheritor of the title of Roman Emperor.[8]

[5] Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford 2011) 107 n. 35, points out that it is slightly misleading to speak of a "Last Emperor" and that the figure is more accurately a "Last King," as he is referred to consistently in Latin as *rex*. Nonetheless, this obviously only applies to texts in Latin, since that language distinguishes between *rex* and *imperator*. No such distinction exists, for example, in Greek or Syriac. I will refer to the legendary figure in general as the "Last Emperor," though in specific versions of the last emperor, such as the Latin *rex Constans,* I will use "king" where appropriate ("King Constans").

[6] Mercurino di Gattinara, *Oratio supplicatoria somnium interserens de novissima orbis monarchia ac future Christianorum triumpho,* unpublished British library manuscript 18008, with the quotation on fol. 93v. This work of Gattinara, written in 1516, was believed lost until rediscovered by Paul Kristeller and John Headley, and subsequently described in John Headley, "Rhetoric and Reality: Messianic, Humanist, and Civilian Themes in the Imperial Ethos of Gattinara," *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance* Period, ed Marjorie Reeves (Oxford 1992) 241–269. I rely here partially on Headley's quotation from the manuscript in ibid. 250, and also on the transcription of part of the Latin in Rebecca Ard Boone, *Mercurino di Gattinara and the Creation of the Spanish Empire* (Brookfield 2014) 143.

[7] For example, to his supporters, the great Staufen emperor Frederick II was connected to this prophecy; see Ernst Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (Berlin 1927) 3–4; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (London 1957) 108–126; Hannes Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit: Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart 2000) 209–216. The Spiritual Franciscans embraced the Last Emperor legend in their opposition to the papacy, combining it in their writings with the apocalyptic theology of Joachim of Fiorre; see Bernard McGinn, "Apocalypticism and Church Reform: 1100–1500," *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism,* ed. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen J. Stein (New York 2003) 273–298; Marjorie Reeves, "Joachimist Influences on the Idea of a Last World Emperor," *Traditio* 17 (1961) 323–370. In Byzantium the prophecy was equally popular, and after the fall of the empire the prophetic Last Emperor was identified as the actual last emperor, Constantine XI, who was not dead but, it was claimed, waited in secret to return and restore the empire and, later, the Greek nation, to glory; see especially Donald Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans* (Cambridge 1992) 95–108; and Nikos Bees, "Περὶ τοῦ Ἱστορημένου Χρησμολογίου τῆς Κρατικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τοῦ Βερολίνου (*Codex Graecus* fol. 62–297) καὶ τοῦ Θρύλου τοῦ Μαρμαρωμένου Βασιλία," *Byzantinisch-Neugriechiche Jahrbücher* 13/14 (1936/1937) 203–244.

[8] By the sixteenth century the Last Emperor legend had become a key aspect of the political claims of both Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France: M Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford 1969) 359–392; Marie Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor* (New Haven 1993) 119–130.

Since academic interest in such imperial eschatology emerged in the nineteenth century, numerous scholars have shown an unwillingness to attribute the origin of the legend of the Last Emperor to the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* in the late seventh century, believing that a positive eschatological emperor likely already existed immediately in the wake of Constantine's conversion in the fourth. Much ink has been spilled trying to fix a date to the origin of the Last Emperor legend, but there have been few conclusive results. After so many indecisive debates, it may seem like a fool's errand to jump into the controversy once more. However, now more than ever the question warrants a further look, both because a number of recent articles have put forth flawed and mutually contradictory theories about the Last Emperor's origins, and because the date of that origin has become increasingly tied to complex historical questions about early Islamic and Byzantine eschatological and imperial ideology in late antiquity and the middle ages.

For example, in his influential monograph, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam,* Fred Donner argues that Muhammad and the companions that went on to lead the Islamic community after him were influenced by Christian apocalyptic thought, including the Last Emperor legend, and that this might explain the importance of Jerusalem to the first few generations of Muslims.[9] The seventh-century caliphs, Donner asserts, may have believed that "as leaders of this new community dedicated to the realization of God's word, [they] would fulfill the role of that expected 'last emperor' who would, on the Last Day, hand earthly power over to God."[10] Subsequently, Donner's argument has been taken up and expanded by Stephen Shoemaker, who puts even greater emphasis on the role the Last Emperor tradition supposedly played in developing early Islamic eschatology.[11]

Both Donner and Shoemaker agree that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* written at the end of the seventh century, was composed too late to have had an influence on Muhammad or the early caliphs. Therefore they have both picked up an argument, first articulated in the nineteenth century and subsequently the target of much contro-

[9] Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge 2010) 125, suggests that the humble and pious entry of Caliph Umar I into the holy city upon its capture may have reflected his own belief that he was fulfilling the role of the Last Emperor in this prophecy. It should be noted that it is not necessary for Umar to have known of the Last Emperor tradition for his journey to Jerusalem to have taken on messianic connotations: see Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge 1977) 5; Paul Cobb, "A Note on Umar's Visit to Ayla in 17/638," *Der Islam* 71 (1994) 283–288. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* 199, later suggests that Caliph 'Abd al-Malik also may have been influenced by the Last Emperor tradition, stating: "'Abd al-Malik seems also to have wanted to remind the Believers [members of the early *umma*] of the reality, and perhaps imminence, of the Last Judgment. He may even have wanted to advance for himself the claim to being that final, just ruler in whose day the Judgment would begin and who would deliver to God sovereignty over the world."

[10] Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (n. 9 above) 144. Donner makes these claims in order to suggest that early Islam was ecumenical, pietistic, and motivated by the same sentiments circulating among Christians and Jews in the Near Eastern world at the time.

[11] Stephen Shoemaker, "'The Reign of God Has Come': Eschatology and Empire in Late Antiquity and Early Islam," *Arabica* 16 (2014) 530: He asserts that Islam developed in an environment in which "the Christians for their part were awaiting the 'Last Emperor,' who would vanquish Christianity's foes, establish righteousness on the earth, and then hand over imperial authority to God at Jerusalem. One imagines that these contemporary apocalyptic scripts exercised a powerful influence over Muḥammad and his followers."

versy, that the tradition of the Last Emperor originated in a fourth-century Latin text known as the *Tiburtine Sibyl*.[12]

Likewise, some Byzantinists have argued that the decision of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (r. 610–641) to enter Jerusalem in triumph in 630 AD and restore the True Cross there was motivated by his desire to emulate the Last Emperor of this same tradition.[13] Nonetheless, there is no clear consensus on the matter. The Byzantinist Paul Magdalino sums up the problem as follows: "It is not entirely clear whether [Heraclius] was inspired by, or inspired, the apocalyptic legend of the Last Emperor," and concludes that the claim that Heraclius was inspired by the legend becomes "less convincing if the relevant passage in the Latin version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* (fourth century) is regarded as an interpolation contemporary with, or later than, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*." Once again, the entire debate comes down to whether the Last Emperor legend originated in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* (the text favored by Donner and Shoemaker), or whether its presence there is a later interpolation based on the famous account of the Last Emperor in *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.[14]

The evidence is conflicting and highly open to interpretation. Addressing the question of which account of the Last Emperor came first, the influential scholar of Christian eschatology, Bernard McGinn, has stated: "Given our present information, no final conclusion is possible."[15] However, recent groundbreaking work on the context, manuscript tradition, and reception of these works now make it possible to return to this problem better equipped to answer it. Using historical, philological, and codi-

[12] Fred Donner, "The Background to Islam," *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge 2005) 524. Donner claims that the *Tiburtine Sibyl* was written in the fourth century and translated into Greek in the sixth century. He also notes here other apocalyptic works written at the end of the seventh century, such as Pseudo-Methodius, Pseudo-Athanasius, and the *History* of Sebeos, but obviously these could not have influenced early Islam if they were written at the end of the century. Likewise, Stephen Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor, and the Early Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition," *Forbidden Texts on the Western Frontier: The Christian Apocrypha from North American Perspectives; Proceedings from the 2013 York University Christian Apocrypha Symposium,* ed. Tony Burke and Christoph Markschies (Eugene 2015) 218–244, makes a more extensive case for the *Tiburtine Sibyl* as a fourth-century work and the origin of the Last Emperor tradition. I thank Stephen Shoemaker for letting me see this paper in advance of its publication.

[13] This is suggested by Jan Drijvers, "Heraclius and the *Restitutio Crucis*: Notes on symbolism and ideology," *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation,* ed. G. J. Reinink, Bernard H. Stolte (Leuven 2002) 186–188, who compares Heraclius's actions in Jerusalem with the scene from the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. Other scholars have not stated this outright, but it seems probable that such a view has implicitly influenced the understanding of Heraclius's return of the True Cross to Jerusalem. For example, Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (New York 1980) 206, calls it "a deliberately apocalyptic act." Likewise Irfan Shahîd, "The Iranian Factor in Byzantium during the Reign of Heraclius," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972) 307–308, posits that with the return of the True Cross, "Heraclius might very well have thought he was opening the last phase of the millennium as a *praeparatio* for the Second Coming." Bernard Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIe siècle,* vol. 2 (Paris 1992) 314–315 says: "La reposition de la Croix a Jérusalem marque le début d'un nouvel âge dans l'histoire de la Création." I have argued against this view already in Christopher Bonura, "Did Heraclius Know the Legend of the Last Roman Emperor?" *Studia Patristica* 62 (2013) 503–514.

[14] Paul Magdalino, "The history of the future and its uses: prophesy, policy, and propaganda," *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies dedicated to Donald M. Nicol* (Aldershot 1993) 19 and n. 65.

[15] Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York 1979) 44. Likewise, András Kraft, "The Last Emperor *topos* in the Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition" (MA thesis, Central European University 2011) 36, asserts that "in the end, the evidence that comes down to us does not allow for a final word on this issue."

cological arguments, it can be demonstrated that by far the most likely interpretation of the evidence is that the tradition of the Last Emperor originated in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius;* its presence in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* was indeed a later interpolation, borrowed either directly from the former work or through an intermediary text closely dependent on Pseudo-Methodius. Beyond ending a long-standing academic debate, establishing this point offers a firmer understanding of the role of Syriac eschatological concepts in the development of medieval Christian apocalyptic thought; the evolution of the role of the king/emperor in Christian eschatology; and the connection between Islamic and Christian apocalypticism.

I. THE LAST EMPEROR IN THE *APOCALYPSE OF PSEUDO-METHODIUS*

Context and Message

Since, as we will see, the dating of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* presents many challenges, the first confirmed and datable appearance of the Last Emperor legend is contained in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. The pseudonymous author claims to be the bishop Methodius of Patara, martyred in the early fourth century, but is clearly writing in the late seventh-century and pretending to predict events that had already happened (a common trope in apocalyptic literature called *vaticinium ex eventu*), namely the Islamic conquests of the seventh century. He considers the Muslims, whom he calls “Ishmaelites” or the “Sons of Ishmael” (ܒܢ̈ܝ ܐܝܫܡܥܝܠ), to be pagans, and emphasizes that they are not men but “children of desolation” (ܒܢ̈ܝ ܚܘܪܒܐ).[16] According to Pseudo-Methodius, they will conquer all nations and powers, subjecting them to taxation, impoverishment, and slavery, except the Kingdom of the Greeks and Romans (ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܝܘܢܝܐ ܕܐܝܬܝܗ̇ ܕܪ̈ܗܘܡܝܐ), which will survive because it is the Christian Empire protected by the invincible power of the cross.[17] This empire’s final ruler, whom Pseudo-Methodius simply calls the “King of the Greeks” (ܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܘ̈ܢܝܐ), will arise when the Ishmaelites boast that the Christians have no savior, and will drive them back into the desert, killing and enslaving them, so that “their oppression will be one hundred times more bitter than their own yoke.”[18] As we have already seen, his victory will usher in an age of prosperity, interrupted by the invasions of Gog and Magog, savage nations who will break free from the Gates of the North, which Alexander the Great had built to enclose them. God will send an angel to defeat these eschatological invaders, and with their defeat the King of the Greeks will go to Jerusalem, surmount Golgotha, place his crown upon the Cross, and surrender the empire to God. With this act, the Cross will ascend to heaven with the crown, Christ will take up the crown of the Roman Empire, and the empire will be no more. With the end of the Roman Empire, the *katechon,* the restraining force that keeps the Son of Perdition at bay (ambiguously described in 2 Thessalonians 2.6–7) will be removed. The Son of Perdition will gain

[16] Pseudo-Methodius11.17, ed. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above) 31 (Syriac), 52 (German trans.).

[17] Ibid. 9.9: 20 (Syriac), 32–34 (German trans.).

[18] Ibid. 13.13: 39 (Syriac), 64 (German trans.): ܘܬܗܘܐ ܡܪ̈ܝܪܐ ܥܒܕܘܬܐ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܚܕ ܒܡܐܐ ܡܢ ܗ̇ܝ ܕܠܗܘܢ.

power over the earth, but he will soon be defeated with Christ's return at the Last Judgment.[19]

While the Syriac text of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* survives in only a few late manuscripts,[20] research based on internal evidence in the text has fixed the date on and location of the composition of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* to around 690 AD in Northern Mesopotamia. It was almost certainly written in response to the rule of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705). While the caliph is not explicitly mentioned (no contemporary figures are named because the author pretends that he is recording a prophecy that had been in circulation for centuries previously), 'Abd al-Malik's policies of greater public emphasis upon the Islamic faith and its centrality to the state, as well as his institution of a census and capitation tax upon Northern Mesopotamia, have been convincingly shown as the primary concerns of the Christian author, who was hoping that the region would be liberated by the Byzantine Romans.[21] We can be fairly confident that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* does not date before the late 680s or early 690s, because prior to that time the presence of the Islamic Empire in Northern Mesopotamia was very lightly felt, if at all. It was in the final days of the Second Arab Civil War (Second Fitna, AD 680–692) that this changed: taxation was imposed by Damascus upon Northern Mesopotamia and Muslims settled there.[22] Indeed, several other apocalyptic texts were also written around the 690s in Northern Mesopotamia in response to these events, though none ultimately proved as popular as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.* As we shall see, a *terminus ante quem* of the early eighth century is provided by the existence of surviving manuscripts of translations of the work. Thus, an approximate date of 690 AD for the com-

[19] Ibid. 13.15–14.14: 40–48 (Syriac), 65–78 (German trans.).

[20] The oldest manuscript dates to around 1225 AD, though it is incomplete. The manuscript Vaticanus syriacus 58, folios 118v–136v, dating to around 1586, provides the one complete witness to the text; see Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above) xiv–xxxi. Long excerpts from Pseudo-Methodius are also preserved in Solomon of Basra's thirteenth-century *Book of the Bee.* While earlier editions of Pseudo-Methodius were based solely on the Vatican manuscript, G. J. Reinink's has provided a critical edition that takes into account the other manuscripts and the material in Solomon of Basra.

[21] For Abd al-Malik's policies, see Chase Robinson, *Abd Al-Malik* (Oxford 2005) 59–121; Fred McGraw Donner, "From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-Identity in the Early Islamic Community," *Al-Abhath* 50–51 (2002–2003) 9–53. For the reaction of the author of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* to these events, see especially G. J. Reinink, "Following the Doctrine of the Demons: Early Christian Fear of Conversion to Islam," *Cultures of Conversions*, ed. Jan Bremmer, Wout Jac. van Bekkum, and Arie Molendijk (Leuven 2006) 127–138. See also Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton 1997) 264 n.17. Pseudo-Methodius's concern with taxation has long been associated with an increase in taxation upon Northern Mesopotamia, with reference to the understanding of events laid out in Daniel Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge 1950) 45–48. Chase Robinson, however, has revised the understanding of the tax situation, and in his monograph *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (New York 2000) esp. 33–62, he shows that Northern Mesopotamia only paid occasional tribute to the Caliphate before the reign of 'Abd al-Malik, when a *jund* was established in the region and the Christians were subjected to census and regular taxation, which is echoed in the concerns of Pseudo-Methodius and other contemporary apocalyptic writers.

[22] See esp. Robinson, *Empire and Elites* (n. 21 above) 33–62. He notes on 56–57 that rather than suffering terrible devastation, after the initial Islamic conquest of Northern Mesopotamia the region was mostly turned over to the local Christian aristocracy to govern, and so "the cities [of Northern Mesopotamia] entered an Indian summer of *de facto* autonomy that ended only with Marwānid annexation and the imposition of direct Islamic rule." It was this imposition of direct Islamic rule in the late 680s and early 690s that caused widespread anxiety and led to the composition of several apocalyptic texts.

position of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, plus or minus about four years, has been nearly unanimously accepted in recent scholarship and is a safe assumption.[23]

Pseudo-Methodius's View of History

The King of the Greeks, Pseudo-Methodius's version of the Last Emperor, cannot be viewed in isolation but is part of the author's understanding of history and historical processes. Beyond simply an apocalypse, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* is an account of world history, from Adam and Eve to the end of the world.[24] As pointed out by the most recent editor of this apocalypse, G.J. Reinink, Pseudo-Methodius

[23] Paul Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 25, had placed the date of the composition of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* somewhere between 644 and 674. He did so on the basis that the apocalypse makes no explicit mention of the Arab siege of Constantinople, which is generally held to have begun around 674. More recently, Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 228–229, has followed Alexander's dating, suggesting a date of composition in the 660s. There is a major problem with this theory, namely that this first Arab siege of Constantinople was not particularly noted by contemporaries, being first prominently mentioned in the early ninth-century Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. James Howard-Johnston, in his extensive study of the seventh-century sources, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford 2010) 304, calls this siege a "myth," a long, geographically extensive campaign condensed by later chroniclers, and hardly an event dramatic enough that it necessarily would have been noted by contemporaries in Mesopotamia. Thus, there is no reason to assume that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* must have been written before 674. Sebastian Brock in "Syriac Views on Emergent Islam," *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society,* ed. G. H. A. Juynboll (Carbondale 1982) 18–19, 203 n. 63, dated the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* to the last decade of the seventh century on the basis that Pseudo-Methodius repeatedly states that the occupation by the Ishmaelites will last "ten weeks of years," i.e., 70 years. Sebastian Brock has argued that Pseudo-Methodius may have been calculating from the first year of the Islamic calendar, and so ten weeks of years would end in the year 692. For the mention of the "ten weeks of years," see Pseudo-Methodius 5.9: 10 (Syriac), 15 (German trans.); ibid. 10.6: 23 (Syriac), 39 (Germn trans.); 13.2: 35 (Syriac), 57 (German trans.). This method of dating is also problematic, as has been pointed out in Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic* (n. 4 above) 30–31 and Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 229: while the primary manuscript witness to the text of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* reads "ten weeks of years," the Greek and Latin translations, in addition to some Syriac manuscripts, read "seven weeks of years," i.e., 49 years. Still, Martinez prefers a date of around 689 on the basis that the apocalypse is clearly responding to the religious and fiscal reforms of ʻAbd al-Malik. G. J. Reinink has made this case for a response to the changes under ʻAbd al-Malik in a stronger and more detailed way, in "Following the Doctrine of the Demons" (n. 21 above) 127–138; idem. "The Romance of Julian the Apostate as a Source for Seventh-Century Syriac Apocalypses," *La Syrie de Byzance a l'Islam*, *VII-VIII siecles*, ed. Pierre Canivet and Jean-Paul Rey Coquas (Damascus 1992) 85; idem. "Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam," *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, vol. 1: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton 1992) 178–182; G. J. Reinink also makes a strong case that Pseudo-Methodius was writing in the aftermath of the construction of the Dome of the Rock in the reign of ʻAbd al-Malik: G.J. Reinink, "Early Christian Reactions to the Building of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Xristianskij Vostok* 2 (2000) 229–241; likewise, Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser* (n. 7 above) 75–82, after presenting a useful overview of the various attempts to date the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, concludes that it was probably originally composed between 685 and 690, and certainly before the end of 692. Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims* (n. 4 above) 112–116, gives a summary of arguments about the date of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and mentions Shoemaker's attempts to date the apocalypse earlier based on the "weeks of years," but states "it is not yet clear if Shoemaker's arguments will shake the scholarly consensus." I would add that if the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* originally read that the Ishmaelite domination would last "seven weeks of years" (and not ten), this still supports a date at the end of the Second Fitna: Brock believed Pseudo-Methodius was dating from the hijra year, but I see no good reason why a Christian would do that. I believe it is more likely that Pseudo-Methodius would have begun instead at 640, the year the Muslims conquered Northern Mesopotamia. That would bring the date of the text to 689, again at the end of the Second Fitna.

[24] The actual title used in the Syriac manuscripts of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* is generally "A homily on the succession of kings and on the end of time" (ܡܐܡܪܐ ܥܠ ܝܘܒܠܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܘܥܠ ܚܪܬ ܙܒܢܐ.).

"uses the typical Syriac method of typological and symbolic exegesis to explain and describe historical phenomena."[25]

Thus, for Pseudo-Methodius, the biblical past is mirrored in the historical present and in the future events he predicts. Just as Gideon defeated the Ishmaelites in the Old Testament (the Midianites and Amalekites in Judges 6), his typological successor, the last King of the Greeks, will defeat them again.[26] Perhaps the most important historical figure for Pseudo-Methodius (and another typological precursor for the Last Emperor) is Alexander the Great. Pseudo-Methodius saw the Kingdom of the Greek and Romans as beginning with his conquests, so Alexander counts as the first king/emperor of the Kingdom of the Christians (and, indeed, he is portrayed as a proto-Christian). Uniquely, Pseudo-Methodius invents an Ethiopian ancestry for Alexander the Great, and takes pains to show that the rulers of Byzantium, Rome, and Alexandria all descend from Alexander the Great's supposed Ethiopian mother, Kushat (ܟܘܫܥ). This was a strange innovation, but there is a good explanation. Pseudo-Methodius makes mention of the verse Psalm 68.31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God," as a prophecy and states that many Christians were wrongly associating it with the kingdom of Ethiopia.[27] As several scholars have argued, it is likely that Pseudo-Methodius was referring to certain Christians, primarily Miaphysites—numerous in Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, but persecuted by the Roman state for rejecting the definition of Christ's nature promulgated at the Council of Chalcedon—who perhaps expected liberation by the Miaphysite Christian kingdom of Ethiopia based on the supposed prophecy from the Psalms. Pseudo-Methodius understood that the only realistic hope for liberation from Islamic rule was through the much more powerful Byzantine state, and so in response to the Miaphysite claims he provided an Ethiopian ancestry to show that the Last Emperor would be from the "Kingdom of the Greeks, which is that of the Romans" and yet still fulfill the prophecy, for now all prophecies and expectations about Ethiopia could be subsumed into hopes tied to the Roman Empire.[28] If nothing else, Pseudo-Methodius was creating in the Last Emperor a figure behind whom all Christians could unite, and even in this time of fierce debate on Christ's nature he remained silent about his Christological views in order to encourage Christian unity against a common enemy: the Islamic Arabs.[29]

[25] Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History" (n. 23 above) 153.

[26] Pseudo-Methodius 5.2–9, ed. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above): 8–10 (Syriac), 11–15 (German trans.), posits that the Midianites and Amalekites were an earlier manifestation of the Ishmaelites, and that they conquered most of the world prior to their defeat by Gideon in a why very similar to the conquests of the Ishmaelite Muslims of the seventh century.

[27] As we shall see, the translation of this line is obscure, and depends on which language one translates from. On which kingdom Pseudo-Methodius identified as Ethiopia, see Lutz Greisiger, "Ein nübischer Erlöser-König: Kūš in syrischen Apokalypsen des 7. Jahrhunderts," *Der Christliche Orient und seine Umwelt,* ed. S. G. Vashalomidze and L. Greisiger (Wiesbaden 2007) 189–213.

[28] Some of the best explanations of this theory are Glen Bowersock, "Helena's Bridle and the Chariot of Ethiopia," *Antiquity in Antiquity*, ed. Gregg Gardner and Kevin L. Osterloh (Tübingen 2008) 389–390; Witold Witakowski, "The Eschatological Program of the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius: Does it Make Sense?" *Rocznik orientalistyczny* 53.1 (2001) 38–39; and Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic* (n. 4 above) 179–180.

[29] Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History" (n. 23 above) 166–168, disputes the idea that Pseudo-Methodius was actually responding to a real belief in Ethiopian liberation that existed among the Mi-

Sources and Inspirations

The basis of the view that the Last Emperor legend originated in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* is that the Last Emperor in this apocalypse is modeled on earlier Syriac works which did not exist in Greek or Latin versions.[30] There was no scriptural basis for a Last Emperor, so Pseudo-Methodius drew heavily from a number of contemporary Syriac works. Such works could provide many of the fundamental elements of the Last Emperor story, such as the victory over all enemies of Christianity, and details of the invasion of Gog and Magog.

In his depiction of Alexander the Great as a typological precursor of the Last Emperor, Pseudo-Methodius was clearly relying on the so-called *Glorious Deeds of Alexander* (ܢܨܚܢܐ ܕܝܠܗ ܕܐܠܟܣܢܕܪܘܣ), commonly known as the Syriac Christian *Alexander Legend.*[31] Probably written in the late 620s, the *Alexander Legend* gives a mythical account of Alexander's campaigns, with special emphasis on his imprisonment of Gog and Magog (which it identifies as the tribes of the Huns) behind the Gates of the North. This work also portrays Alexander as the founder of the Roman state, so like the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* which would come to draw upon it, its pro-Byzantine message was probably aimed at Miaphysite Christians, or Christians susceptible to Miaphysite ideas, perhaps shortly after the eastern provinces (where Miaphysites were most hightly concentrated) were won back for the empire after a lengthy Persian occupation in the early seventh century (from c. 608–629).[32]

The *Alexander Legend* also has a strong apocalyptic element. Toward the end of the narrative, Alexander predicts that the unfolding of the end times would begin 940

aphysites, since Pseudo-Methodius eschewed sectarian conflict within Christianity and was simply making his Last Emperor more palatable to Miaphysites through an Ethiopian ancestry. However, Garth Fowden, *From Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton 1993) 132 n.144, notes that Pseudo-Methodius could have encouraged unity between the different Christian churches and communities while still maintaining an "element of polemic against those more extreme Monophysites [sic] who opposed political alliance with Constantinople…the Monophysite community was far from monolithic."

[30] See Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic* (n. 4 above) 25.

[31] An edition of the *Alexander Legend*, with an English translation, is available in Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac Version, edited from five manuscripts, of the Pseudo-Callisthenes* (Amsterdam 1976) (repr. of Cambridge 1889) 144–158 (English trans.), 255–275 (Syriac). Pseudo-Methodius's heavy dependence on the Syriac Christian *Alexander Legend* has been demonstrated by Reinink, "Die syrischen Wurzeln der mittelalterlichen Legende zum römischen Endkaiser," *Non Nova, sed Nove: Mélanges de civilisation médiévale dédiés à W. Noomen*, ed. M. Gosman and J. van Os (Groningen 1984) 203–205; idem. "Alexander the Great in 7th-century Syriac 'Apocalyptic' texts," *Byzantinorossika* 2 (2003) 171–178.

[32] Károly Czeglédy, "The Syriac Legend Concerning Alexander the Great," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungarica* 7 (1957) 231–249, was the first to tie this legend to the propaganda of Emperor Heraclius. In a number of articles— G.J. Reinink, "Die Entstehung der syrischen Alexanderlegende als politisch-religiöse Propagandaschrift für Herakleios' Kirchenpolitik," *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History Offered to Professor Albert van Roey for his Seventieth Birthday* (Leuven 1985) 279–280; idem. "Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies during the Reign of Heraclius," *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation,* ed. G. J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte (Leuven 2002) 84–92; idem. "Alexander the Great" (n. 31 above) 152–162—Reinink has argued that the *Alexander Legend* was written around 628–630 in order to portray Heraclius as a new Alexander. Reinink has also demonstrated that a homily version of the *Legend* written in verse, and falsely attributed to Jacob of Serugh, was slightly later and reacted against the optimism about the fate of the Roman Empire in the prose *Legend.* Since Pseudo-Methodius certainly used the prose *Legend,* though it is impossible to tell whether he also knew of the poem, this discussion will be limited to the prose *Legend.*

years in the future (sometime in the early seventh century),[33] which would entail the nations of Gog and Magog breaking free of the northern prison Alexander had prepared for them, but that they would be defeated by the Roman Empire, which would conquer all the world and surrender its power to God.[34]

Pseudo-Methodius seems to also have utilized another slightly earlier apocalyptic text to create his eschatological scenario, Pseudo-Ephraem's *Homily on the End*. This text, though much simpler, also predicts the invasions of Gog and Magog, after which it also claims that the Roman Empire will be restored and will temporarily rule the whole world just before the end of time.[35]

However, whereas the *Alexander Legend* and Pseudo-Ephraem's *Homily on the End* simply state that the Roman Empire would conquer the earth and surrender its power to God, it seems that Pseudo-Methodius created the agent by whom the conquest and final surrender would take place: the Last Emperor (the "King of the Greeks"). Thus, unless it can be demonstrated that a version of the Last Emperor legend existed before Pseudo-Methodius's work, it would seem that he invented the concept in line with Syriac literary models as the embodiment of these earlier prophecies of Roman supremacy followed by surrender of power to God (supported by Pseudo-Methodius's unique reading of Psalm 68).

Finally, Pseudo-Methodius seems to have found another precursor to the Last Emperor in the figure of Emperor Jovian, as described by the Syriac *Julian Romance.*[36] The date of this work has been the subject of controversy, but scholarly opinions now tend to agree that it was composed in the sixth century.[37] The *Julian Romance* depicts

[33] Depending on whether it was being calculated from the death of Alexander in 323, around 617; or the very common Seleucid Era, often identified as the Era of Alexander, in which case to 629 or 630 AD, just after Heraclius's victory over the Persian invaders.

[34] Reinink, "Alexander the Great" (n. 31 above) 161, has demonstrated how similar a passage from the Alexander Legend found in Budge, *The History of Alexander* (n. 31 above) 275 (Syriac), 158 (English trans.), describing how "the kingdom of the Romans would deliver the kingdom of the earth to Christ, who is to come" is to a passage saying the same thing in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* 10.2–3, 21–22 (Syriac), 35–36 (German trans.). The idea that Christ will take up the rule of earthly power at the end of time has other echoes in Syriac literature, as Francisco Javier Martinez has shown in "The Apocalyptic Genre in Syriac: the World of Pseudo-Methodius," *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984*, ed. H. J. W. Drijvers, R. Lavenant, C. Molenberg, G. J. Reinink (Rome 1987) 345–346. For example, the third-century Syriac-Christian author Aphrahat states in his *Demonstrations* (*Taḥwîṯâ*, ܬܚܘܝܬܐ) that Christ gave royal power to the Romans, and "when He, Whose is the Kingdom, shall come in His second coming, He will take to Himself what He has given" (*Demonstrations* 5.23; *Patrologia Syriaca,* col. 232, 23–26).

[35] For the text of Pseudo-Ephraem, see *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones III*, ed. and trans. E. Beck (Leuven 1972) 60–71 (Syriac), 79–94 (German trans.). See also G. J. Reinink, "Pseudo-Ephraems 'Rede uber das Ende' un die syrische eschatologische Literatur des siebenten Jahrhunderts," *ARAM* 5 (1993) 437–463; Harald Suermann, "The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephraem," *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, volume 1 (600–900),* ed. David Thomas and Barbara Roggema (Boston 2009) 160–162. Pseudo-Methodius seems to take much of his information about the eschatological invasions of Gog and Magog from this work, including many of the names of the unclean nations that accompany them.

[36] *Julianos der Abtruennige: Syrische Erzaehlungen,* ed. Johann G. E. Hoffmann (Leiden 1880). Hermann Gollancz provides a rather flawed English translation in *Julian the Apostate, Now Translated for the First Time from the Syriac Original, the Only Known Ms. in the British Museum* (London 1928); Emmanuel Papoutsakis is currently preparing a new and improved English translation of the text.

[37] Emmanuel Papoutsakis, "The Making of a Syriac Fable: From Ephrem to Romanos," *Le Muséon* 120 (2007) 38, has shown evidence of influence from Jacob of Serugh in the text, which would suggest the sixth century date. This confirms Theodor Nöldeke's original opinion in "Über den syrischen Roman von Kaiser Julian," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 28 (1874) 263–292, that the work dated

Emperor Julian as an evil tyrant fighting a war against Christianity until he is killed by divine aid and succeeded by a saintly Emperor Jovian, who is depicted, in the words of a recent scholar of the text, as "the eschatological fulfillment of the Christian imperial ideal."[38] As Reinink has demonstrated, Pseudo-Methodius modeled his Last Emperor in part on this literary version of Emperor Jovian, an ideal Christian ruler who had also rescued Christians from a pagan tyranny under Julian, one that Pseudo-Methodius saw as a parallel to the "pagan" tyranny of the Arabs.[39]

As we have seen, not only was the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* a late seventh-century work, but it also relied on Syriac literature from the sixth and seventh centuries. If a Last Emperor tradition can be found prior to Pseudo-Methodius, it stands to reason that such a tradition would be free from these Syriac influences.

The Early Transmission of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*

The final important factor for understanding why the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was likely the source of the Last Emperor legend is its widespread popularity outside its original Syriac milieu. It was soon translated rather faithfully into Greek.[40] The Greek translator did add slightly to the text, notably introducing the "King of the Greeks" (ܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܘܢܝܐ) as "King [or Emperor] of the Greeks, that is, of the Romans" ((βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ἤτοι Ῥωμαίων), and for the rest of the text simply referring to the Last Emperor as "King/Emperor of the Romans" (βασιλεὺς τῶν Ῥωμαίων). This was an important distinction for Byzantine readers who did not generally identify as Greeks but as Romans. The Greek translator also added aspects from the Book of Revelation (the *Apocalypse of John*), a book not considered canonical in the Syriac tradition but increasingly popular in Byzantium since the sixth century (thanks, in part, to the popular commentary of Andrew of Caesarea).[41] These included adding the return of Enoch and Elijah to oppose the Son of Perdition and be killed by him before

from the sixth century. Philip Wood also argues for a sixth-century date in '*We Have No King but Christ': Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c.400–585)* (Oxford 2010) 141–142; as does Daniel Schwartz, "Religious Violence and Eschatology in the Syriac Julian Romance," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19.4 (2011) 567–568.

[38] Schwartz, "Religious Violence" (n. 37 above) 584.

[39] Reinink, "The Romance of Julian the Apostate" (n. 23 above) 77–81.

[40] While several manuscripts of the Greek version of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* were edited by Vasily M. Istrin, *Откровеніе Меѳодія Патарскаго* (Moscow 1897) 5–74, it was not until almost eighty years later that a critical edition of the Greek Pseudo-Methodius was published by Anastasios Lolos, "Die Apokalypse des Ps.-Methodius," *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 83 (1976) 7–151. A newer edition is available in W. J. Aerts and G. A. A. Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius: die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen,* CSCO, vol. 569 (Leuven 1998) 70–198. The Aerts and Kortekaas edition with a facing English translation can be found in Benjamin Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius/An Alexandrian World Chronicle* (Cambridge 2012) 2–71. For additional information and a useful bibliography, see Pablo Ubierna, "Pseudo-Methodius (Greek)," *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, volume 1 (600–900),* ed. David Thomas and Barbara Roggema (Boston 2009) 245–248.

[41] Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou, *Guiding to a Blessed End: Andrew of Caesarea and the Apocalypse* (Washington, D.C. 2013) esp. 35–46. The Book of Revelation was not unknown in the Syriac-speaking world, and in the twelfth century Dionysius Bar-Salibi provided a commentary on it, but it was not included in the Peshitta (the Syriac Bible).

the return of Christ (probably identifying them with the Two Witnesses from chapter 11 of the Book of Revelation).[42]

The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* made its way west and was translated from Greek into Latin by a certain Peter the Monk, probably in Gaul, who added his own short introduction—his *praefaciuncula*—to the text, explicitly stating that he translated it from Greek.[43] Here the Last Emperor is referred to by way of exact translation from the Greek: at first as "King of the Greeks, that is the Romans" (*rex Gregorum, sive Romanorum*) and then simply as "King of the Romans" (*rex Romanorum*).[44]

The migration of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* from Syriac to Greek to Latin happened very quickly, within a generation, and the earliest manuscript of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* in Latin dates to the 720s though there is no indication that this manuscript was written in Peter the Monk's own hand, so the translation probably happened even earlier, probably within the first two decades of the eighth century.[45]

While the Peter the Monk's translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* remained quite popular, the work was read in Latin even more frequently in a significantly abridged reworking, recension 2, sometimes dubbed the "short Pseudo-Methodius."[46] This redaction, probably made in the late eighth or early ninth century, lacks

[42] Greek *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* 14.11; Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 194–195; Garstad (n. 40 above) 68–69.

[43] Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 65–66; translated in Garstad (n. 40 above) 74–77. For Peter the Monk's possible identity and his translation, see Richard Pollard, "One Other on Another: Petrus Monachus' *Revelationes* and Islam," *Difference and Identity in Francia and Medieval France,* ed. Meredith Cohen and Justine Firnhaber-Baker (Surrey 2010) 25–42; and James Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2014). 113–115.

[44] While Istrin (n. 40 above) 75–83, edited a Latin manuscript of Pseudo-Methodius, Ernst Sackur prepared the first critical edition of Peter the Monk's Latin Pseudo-Methodius the following year in *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen: Pseudomethodius Adso und Die tiburtinische Sibylle*. (Halle 1898) 59–96, based on four manuscripts; a more complete edition of Peter the Monk's translation can be found in Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 71–199; the Aerts and Kortekaas edition with a facing English translation can be found in Garstad (n. 40 above) 74–139. For additional information and a useful bibliography, see Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, "Pseudo-Methodius (Latin)," *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, volume 1 (600–900),* ed. David Thomas and Barbara Roggema (Boston 2009) 249–252.

[45] The manuscript is codex Bern, Burgerbibliothek, no. 611, and can be dated to 727 AD based on an Easter *computus* contained in the same volume; see Marc Laureys and Daniel Verhelst, "Pseudo-Methodius, Revelationes: Textgeschichte und kritische Edition. Ein Leuven-Groninger Forschungsprojeckt," *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages,* ed. Werner Verbeke et al. (Leuven 1988) 114 item 4. This early dating for the manuscript is no outlier, as three other manuscripts containing Peter the Monk's Latin translation of Pseudo-Methodius have also been dated to the eighth century based on the handwriting: Paris Bibliothèque national, Fonds latin 13348, fol. 93v–110v (dated to the mid-eighth century); Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 671, fol. 171r–174v (dated to the middle to late eighth century); and Sankt Gallen Stiftsbibliothek 225, S. 384–439 (dated from 760–797 AD). For more on these manuscripts, see Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 48–56. The manuscript evidence is confirmed by the fact that in 767 the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was mentioned in the Latin commentary on the Book of Revelation by Ambrosius Autpertus; see Palmer (n. 43 above) 114.

[46] The recension known as the "short Pseudo-Methodius," or the "second recension," was first edited from a single manuscript by Istrin (n. 40 above) 75–83; and later by Charlotte D'Evelyn, "The Middle-English Metrical Version of the Revelations of Methodius; with a Study of the Influence of Methodius in Middle-English Writings," *PMLA* 33.2 (1918) 135-203, on the basis of an Oxford manuscript; later it was edited by T. Rainer Rudolf, in "Des Pseudo-Methodius 'Revelationes' (Fassung B) und ihre deutsche Übersetzung in der Brüsseler Handschrift Eghenvelders," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 95 (1976) 68–91, but on the basis of just five relatively late manuscripts. A more recent critical edition of the "short Pseu-

all the chapters between the initial invasion and defeat of the Ishmaelites under Gideon and the second Ishmaelite invasion, giving greater emphasis to the chapters dealing with the Last Emperor. The majority of the surviving Latin manuscripts of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* are of this version.[47]

As a result of these translations, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* enjoyed immense popularity in the medieval world. Only a handful of manuscripts of the Greek translation survive from the Byzantine period, but over a hundred are extant from the post-Byzantine period; there is no reason to believe the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was any less popular before the fall of the empire.[48] The influence of Pseudo-Methodius's eschatological scenario, including the Last Emperor, is discernible in nearly every Byzantine apocalyptic work from the eighth century on; in the words of Paul Alexander, the late preeminent expert on Byzantine apocalypses: "In the development of the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition the translation of the Syriac text of Pseudo-Methodius into Greek marked the end of the era of Antiquity, and the beginning of that of the Middle Ages."[49] The popularity of the Latin *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* both in Peter the Monk's translation and the "short Pseudo-Methodius" version, is attested by the appromixately 220 extant manuscripts.[50] Ironically, thanks to its frequent translation, the Syriac origins of Pseudo-Methodius were completely forgotten. It was only in the early twentieth century that the fact of its original composition in Syriac was rediscovered.[51]

do-Methodius" has been provided by Otto Prinz, in "Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung der lateinischen Übersetzung des Pseudo-Methodius," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 41 (1985) 1–23; Prinz based his edition on four manuscripts, the earliest of which is Trier Stadtbibliothek, 564/806 from the late eighth century; for this manuscript, see Laureys and Verhelst (n. 45 above) 127; for some oversights in Prinz's edition, however, see Gerrit H. V. Bunt, "The Middle English Translations of the Revelations of Pseudo-Methodius," *Polyphonia Byzantina: Studies in Honour of Willem J. Aerts*, ed. William J. Aerts, Hero Hokwerda, Edmé Renno Smits, Marinus M. Woesthuis, and Lia van Midden (Groningen 1993) 133. For a short description of the text of the "short Pseudo-Methodius," see Paul J. Alexander, "The Diffusion of Byzantine Apocalypses in the Medieval West and the Beginnings of Joachimism," *Prophecy and Millenarianism: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Reeves*, ed. Ann Williams (Essex 1980) 65–66; also Hannes Möhring, "Karl der Groβe und die Endkaiser-Weissagung: Der Sieger über den Islam kommt aus dem Westen," *Montjoie: Studies in Crusade History in Honour of Hans Eberhard Mayer*, ed. Rudolf Hiestand, B. Z. Ḳedar, Jonathan Simon, Christopher Riley-Smith, and H. E. Mayer (Aldershot 1997) 6–11; Palmer, *The Apocalypse* (n. 43 above) 122–123.

[47] Two other Latin recensions of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* exist, thought they were somewhat less popular and less scholarly work has been done on them; see Laureys and Verhelst (n. 45 above) 129–130.

[48] The lack of Byzantine-era manuscripts of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* in Greek corresponds closely with survival rates of Greek manuscripts, in contrast to Latin and even Syriac manuscripts, which tend to survive in higher numbers from the earlier periods. Unlike for the Latin manuscripts, there is as yet no definitive catalog of the manuscripts of the Greek translation of the A*pocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* and so the number of Greek manuscripts is often severely underestimated. I am working on compiling such a catalog. A discussion of a few important manuscript witnesses to the Greek translation can be found in Lolos, *Die Apokalypse* (n. 40 above) 26–37; and idem. "Die dritte und vierte Redaktion des Ps.-Methodios," *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 94 (1978) 12–15.

[49] Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 14.

[50] The "short Pseudo-Methodius" edited by Prinz was the most popular. More than 150 manuscripts of this version survive, and they date mostly from the ninth through twelfth centuries; see Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 33. Laureys and Verhelst (n. 45 above) 119–129, list about 90 of these manuscripts; and Bunt (n. 46 above) 133, adds a dozen more that Laureys and Verhelst misclassified. For the total of about 220 Latin manuscripts inclusive of all recensions, see Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 19.

[51] It was not until 1930 that Michael Kmosko introduced to other scholars the existence of a manuscript of Pseudo-Methodius in the Vatican archives written in Syriac and demonstrated in his article "Das Rätsel

II. The Last Emperor in the Tiburtine Sibyl

The other possible source of the Last Emperor legend is the Latin *Tiburtine Sibyl.* Like the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* the *Tiburtine Sibyl* was a medieval "bestseller," as evidenced by the fact that over a hundred Latin manuscripts survive, almost a quarter of which predate the thirteenth century.[52] Though never as universally influential as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, it was nonetheless one of the more popular apocalyptic works in the medieval west. As scholarly research has increasingly brought to light, the *Tiburtine Sibyl* is a pastiche composed of various prophecies cobbled together at various times.[53]

The Latin text of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* survives in three or four distinct textual variations,[54] but they all narrate the same basic story and contain the same three distinct parts, each of which may date to a different time and context. [55] The first section is seemingly the most ancient, the *explanatio somnii*, in which one hundred Roman senators all have the same dream one night. In the dream they see a sky filled with nine different suns, and so gather and ask the Sibyl of the Tibur to interpret the dream.[56] She claims that each sun represents one of the nine ages of the world. The Sibyl describes how the characteristics of each sun represent the aspects of the age it represents. According to the Sibyl, the first two ages were peaceful, but the third saw the outbreak of conflict among men.[57] Thus, like the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, the *Tiburtine Sibyl* is not solely an apocalypse, but a recapitulation of, and discourse

des Pseudomethodius," *Byzantion* 6 (1931) 273–296, that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* originated in Syriac, not Greek. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 13–51; idem. "Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs: The Legend of the Last Roman Emperor," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 2 (1971) 56–57; and G. J. Reinink, "Ismael*,* der Wildesel in der Wüste: Zur Typologie der Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodios," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 75 (1982) 336–344, have provided further, incontrovertible evidence that thr original language of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was Syriac.

[52] Bernard McGinn, "Teste David Cum Sibylla: The Significance of *the* Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages," *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford 1985) 24; Anke Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes: Manuscripts and Interpretation of the Latin Sibylla Tiburtina c. 1050–1500* (Aldershot 2006) xvii, 10–11. For a list of 112 manuscripts with descriptions, see Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes,* 177–197.

[53] Anke Holdenried, "Many Hands without Design: The Evolution of a Medieval Prophetic Text," *The Mediaeval Journal* 4.1 (2014) 23–42; Gian Luca Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*: Genesis and original purposes of the legend of the Last World Emperor," *Millennium – Jahrbuch* 8 (2011) 274–275.

[54] Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 4–5, gives a basic outline of the four versions of the text, including the lost initial version. She also makes the case for a fifth (fourth surviving) recension.

[55] I follow the three-part division described by Holdenried, "Many Hands" (n. 53 above) 25; Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 273–274, specifies that there are five distinct sections, but does not list them. In addition to the sections listed above, version 2 also contains a brief prologue with background on the sibyl—see Sackur (n. 44 above) 177–178—and a conclusion in the form of the acrostic poem from St. Augustine's City of God, XVIII.23.1; see Sackur (n. 44 above) 187. Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 19, notes various versions of the introduction not mentioned in Sackur's critical apparatus.

[56] The different manuscripts vary regarding to whom the Sibyl gives her prophecy: in some it is all the senators, in some it is just the consuls, in others it is Emperor Trajan, while in others it is a Trojan emperor; see Sackur (n. 44 above) 172–173. Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 225, believes the correct interpretation is "Trojan Emperor," as it reflects the mythical foundation story of Rome.

[57] Sackur (n. 44 above) 179: *Primus autem sol prima generatio est. Erunt homines simplices et clari, amantes libertatem, veraces, mansueti, benigni, amantes consolationes pauperum et satis sapientes. Secundus sol secunda generatio est. Erunt homines splendide viventes et crescentes multum Deum colentes sine malicia conversantes in terra. Tertius sol tertia generatio est, exurget gens contra gentem et erunt pugne multe in Roma.*

on, world history (albeit a much briefer and simpler one than that of Pseudo-Methodius). This first section contains a subsection, often called the Sibylline Gospel because the Sibyl, in describing the generation represented by the fourth sun, briefly predicts (*vaticinium ex eventu*) the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. She is challenged by Jewish priests among the audience (a discontinuity that may indicate that this part of the text was originally separate from the *explanatio somnii* involving the Roman senators), and she denounces them for their blind adherence to the law and explains Christ's incarnation to them.[58]

The Sibyl quickly dispenses with the fifth through eighth generations, reaching the ninth and last generation. Most of the text of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* concerns the events of this ninth generation. And it is here that the text becomes quite strange. It is rife with various materials that clearly come from different periods, though the exact narrative differs somewhat between the different recensions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*. Here I will focus on our oldest surviving recension, version 2. It begins with an ahistorical description of two kings coming out of Syria and two kings coming out of Egypt with innumerable armies, seemingly moving toward an apocalyptic ending to the narrative. But then the Sibyl describes the rise of a very pious and mighty king identified by the initial C, a conqueror and church builder and an establisher of law, who will rule for thirty years.[59] This *vaticinium ex eventu* description likely refers to Constantine the Great (r. 306–337). This is the beginning of the second major section of the work, the king-lists. Following Constantine come more kings each identified by an initial but they are described as Lombards or members of the Frankish Salian dynasty. The narrative then becomes even stranger and more disjointed. The Persians invade Armenia; there is famine; priests chase after sorcerers; men become evil, dishonest, and fornicators; and then there is another list of Lombard and Frankish kings. The material of this second section is clearly medieval, and as we shall see is generally considered a later interpolation.

The third and final part of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* is conventionally called the *Vaticinium of Constans*.[60] This is the description of the coming of the Last Emperor, whom the text names "Constans." As with the previous sections, the account differs somewhat across versions, and my summary here is of version 2. Unlike the previous rulers the sibyl lists, King Constans is called a "king of the Greeks" (*rex Grecorum*), but the text says that he will become king of both the Greeks and the Romans (*et ipse erit rex Romanorum et Grecorum*). "He will be tall of stature, of handsome appearance with shining face, and well put together in all parts of his body," the sibyl reports.[61] This messianic king will defeat all the enemies of the Christian empire. "He will devastate all the islands and cities of the pagans and will destroy all idolatrous

[58] Ibid. 179–181.

[59] Ibid. 181: *Et post eos consurget alius rex C nomine, potens in prelio qui regnabit a. XXX et edificabit templum Deo et legem adimplebit et faciet iustitiam propter Deum in terram.*

[60] The term *Vaticinium of Constans* was not used by Sackur, and was first introduced, as far as I can tell, by Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser* (n. 7 above) 48–49, but it is a useful term to describe this section of the *Tiburtine Sibyl.*

[61] Sackur (n. 44 above) 185: *Et tunc surget rex Grecorum, cuius nomen Constans, et ipse erit rex Romanorum et Grecorum. Hic erit statura grandis, aspectu decorus, vultu splendidus atque per singular membrorum liniamenta decenter conpositus*.

temples; he will call all pagans to baptism and in every temple the Cross of Christ will be erected ... whoever does not adore the Cross of Jesus Christ will be punished by the sword."[62] At the very end of the reign of Constans, "the Jews will be converted to the Lord and His sepulcher will be glorified by all."[63]

The defeat of the pagans and Jews will bring a golden age of peace and plenty, but, as in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, it will be interrupted by the eschatological invasions of Gog and Magog, who will break free from behind the Gates of the North built by Alexander the Great, before they will be defeated finally by King Constans himself. Then, the final enemy, the Antichrist, will be revealed. At this point Constans will go to Jerusalem, remove his diadem and imperial garb (*habitu regali*), and surrender his rule to God. As in the Greek and Latin translations of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, Enoch and Elijah will return to lead the struggle against the Antichrist, who will kill them but, with the Second Coming, will in turn be killed by the archangel Michael on the Mount of Olives.[64]

Sackur's Version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*

Clearly, the eschatological scenarios in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* and in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* have much in common. Already in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period the similarities between them were clear, and they were frequently read together, particularly as authoritative sources for information on the Last Emperor.[65] For example, they were printed one after the other in the 1522 *Mirabilis Liber,* which circulated in France shortly after the charged 1519 election of the Holy Roman Emperor, in which partisans of the two candidates, Francis I of France and Charles Duke of Burgundy (later Emperor Charles V), portrayed their favored candidates as the fulfillment of the Last Emperor prophecy.[66]

Later, with the development of the modern historical discipline, the two works were often studied together. They were popularized by German scholars who, in the excited wake of the 1871 national unification and the proclamation of the king of Prussia as emperor of Germany, sought to discover the roots of the imperial *kaisersage* (such as the story of the sleeping emperor who would return to save the nation, closely associated with the medieval German emperors Frederick I and Frederick II). These German scholars became interested in the origin of the Last Emperor theme, which they believed might have derived from stories about Roman emperors which had passed through the Byzantines on into medieval German national

[62] Ibid.: *Omnes ergo insulas et civitates paganorum devastabit et universa idolorum templa destruet, et omnes paganos ad babtismum convocabit et per omnia templa crux Iesu Christi erigetur... Qui vero cruce Iesu Christi non adoraverit gladio punietur*.

[63] Ibid.: *Iudei convertentur ad Dominum, et erit ab omnibus sepulcrum eius gloriosum.*

[64] Ibid. 186–187.

[65] Peter Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula: Myths and Legends in Historical Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age* (Leiden 1994) 127–129.

[66] Jennifer Britnell and Derek Stubbs, "The *Mirabilis Liber*: Its Compilation and Influence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986) 127, 133–134. For the prophetic context of the 1519 election, see Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy* (n. 8 above) 360–363; Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas* (n. 8 above) 110–113; Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Princeton 1990) 175.

legend.[67] The ultimate interest of these nineteenth-century German scholars was to trace such legends back as early as possible, to draw an explicit connection between the emperor of the German Second Reich and the emperors of Rome. Thus the first critical editions of both the *Tiburtine Sibyl* and the Latin version of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (together with a third text that makes mention of the Last Emperor, Adso's tenth-century letter to Queen Gerberga of Saxony on the Antichrist) were produced by the German philologist Ernst Sackur and published together in his 1898 work *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen.*[68]

Sackur based his critical edition of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* on the earliest known manuscript (Escorial & I.3), a codex from Toledo dated, on the basis of a scribal note, to the year 1047, which he supplemented for this critical edition with five later manuscripts.[69] He produced a critical edition still lauded to this day, cutting through the rather difficult questions of the manuscript tradition of the *Tiburtine Sibyl.*[70] Using his critical edition to support his assertions, Sackur argued that the Last Emperor legend ultimately had its origin in the *Tiburtine Sibyl*.[71]

The *Tiburtine Sibyl,* he maintained, despite surviving only in manuscripts of the eleventh century and later, was actually derived from a Roman *Urtext* written in the middle of the fourth century. Since the king-list began with Constantine (the description of whom Sackur believed had been part of the late antique original) and then veered off into descriptions of medieval kings of Italy, these king-lists were probably interpolated into a text that had moved more or less straight from the *vaticinium ex eventu* prophecy of Constantine to the description of upheaval preceding the end of the world (which represented the political chaos after Constantine's death) and directly to

[67] Such nineteenth-century German studies include Gerhard von Zezschwitz, *Vom römischen Kaisertum deutscher Nation: Ein mittelalterliches Drama, nebst Untersuchungen über die byzantinischen Quellen der deutschen Kaisersage* (Leipzig 1877); and the influential review of this book by Alfred von Gutschmid in *Historische Zeitschrift* 41.1 (1879) 145–154. For more in-depth analysis of nationalistic German interest in the Last Emperor legend, see Alexander, "Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works" (n. 51 above) 48–55; Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribe* (n. 52 above) 8–10; Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 219–220.

[68] For Pseudo-Methodius, see Sackur (n. 44 above) 60–96; for the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, see ibid. 177–187. Sackur was unaware of Istrin's editions of Greek and Latin versions of Pseudo-Methodius published a year earlier, though Istrin edited only individual texts without attempting any critical edition.

[69] Sackur knew of twelve manuscripts of his version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* but picked the Escorial & I.3 and five others to use for his edition; he also used the version printed by Migne in the *Spuria* of Bede, and a version from the Monumenta Germaniae Historica edition of the *Pantheon* of Godfrey of Viterbo, and he consulted, but did not include in his apparatus, the version printed in the *Mirabilis Liber*. As Holdenried points out, modern historians now know of over one hundred extant manuscripts of Sackur's version (version 2) of the *Tiburtine Sibyl.*

[70] The *Tiburtine Sibyl* had been printed by Migne as part of the *spuria* of Bede, but by Sackur's time it was apparent that the attribution was false. An almost identical version was found in the *Pantheon* of Godfrey of Viterbo and in a manuscript found in Düsseldorf. A noticeably different but related version was preserved in a text attributed to the Cumaean Sibyl. Rudolf Usinger, "Eine Sibylle des Mittelalters," *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte* 10 (1870) 621–631, puts forth the case that the Cumaean Sibyl was an earlier version of the Tiburtine Sibyl, but this argument failed to gain wide acceptance, and Sackur asserted instead that the Migne-Pantheon-Düsseldorf version (now called version 2) was earlier and used these as the basis of his critical edition. For a detailed history of the debates over the *Tiburtine Sibyl* prior to Sackur's edition, see Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 8–10. For an edition of this Cumaean Sibyl with background commentary, see Carl Erdmann, "Endkaiserglaube und Kreuzzugsgedanke im 11. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 51 (1932) 396–398.

[71] Sackur (n. 44 above) 158–163. For the debates over the origins of the *Tibrurtine Sibyl,* see Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 10–11.

the *Vaticinium of Constans*. Since the Last Emperor in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* is a *rex Grecorum* named King Constans, Sackur asserted that this referred to Constantine's son, Emperor Constans I (r. 337-350). Sackur provided a historical basis for this view with is often invoked to this day.

Constantine's three sons, Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans, had vied for control of the empire after their father's death in 337, and they patronized clerics in opposing camps on the question of Christ's relation to God. In 350, Constans, a supporter of the Council of Nicaea, was assassinated and his anti-Nicene brother, Constantius II, after defeating the assassin, took control over Constans's provinces (and indeed the entire empire). According to Sackur, fourth-century Nicene Christians, outraged at having an "Arian heretic" as their emperor, must have seen this as a sign of the end of times and hoped that Constans would return from the dead to restore the Nicean definition of faith.[72] Thus, the *Tiburtine Sibyl* as preserved in the medieval manuscripts, Sackur believed, was an eleventh-century update and reworking of an apocalyptic text that had existed since the middle of the fourth century.

Using methodology that was quite at home in late nineteenth-century manuscript research, but at which most modern scholars would probably balk, Sackur believed he could strip away all the later interpolations and get at a genuine fourth-century version of the sibylline text. Anything that clearly could not date from the fourth century he simply marked as a later interpolation (printing it in italic script). He left the entirety of the *Vaticinium of Constans* unitalicized.

Sackur seems to have believed that the interpolations in the late antique work were introduced *en masse* by a single medieval scribe, and also sought to discover when this happened.[73] For this, Sackur turned to the lists of Lombard and Salian Frankish kings (identified by their initials) that formed the second major section of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*. He realized that these corresponded to historical medieval kings of Italy, from the sixth through the early eleventh century, and was another *vaticinium ex eventu,* a historical list masquerading as prophecy.[74] Since these lists included rulers up to the eleventh century, it indicated that a redaction took place only shortly before Sackur's manuscript of 1047 was copied, though it would fall to scholars after Sackur to use the king-lists to get a full sense of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*'s textual history.

The Versions of the Latin *Tiburtine Sibyl*

As mentioned above, the surviving versions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* contain two medieval king-lists. And in nearly all surviving versions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* the first king-list ends in virtually the same way:

[72] Since there were no references to Julian the Apostate and his abandonment of Christianity, Sackur believed that the text must have been written sometime between the death of Constantine and the reign of Julian; see Sackur (n. 44 above) 162.

[73] Holdenried, "Many Hands" (n. 53 above) 28.

[74] For the method of using *vaticinium ex eventu* for dating medieval apocalypses, see Paul Alexander, "Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources," *The American Historical Review* 73.4 (April 1968) 998–1001. For a chart of the various kings in the text, see Sackur (n. 44 above) 130–131. Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 28–29, provides a more detailed chart with the names of the identifiable historical rulers associated with each initial.

> And in these days there will appear a king with the name O and he will be very powerful and strong and good and make justice for the poor and judge uprightly. And from this O shall appear another very powerful O and under him there will be fighting among the pagans and the Christians, and the blood of the Greeks shall be shed, and his heart will be in the hand of God, and from this woman[75] will be born a king by the name of O. He will be bloodthirsty and villainous and without faith or truth, and through him will come to pass great ill and much shedding of blood, and churches will be destroyed in his domains. And in other regions there will be many tribulations and battles…This king will reign four [or five[76]] years.[77]

This is very transparently a description of Holy Roman Emperors Otto I (r. 962–973), Otto II (r. 967–983), and Otto III (r. 996–1002), with a polemic against the latter. After this the narrative begins a discussion of the collapse of society in the face of the apocalypse, but this is suddenly interrupted by a second king-list. In the earliest manuscript (Escorial & I.3, from 1047), the one used by Sackur as the basis of his edition, this second list begins with a king with the initial A (likely Arduin of Ivera, king of Italy from 1002–1014[78]), followed by a king with an E name, who can be identified with Emperor Henry (Enricus) II (r. in Italy 1014–1024), followed by an unnamed successor, and then the rise of the King Constans.[79] However, this second

[75] Something is missing here, but the woman (*ipsa muliere*) is clearly meant to be the Byzantine wife of the second O, that is, Otto II's wife, Theopanu, who ruled as regent for Otto III after her husband's death. Version 3 and Version 4 in fact mention this marriage, though they incorrectly associate it with Otto I: *Et sanguis illius complicabitur cum genere Grecorum*; see below.

[76] The number of years differs in the various versions.

[77] Sackur (n. 44 above) 182: *Et in diebus illis procedet rex per O nomine et erit potentissimus et fortis et bonus et faciet iusticiam pauperibus et recte iudicabit. Et de ipso procedet alius O potentissimus et erunt sub eo pugne inter paganos et christianos et sanguis Grecorum fundetur et cor eius in manu Dei et regnabit annos VII et ex ipsa muliere nascetur rex per O nomine. Hic erit sanguinarius et facinorosus et sine fide et veritate, et per ipsum multa erit malitia et multa sanguinis effusio atque destructe erunt ecclesie in ipsius potestate. In aliis namque regionibus tribulationes erunt multe et prelia…Hic namque rex regnabit annos IIII.*

As a point of comparison, in the critical edition of Erdmann, "Endkaiserglaube" (n. 70 above) 396, Version 3 reads: *Et in diebus illis procedet rex per O nomen et erit potentissimus et fortis et bonus ad iustitiam faciendam. Et sanguis illius complicabitur cum genere Grecorum, et ipse erit rex per O nomen et erit bellicosissimus et misericordissimus nimis, et virtus et cor eius in manu Domini, et non regnabit ultra septem annos. Et de ipso procedet rex per O nomen, et erit sanguinarius et facinorosus sine fide et sine operibus bonis et sine veritate, et non regnabit ultra V annos.*

[78] Holdenried, "Many Hands" (n. 53 above) 31, believes this king with an A name is actually Aistulf, the Lombard King of Italy from 749–756, placed out of order, because the *Tiburtine Sibyl* mentions that in his reign the Pentapolis will be captured, and indeed Aistulf captured the Ravanesse Pentapolis in the mid-eighth century. However, as Levi Roach, "The Legacy of a Late Antique Prophecy: The Tiburtine Sibyl and the Italian Opposition to Otto III," *The Mediaeval Journal* 5.1 (2015) 15–16, points out, the work implicitly suggests that it means the Syrian Pentapolis, and that it is the pagans/Hagarenes that will capture it; see Sackur (n. 44 above) 183: "A king by the name of A will arise, and in his day there will be many conflicts between the Hagarenes and the Greeks. And there will be many battles and conflicts amongst the pagans. They will attack Syria and capture the Pentapolis" (*Et post cum surget rex A nomine, et in diebus eius erunt pugne multe inter Agarenos et Grecos. Inter paganos namque multa prelia et pugne erunt. Syriam expugnabunt et Pentapolim captivabunt)*. Since there was fighting between the Byzantines and Arabs for control of Syria in the early eleventh century, while Arduin was reigning in Italy, it is probable that the *Tiburtine Sibyl* is referring to Arduin.

[79] It should be noted that the rulers/initials in the various manuscripts differ greatly, as scribes clearly found it necessary to constantly update and amend the list to keep it up-to-date. For a list of the initials in each king-list, the differences in the various manuscripts, and the rulers to be identified with each initial, see the charts on Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 28–29.

king-list varies greatly from manuscript to manuscript, as it was clearly being conconstantly updated by scribes to bring it in line with present circumstances.

Still, the clear presence of two separate king-lists have led scholars to conclude that a lost version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* was written under Otto III, containing the king-list that terminates with his reign (this lost version was version 1).[80] Subsequent surviving versions of the Sibyl, such as the one edited by Sackur, had been clumsily updated with a second king-list added by a later scribe and then heavily interpolated by subsequent copyists.[81]

Thus, the lost version 1 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* from ca. 1000 (sometimes called the "Ottonian Sibyl") was reworked and updated with a second king-list, becoming version 2 (the version edited by Sackur, also sometimes called w^1 or "Sackur's Sibyl"), the oldest surviving version, which probably dates to sometime between 1024 and 1039 and preserved in the manuscript of 1047.[82] Another, slightly later version, from c. 1090, was also derived from version 1 and is included in a short text attributed to the Cumaean Sibyl (version 3, or the "Cumaean Sibyl").[83] Finally, there exists a version 4, derived from a lost reworking of version 1.[84] Edited by Bernard McGinn, version 4 (sometimes called the "Newberry Sibyl," since McGinn's primary manuscript witness is housed in that library) was composed around 1100.[85] Since none of the surviving versions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* are based on each other, but have a number of textual similarities and differences, all seem to have been independently derived from the lost Ottonian Sibyl from around 1000 (version 1), or from lost reworkings of that lost version.[86] We can only speculate about what was in version 1, but since Sackur's version 2 seems to have been the most immediate reworking, version 2 is probably the

[80] Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 11; Bernard McGinn, "Oracular Transformations: The *SibyllaTiburtina* in the Middle Ages," *Sibille e linguaggi oracolari: mito, storia, tradizione*, ed. Ileana Chirassi Colombo and Tullio Seppilli (Pisa 1998) 613–614.

[81] The subsequent surviving versions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* are listed and described in Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 3–5. Holdenried asserts her belief that the so-called Bedan recension, the version printed by Migne and wrongly attributed to Bede, constitutes a fifth version, though she admits that this view is not pervasive among scholarly critics; see Anke Holdenried, "The Bedan Recension of the Sibylla Tiburtina: New Manuscript Evidence and its Implications," *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Medieval Latin Studies, Cambridge, September 9–12, 1998,* ed. Michael W. Herren, Christopher James McDonough, and Ross Gilbert Arthur (Turnhout 2002) 410–443.

[82] Sackur (n. 44 above) 129–137, believes that the text was written under Conrad II (1027–1039), since he is the last figure mentioned (as the successor of Henry II). Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser* (n. 7 above) 37–39, suggests an earlier date of composition, under Henry II, since Conrad is not technically named in the text (it mentions a figure who is clearly Henry, and merely states that another Salian Frankish king will succeed him).

[83] Edited in Erdmann, "Endkaiserglaube" (n. 70 above) 396–398. Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser* (n. 7 above) 149–156, argues for a slightly earlier date for the text of around 1040.

[84] This lost intermediary from which version 4 is derived is known as w^c.

[85] McGinn, "Oracular Transformations (n. 80 above) 636–644. Although at the time McGinn made his edition this was the only known complete copy of version 4, Holdenried has since identified ten additional manuscripts, some of which predate the one used by McGinn; see Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 209.

[86] McGinn, "Oracular Transformations" (n. 80 above) 636–644.

closest to the initial lost version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* and thus has been the primary focus of scholarly work.[87]

The Greek Sibyl

Sackur had always believed that the *Tiburtine Sibyl* originated in a late antique Greek version, and he was proven correct forty-eight years after his death when, in 1949, S. G. Mercati announced the discovery of the Greek version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, preserved in both a twelfth- and a fourteenth-century manuscript. These, along with a subsequently-found third Greek manuscript, were later edited with extensive analysis by Paul Alexander.[88] He called this Greek version the *Oracle of Baalbek,* because numerous references to that city in its text seem to indicate it was written there.[89]

Like the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the *Oracle of Baalbek* describes the common dream of one hundred Roman senators, who call on the Sibyl to interpret it. The structure is very similar to the Latin work, and aside from a few minor details the *explanatio somnii* and Sibylline Gospel in it match the Latin nearly word for word. The *Oracle of Baalbek* also contains the king-lists, but unlike the lists of medieval Lombard and Frankish kings in the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* the *Oracle of Baalbek* instead contains a *vaticinium ex eventu* list of fourth- and fifth-century Roman Emperors, and they are dispersed fairly evenly through the sixth through eighth generations and not all bunched in the ninth as in the *Tiburtine Sibyl*. At first they are explicitly named, but later emperors are thinly disguised with an initial as in the Latin king-lists, or with a circumlocution (for example, the emperor with the "name of a beast" is certainly Emperor Leo). The last emperor it mentions is Anastasius I (r. 491–518).[90]

It seems very probable that the Greek *Oracle of Baalbek* was composed during the reign of Anastasius, probably in the first decade of the sixth century.[91] In some respects, the *Oracle of Baalbek* seems to preserve earlier readings of its common source with the *Tiburtine Sibyl.*[92] In others, however, the *Oracle of Baalbek* retains updates

[87] This has been the general position for scholars contending about the date of the *Vaticinium of Constans.* For example, Robert Konrad, *De Ortu et tempore Antichristi: Antichristvorstellung und Geschichtsbild des Abtes Adso von Montier-en-Der* (Kallmünz 1964) 35–52; Maurizio Rangheri, "La 'Epistola ad Gerbergam reginam de ortu et tempore Antichristi' di Adsone di Montier-en-Der e le sue fonti," *Studi Medievali* 3.14 (1973) 708–709; both of whom use Sackur's edition exclusively, without reference to the other versions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl.* Simply put, Sackur's text is generally held to contain the earliest and purest version of the *Vaticinium of Constans*.

[88] Paul Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbek: The Tiburtine Sibyl in Greek Dress* (Washington, D.C. 1967).

[89] Ibid. 43–47.

[90] For the text of the *Oracle of Baalbek,* see ibid. 9–22 (Greek), 23–29 (English trans.).

[91] Ibid. 41–42: the *terminus post quem* is 502, the year of the outbreak of Anastasius' war against Persia which is mentioned in the form of a prophecy. The work must predate 510, because it was in that year that this war ended, though not in the apocalyptic manner the *Oracle of Baalbek* predicts.

[92] Ibid. 51–53. For example, in the Greek text the Sibyl issues her dream interpretation on the Capitoline Hill of Rome, the epicenter of pagan worship in the city of Rome. In the Latin text, however, the senators meet the Sibyl *in loco stercoribus pleno et diversis contaminationibus polluto,* but the Sibyl requests that they move to the Aventine Hill before she issues her prophecy. Alexander speculates that since the Aventine Hill was the principal site of Christian churches in the fourth century, this must be a later innovation to remove the stain of paganism associated with the Capitoline from the text. It should be noted Holdenried, "Many Hands" (n. 53 above) 39, has argued that this change was introduced by a medieval interpolator, who she believed redacted the *Tiburtine Sibyl* at the monastery of Ss. Boniface and Alexius in Rome, which was located on the Aventine Hill; this accounts for the transfer to the Aventine.

that did not make it into the source of the *Tiburtine Sibyl.*[93] Thus, they both must derive independently from a common source, likely with several lost intermediaries. Like Sackur, Alexander speculated that this source originated in the fourth century, though he believed that it was composed slightly later than Sackur had suggested, under the reign of Emperor Theodosius I (r. 379–395), perhaps in the panicked environment following the destruction of the Eastern Roman army by the Goths at the Battle of Adrianople in 378.[94]

Crucially, the *Oracle of Baalbek* lacks the final part of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the *Vaticinium of Constans.* It does not mention the Last Emperor/King Constans or any of the major events associated with him—the period of peace interrupted by the invasions of Gog and Magog, or the journey to Jerusalem, or the surrender of power to God—anywhere in its text. The oracle does describe a succession of minor good and evil eschatological kings who make war upon each other in the ninth age, but they have none of the crucial features of the Last Emperor.[95] These final kings of the ninth and final age include two kings who come out of Syria and two kings who come out of Egypt with innumerable armies, mention of whom is preserved in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* before Constantine. Thus, it appears that where in the original prophetic work (preserved in the *Oracle of Baalbek*) the narrative begins to wind down to its conclusion, the redactor/translator responsible for the Latin *Tiburtine Sibyl* added a new reference to Constantine, the Lombard and Frankish king-lists, and a new ending, the *Vaticinium of Constans.*[96] It seems clear from this Greek version that the *Vaticinium* was interpolated into the Latin *Tiburtine Sibyl* sometime in the Middle Ages.

[93] For example, version 4 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* (the Newberry Sibyl), ed. Bernard McGinn, "Oracular Transformations" (n. 80 above) 640 (lines 108–109), predict that the city of Constantinople will perish sixty years after its foundation, implying that it preserves a prophecy that originated before 390 AD. Although this line is not in version 2, the clear late-antique context of this prophecy makes it evident that it was translated from the late-antique original and included in the lost version 1 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* but not retained in Sackur's version 2. This prediction is altered in the *Baalbek Oracle* to be "thrice sixty years," suggesting that a later copyist decided to update the prediction once 390 had passed and Constantinople remained standing (this further suggests that the *Oracle of Baalbek*, in its surviving copies, preserves a text from around 510, which was 180 years, or thrice sixty, after the foundation of Constantinople); see Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbek* (n. 88 above) 49, 53–54. Paul Alexander points out on several occasions that such methods of altering dates to deal with failed predictions is incredibly common in medieval apocalyptic literature.

[94] Alexander redated the text on the basis that a reference to the death of Valens is preserved both in the *The Oracle of Baalbek* and in version 4 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* (the Newberry Sibyl). Alexander, in *The Oracle of Baalbek* (n. 88 above) 63, concluded that this reference "must likewise have occurred in an ancient (pre-medieval) Latin version (w^a) of the Sibylline text, now lost, which was still free from the interpolations of medieval rulers such as those now preserved in the Latin versions." Since no ruler is mentioned between Valens and the Lombard king Aldoin in this Latin version, the latter clearly being a medieval interpolation, Alexander asserted that the orginal sibylline text must have originated soon after Valens's death.

[95] Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbek* (n. 88 above) 21–22 (Greek), 29 (trans.). The apocalyptic section of the Oracle of Baalbek seems to begin on lines 173–177, and Sackur's text of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, at the top of 184, has very similar wording in Latin, with both texts describing how men will become rapacious and greedy, and the land and the cities will be devastated. But this is the last time the two texts follow each other. After this, instead of proceeding to the eschatological events as the Greek text does, Sackur's text shifts to another list of interpolated Lombard and Salic kings, and then begins the story of the Last Emperor.

[96] Holdenried, "Many Hands" (n. 53 above) 23–42, suggests that these additions were the work of multiple redactors. While I am not entirely convinced by her theory, this would in no way contradict the basic understanding of the textual history I give here.

Subsequent evidence seems to confirm this. The sibylline dream of nine suns has been found in various works in eastern languages—including Arabic, Garshuni (Arabic written in Syriac characters), and Ethiopic—and these versions include king lists with Muslim rulers. Later versions of the *explanatio somnii* exist in Old Church Slavonic, Romanian, and other languages.[97] The *Vaticinium of Constans*, and indeed any mention of a messianic Last Emperor, is absent from all of these versions of the sibyl.[98] This would seem to indicate that while this story of the sibylline *explanatio somnii* spread widely in the late antique and medieval world as a template onto which various prophecies of contemporary importance could be inserted, the combination of the Last Emperor with the *explanatio somnii* was a distinctly Latin phenomenon, and one which cannot be accounted for in any text before the year 1000. It appears that the mention of the Last Emperor in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* can be accepted, at long last, as an interpolation.

The fact that the two recensions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* that postdate Sackur's version 2 clearly used the Latin translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* as a source appears as further confirmation of this. For example, version 4 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* contains Pseudo-Methodius's lineage of Roman rulers back to Ethiopia and its description of King Constans' surrender of power in Jerusalem, which is borrowed almost word for word from Peter the Monk's eighth-century Latin translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.[99] Only Sackur's version 2 is free of such word-for-word borrowing from the Latin Pseudo-Methodius. Nonetheless, the author of this version (or of the lost version 1 if this were its direct source) could easily have been using the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* more loosely, or an intermediary text de-

[97] For the Garshuni version, see J. Schleifer, *Die Erzählung der Sibylle: Ein Apokryph nach den karschunischen, arabischen und äthiopischen Handschriften zu London, Oxford, Paris und Rom* (Vienna 1910); for the Arabic version, see E. Y. Ebied and M. J. L. Young, "An Unrecorded Arabic Version of a Sibylline Prophecy," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 43.2 (1977) 279–307; for more information see Mark N. Swanson, "The Arabic Sibylline Prophecy," *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, volume 1 (600–900),* ed. David Thomas and Barbara Roggema (Boston 2009) 492–497. For Ethiopian versions, see René Basset, *Les apocryphes éthiopiens X: La sagesse de Sibylle* (Paris 1900). For the Slavonic and Romanian texts, see M. Gaster, "The Sibyl and the Dream of One Hundred Suns: An Old Apocryphon," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (July 1910) 609–623; Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova and Anisava Miltenova, *Historical and Apocalyptic Literature in Byzantium and Medieval Bulgaria* (Sophia 2011) 469–506.

[98] Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans"* (n. 53 above) 273–275. The Slavonic version, which makes the nine suns represent peoples/nations instead of ages, does mention that the Tatars (the ninth and final nation) will be destroyed by a man named Michael. This figure is possibly related to the Last Emperor (named Michael in several Bulgarian apocalypses), see Tăpkova-Zaimova and Miltenova (n. 97 above) 506 n. 37, but clearly this is a late addition, as anything related to the Tartars can date only to the thirteenth century or later.

[99] For the scene in version 4 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* see McGinn, "Oracular Transformations" (n. 80 above) 643: *Et cum apparuerit ipse filius perditionis in terra ascendet rex Romanorum sursum in Golgatha in quo fixum est lignum sancte crucis tolletque coronam capitis sui et ponet eam super crucem et expandet manus suas ad celum tradetque regnum Christianorum Deo Patri.*

Compare to the Latin Pseudo-Methodius in Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 187: *Et cum apparuerit filius perditionis, ascendit rex Romanorum sursum in Golgotha, in quo confixum est lignum sanctae crucis, in quo loco pro nobis Dominus mortem sustenuit. Et tollit rex coronam de capite suo et ponet eam super crucem et expandit manus suas in caelum et tradet regnum christianorum Deo et patri.*

The preservation in version 4 of the descent of the Greeks and Romans from Alexander the Great's supposed Ethiopian mother is used in a different context from Pseudo-Methodius, apparently to argue for a rapprochement between the Latins and Byzantium through marriage; see McGinn, "Oracular Transformations" (n. 80 above) 628–629.

pendent on Pseudo-Methodius, as an inspiration for the Last Emperor ("King Constans") without following it word-for-word as in the later versions. As we shall see, that was almost certainly the case.

III. Internal Evidence in the *Vaticinium of Constans*

The manuscript evidence that the *Vaticinium of Constans* was not present in the Greek version of the sibylline text has been enough to make some scholars, such as Paul Alexander, reevaluate the *Vaticinium of Constans* as a later interpolation influenced by the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. "I no longer believe that the passage on the Last Emperor in the Latin Sibyl is fourth century," Alexander scribbled in the margins of the manuscript of his *magnum opus, The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition.* "So this interpolation, if not derived from Pseudo-Methodius, is contemporary with it, or may have a common source."[100] Alexander died before he could edit the text of his book to fit with this change of heart, and the posthumously published book still treats the *Vaticinium of Constans* in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* and the birth of the Last Emperor legend as a product of the fourth century, with his later comments relegated to a footnote. This has helped cement the legacy of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* as the origin of the Last Emperor tradition.[101] While some scholars have acknowledged the arguments in favor of understanding the Last Emperor tradition as a seventh-century phenomenon originating in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* others have continued to assume a fourth-century origin.[102]

Indeed, a cross-disciplinary disconnect seems to have developed over the origin of the Last Emperor legend. Scholars of Syriac literature operate from the position that the Last Emperor is a product of Syriac literary themes, going so far as to assert "[that] this legend, involving the abdication of the last Roman emperor in Jerusalem, originates in [Pseudo-Methodius] is today an established fact."[103] The general hesitance of

[100] Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 163 n. 44.

[101] Alexander's reversal of opinion, however, was reflected in his "Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works" (n. 51 above) 66–67 n. 35. In this article he contends that Pseudo-Methodius was the original source of the Last Emperor prophecy.

[102] John Wortley, "The Literature of Catastrophe," *Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines* 4.1 (1977) 16–17, could already state confidently that the Last Emperor originated in Pseudo-Methodius and was later interpolated into the *Tiburtine Sibyl.* Likewise, Paul Magdalino, "Prophecies of the Fall of Constantinople," *Urbs capta: the Fourth Crusade and its consequences,* ed. Angeliki Laiou (Paris 2005) 45, calls the *Tiburtine Sibyl* "the main Latin apocalypse that derives from Pseudo-Methodios." Bill Leadbetter, "A Byzantine Narrative of the Future and the Antecedents of the Last World Emperor," *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott* (Melbourne 2006) mentions both the *Tiburtine Sibyl* and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* as transmitters of the legend, but focuses on Pseudo-Methodius, arguing that Pseudo-Methodius was influenced by a long near-eastern tradition of apocalyptic kingship ultimately dating back to Pharonic Egypt. For the scholars who would dispute an origin of the Last Emperor tradition in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* see below.

[103] Francisco J. Martinez, "The King of Rūm and the King of Ethiopia in Medieval Apocalyptic Texts from Egypt," *Coptic Studies: Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies*, ed. Włodzimierz Godlewski (Warsaw 1990) 256. Also, G. J. Reinink, the editor of the Syriac version of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, never once questions that the Last Emperor legend originates in that work in any of his publications.

Syriac scholars to engage with the Latin *Tiburtine Sibyl,* however, has contributed to the lack of consensus across disciplines.[104]

In the meantime, among scholars of the Latin West it is often still assumed that the Last Emperor theme originated in the fourth century.[105] In some instances this is no doubt a case of a lack of cross-disciplinary communication. Recently, however, there has been a conscious pushback against belief that the Last Emperor originated in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, despite the now widely-known absence of the *Vaticinium of Constans* in the *Oracle of Baalbek.* Some scholars have attempted to find other texts besides the *Tiburtine Sibyl* that might preserve a version of the Last Emperor from before the composition of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* but no convincing examples have been found.[106] The *Vaticinium of Constans* in the *Tiburtine*

[104] Thus Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 231, states: "Certain specialists of Syriac and *Apoc. Ps.-Meth.* have for whatever reason seemingly ignored *Tib. Sib.* altogether, without affording it any consideration, simply assuming that the legend originates with Ps.-Methodius. The reason for this oversight is not entirely clear: one suspects that they may have similarly assumed that the Last Emperor tradition is a medieval insertion into the late ancient text of *Tib. Sib.*; accordingly it does not merit consideration, although this is never stated."

[105] The three major works on medieval apocalypticism and the Last Emperor legend in the last half century, Paul Alexander's *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above), Bernard McGinn's *Visions of the End* (n. 15 above), and Hannes Möhring's *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit* (n. 7 above), all treat a lost fourth-century version of the *Tibrutine Sibyl*, not the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, as the origin of the Last Emperor prophecy. However, as we have seen, Paul Alexander changed his mind about the origin of the Last Emperor tradition and decided it must have originated in Pseudo-Methodius or a contemporary work. Bernard McGinn also changed his mind since the publication of *Visions of the End,* making a case in McGinn, "Oracular Transformations" (n. 80 above) 612–613, that the Last Emperor was interpolated into the *Tiburtine Sibyl;* but he remained cautious about it, citing a lack of firm evidence. Still, the split in opinion that persists to this day is perhaps best displayed in two recent books on the Charlemagne legend (which borrowed from the Last Emperor legend): in his 2011 book, Matthew Gabriele, *Empire of Memory* (n. 5 above) 107–110, treats both the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* but asserts that "Pseudo-Methodius…was the first to speak of the Last Emperor." Anne Austin Latowsky, *Emperor of the World Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800–1229* (Ithaca 2013) 16, however, gives the opposite interpretation, and operates from the assumption that the *Vaticinium* in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* was earlier.

[106] Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor," (n. 12 above) 243, suggests "early traditions of the Last Emperor were circulating broadly in the eastern Mediterranean world prior to the advent of Islam." Shoemaker claims that such supposed early references to the Last Emperor tradition can be found in late antique Jewish apocalyptic literature. He is not the first to make such suggestions, as Gilbert Dagron in "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIe siècle," *Travaux et Memoirs* 11 (1991) 41–42, asserts the Last Emperor may have been influenced by Jewish apocalypses such as the *ʿOtot ha-Mashiah* ("The Signs of the Messiah"), works which describe the Last Roman Emperor surrendering his crown in Jerusalem— not at Golgotha but at the Temple— allowing the Jews of Israel to take up the crown of empire. However, virtually no other author places these Jewish works before the composition of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.* Though Dagron accepts a date for the *ʿOtot ha-Mashiah* of the seventh or early eighth century, this is just one uncertain estimation; Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam* (n. 21 above) 318, dates the work as late as the eleventh century. Alexei Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2011) 47–86, while believing that the *ʿOtot ha-Mashiah* was composed as early as the eighth century, still has convincingly shown that it provided an inversion of Christian themes of apocalyptic imperial ideology and thus the surrender of the Last Emperor's crown in the Temple in Jewish apocalypses was a response to, not an influence upon, the scenario in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.* In the end, all Jewish apocalypses that can be convincingly dated to before the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* lack any mention of a Last Emperor.

Another text that Shoemaker puts forth as an indicator of a pre-Pseudo-Methodian Last Emperor tradition is the Ethiopian *5 Baruch* apocalypse. This text, which survives in both Ge'ez and Falasha Hebrew, deserves further scholarly attention. An edition of the Ge'ez was published by J. Halevy, *Te'ezâza Sanbat, Accompagné de six autres écrits pseudo-épigraphie, admis par les falachas ou juifs d'Abyssinie* (Paris 1902) 80–96 (Ge'ez), 196–209 (French trans.); and it is translated into English in Wolf Leslau, *Falasha Anthology*

Sibyl thus remains the best hope and the focus of attention of scholars who believe that the Last Emperor legend must have existed prior to the end of the seventh century. These scholars have argued that even if the Last Emperor was not present in the Greek *Oracle of Baalbek,* there is still reason that the *Vaticinium of Constans* must predate *the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* namely because internal evidence—based on the language, thematic concerns, and the historical references in the *Vaticinium*—shows that it represents an earlier tradition. Already in the 1960s and 1970s, Robert Konrad and Maurizio Rangheri argued that King Constans in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* must have been influenced by a tradition separate from the version of the Last Emperor in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, asserting that this earlier tradition is indicated in literary elements, such as the language, which suggest a fourth-century date.[107]

More recently, Hannes Möhring has again made the case for an origin for the Last Emperor *topos* in the reign of Constans I. Though he provides a discussion of the competing arguments, he ultimately concludes that it is undeniable that the Last Emperor of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* was based on a prophecy concerning Constans I, son of Constantine, based on the fact that it appears to preserve a tradition about the Last Emperor at variance with that of Pseudo-Methodius.[108]

Now once again in a recent article, Stephen Shoemaker has asserted that the *Vaticinium of Constans*'s "account of the Last Emperor appears to be solidly late antique in its content," datable to the fourth century on internal evidence.[109] As we have seen this argument is essential to his and Donner's theories about early Islam. At stake is the question, with a long legacy in the historiography of Islamic origins, of whether Islam originated as an apocalyptic movement or whether it was concerned with building a religion that would endure for centuries to come. For Donner and Shoemaker, an earlier Christian tradition of the Last Emperor allows them to posit a Christian/Roman

(New Haven 1951) 64–76.Toward the end of the work, during the reign of the Antichrist, a good emperor prays for the cross to ascend to heaven, and so it does. While this is very different from the Last Emperor tradition in the *Vaticinium of Constans* and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* there are clear echoes (a good eschatological emperor, and the cross ascending to heaven), and a connection is possible considering Pseudo-Methodius's clear interest in Ethiopia's eschatological role. Still, too little is known about *5 Baruch* to say anything conclusive. Shoemaker suggests in both, "The Reign of God Has Come" (n. 11 above) 549 and "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 243 n. 89 that *5 Baruch* dates from before the Islamic conquests because it does not mention the Muslims, for which he cites the opinions of Pierluigi Piovanelli. However, this is by no means definitive proof of its date (especially considering the Islamic conquests impacted Ethiopia less severely), and Leslau 64 can only say that it *possibly* dates to the seventh century and can be no older than from the second half of the sixth century.

[107] Konrad (n. 87 above) 35–52; Rangheri (n. 87 above) 708–709 n. 79. Konrad was writing prior to the Alexander's publication of the *Oracle of Baalbek,* and so presumably did not know that the Last Emperor was not present in the Greek version. Rangheri, writing later, claims that the absence of any reference to it in the *Oracle of Baalbek* must have been because the writer of that text deleted it, or because it was inserted in the fourth-century Latin translation of the Greek common source for the *Oracle of Baalbek* and *Tiburtine Sibyl* (the "Theodosian Sibyl").

[108] See Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser* (n. 7 above) 17–53, esp. 39–48; see also ibid. 350–359: the *Oracle of Baalbek*, he points out, only survives in manuscripts of the twelfth century or later, but nonetheless we accept that it preserves an early sixth-century prophecy. Why cannot the eleventh-century manuscripts of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* preserve a fourth-century apocalypse? Of course the difference is that the *Oracle of Baalbek,* though preserved in late manuscripts, shows no signs of textual interventions later than the early fifth century, while the *Tiburtine Sibyl* was clearly interpolated heavily with eleventh-century material.

[109] Quotation from Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 233.

influence on Islamic interest in Jerusalem, emphasizing both the eschatological impact on the early Islamic faith and Islam's place in a greater late antique context.[110]

Deviating from these arguments in favor of a fourth-century *Vaticinium*, Petre Guran and, more recently and in much greater detail, Gian Luca Potestà have argued that the *Vaticinium of Constans* preserves a tradition about the Last Emperor that predates Pseudo-Methodius but cannot originate in the fourth century. In their view the *Vaticinum* should be dated to the reign of Constans II (r. 641–668), not Constans I. Potestà goes even further, suggesting the *Vaticinium of Constans* was originally written in Syriac.[111]

Thus, it is clear that the scholarship on the origin of the Last Emperor tradition is mired in enormous confusion and contradictory theories and assumptions. The discovery of the absence of the *Vaticinium of Constans* in the Greek version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* (the *Oracle of Baalbek*), instead of putting to rest the question of the origin of the Last Emperor legend on the basis of the manuscript tradition, has led to a multiplicity of competing theories all hinged on supposed internal evidence. A close analysis of the supposed internal evidence for an earlier tradition about the Last Emperor will show that none of these assertions stand up to scrutiny. Most assume that the account of the Last Emperor in the *Vaticinium of Constans* is shorter and simpler, and that shorter and simpler imply more primitive; or, conversely, that because the *Vaticinium* gives the Last Emperor a name and a physical description these additional details indicate a separate tradition. Other arguments, while more persuasive, fall short when one realizes that the Last Emperor tradition is integrally connected with Pseudo-Methodius's historical view and based on Syriac literary models.[112] In fact, as we shall observe, if we attempt to include the *Vaticinium of Constans* among the chorus of fourth-century works that deal with the triumph over paganism and the relation of the emperor to Christianity, it sounds a discordant note.

Enemies of the Emperor: Pagans or Muslims?

Perhaps the most compelling reason Shoemaker, Möhring, and others provide for attributing the *Vaticinium of Constans* to the fourth century is that while the *Vaticinium* in the later versions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* maintains Pseudo-Methodius's anti-Islamic role for the Last Emperor, casting his main adversaries as "Saracens," this is not the case in Sackur's version 2, in which there is no mention of Ishmaelites, Saracens, or

[110] Averil Cameron has recently provided a riposte to some of the general assumptions of Donner and Shoemaker on this point in Averil Cameron, "Late antique apocalyptic: A context for the Qur'an?" *Visions of the End: Apocalypticism and Eschatology in the Abrahamic Religions*, ed. Hagit Amirav, Emmanouela Grypeou and Guy Stroumsa (Leuven 2016) 1–33.

[111] Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 271–290; he reiterates this view in idem, *L'ultimo messia: Profezia e sovranità nel Medioevo* (Bologna 2014) 24–31; Petre Guran, "Genesis and Function of the 'Last Emperor' Myth in Byzantine Eschatology," *Bizantinistica* 8 (2006) 298–300; Guran's link between the text and the visit of Constans II to Rome implies that, unlike Potestà, he believes that the *Vaticinium* was originally composed in Latin.

[112] Most of these arguments will focus on the *Vaticinium* as it is preserved in Sackur's version 2 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, because it lacks the obvious influence from the Latin version of Pseudo-Methodius found in later recensions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*.

Muslims in general.[113] It is pagans and Jews who act as the enemies of King Constans in version 2. Indeed, unlike in the time of Pseudo-Methodius when Islam was the major threat to Christian power, the perceived existential threat to the unity and piety of the Christian Roman Empire in the fourth century was the pagans and Jews, and thus the *Vaticinium* may reflect earlier Christian anxieties.[114] In this way, according to Shoemaker, the mention of the pagans in place of Muslims "appears to ensure the [Last Emperor] legend's circulation already prior to the invasions of the seventh century."[115]

There is a problem with this interpretation, however. King Constans in the *Vaticinium of Constans* will devastate "the islands and cities of the pagans" (*insulas et civitates paganorum*). Why would fourth-century pagans have their own islands and cities? In late antiquity pagans were not an external threat; they were an internal one. They shared the same cities as the Christians. And as Potestà rightly points out, it is unthinkable that violent extermination of all pagans and Jews would have been within the imaginative horizons of Christians of the fourth century; indeed, before Christianity was even the official religion of the Roman state.[116] In the fourth century, Christian language directed toward paganism was of rooting out and purification, not violent extirpation.

Therefore, I would suggest a different interpretation. These pagans discussed by the *Vaticinium of Constans* seem to be a better fit with the Muslim Arabs, who, incidentally, were often called "pagans" by medieval Christians.[117] These "pagans" did rule over cities, and indeed conquered many of the islands of the Mediterranean.[118] In fact, Pseudo-Methodius goes to great lengths to show that the Muslims are no different than pagans, so the redactor/author of the *Vaticinium* could have even derived the idea of Muslims as pagans from Pseudo-Methodius if he were not already under such an impression.[119]

[113] See Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser* (n. 7 above) 44; Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 232–233. Again, only in Sackur's edition of the *Vaticinium* are the Muslims absent. In versions 3 and 4 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* as well as the copy of version 2 in the *Mirabilis Liber,* "Saracens" are explicitly mentioned as enemies of the Last Emperor.

[114] Paul Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 168, also expressed this opinion for a fourth-century origin before he changed his position and redated the Last Emperor tradition to the time of Pseudo-Methodius.

[115] Shoemaker, "The Reign of God Has Come" (n. 11 above) 545.

[116] Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 283.

[117] G. J. Reinink, "The Romance of Julian," (n. 23 above) 79–81, has argued that Pseudo-Methodius purposely stresses that Muslims are pagans, comparing the Islamic domination to the period of pagan rule under Julian the Apostate.

[118] The Greek translation of Pseudo-Methodius includes a passage, not present in the Syriac and Latin, describing how the Muslims will "devastate the islands and those who live by the sea" (ἐρημώσουσιν τὰς νήσους καὶ τοὺς τὴν παραλίαν οἰκοῦντας), Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 170; English translation in Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic* (n. 4 above) 194. If, as I will later suggest, the author of the *Vaticinium* was using the Greek version of Pseudo-Methodius, he may have simply substituted the Last Emperor for the Ishmaelites, reversing their roles.

[119] Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History" (n. 23 above) 182–184. For the general medieval Christian perception of Muslims as pagans, see Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton 1984) 35; John Victor Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York 2002) esp. 78–104.

Moreover, pagans are mentioned elsewhere in Sackur's version 2 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* to describe Muslims, namely in the king-lists. The first king-list claims that in the reign of Otto II ("*de ipso O procedet alius O potentissimus"*) there will be fighting between Christians and pagans, with Greeks involved in the warfare.[120] If the text places these events in the reign of a king whose historical rule was from 973 to 983, this fighting cannot be against the pagan polytheists of the fourth century. Instead, considering the mention of the Greeks, it seems like a reference to the fighting in southern Italy culminating in the campaigns of Otto II against both the Byzantines and the Arabs of the Emirate of Sicily, which ended in Otto's defeat there in 982 at the Battle of Stilo.[121] The pagans, then, would be the Arab Muslims of Sicily. Likewise, slightly later the *Tiburtine Sibyl* king-list speaks of war in Syria between the Greeks and Arabs, referring to the latter alternatively as "Hagarenes," a common derogatory term for Muslims, and "pagans."[122]

While it seems likely that the term "pagan" often refers to Muslims in the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* in a recent publication Anke Holdenried offers an intriguing alternative possibility. She believes that the *Tiburtine Sibyl* was redacted by Bruno of Querfurt (d. 1009), the "Apostle of the Prussians," or someone of his circle at the Greek monastery of Ss. Boniface and Alexius in Rome, and thus she speculates that the references to pagans throughout the work held a special significance to such men who would missionize the Slavic peoples of Northeastern Europe.[123] Following her logic, if Bruno or a similar missionary preparing for the journey north composed the *Vaticinium,* the reference to the extirpation of the "cities and islands of the pagans"—the pagans to whom the Last Emperor would give the choice of baptism or death—likely referred to the medieval pagan peoples east of the Elbe, such as those who inhabited the lakeside *urbs* of Riedegost described in the early eleventh-century chronicle of Thietmar, or the

[120] Sackur (n. 44 above) 182: *Et de ipso O procedet alius O potentissimus et erunt sub eo pugne inter paganos et christianos et sanguis Grecorum fundetur*.

[121] It is possible, as Sackur (n. 44 above) 182 has suggested, that the line *eo pugne inter paganos et christianos* is late antique in origin, and has merely been subsumed into the discussion of the reign of Otto II. But unless the tenth-century compiler was adding lines with no regard to their meaning, he must have intended this line to refer to the Muslims, whether or not it was originally meant that way. On the defeat of Otto II at the Battle of Stilo, see Thietmar, *Chronicon* III.20 ed. Robert Holtzmann, in the MGH, *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre Korveier Überarbeitung* (Berlin 1935), 123–124. See also Dirk Alvermann, "La battaglia di Ottone II contro i Saraceni nel 982," *Archivio storico per la Calabria e la Lucania* 62 (1995) 115–130.

[122] Sackur (n. 44 above) 183: *Et post cum surget rex A nomine, et in diebus eius erunt pugne multer inter Agarenos et Grecos. Inter paganos namque multa prelia et pugne erunt. Syriam expugnabunt et Pentapolim captivabunt.* Holdenried, "Many Hands" (n. 53 above) 30; and Roach, "The Legacy of a Late Antique Prophecy" (n. 78 above) 15–16, have different interpretations of the events behind these lines, but Roach is most convincing in his assessment that they refer to the fighting, in the tenth century, between the Byzantines and Arabs in Syria; see n. 78 above.

[123] Holdenried, "Many Hands" (n. 53 above) 38–39. While I am suspicious of Holdenried's theory of multiple redactors, and I am convinced by the arguments of Roach, "The Legacy of a Late Antique Prophecy" (n. 78 above) 11–13, that Bruno was likely not responsible for the redaction of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, I still believe any contemporary of Bruno's who redacted the *Tiburtine Sibyl* could have been thinking of the Slavic pagans considering the prominence of their uprising in the late tenth century and of the attempts to convert them to Christianity. Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 233, states: "It is hard to imagine that a medieval interpolator would have eliminated the Muslims from an existing tradition in order to replace them with pagans and Jews." However, an interpolator specifically interested in the Baltic in the time of Adelbert and Bruno could certainly be imagined doing so.

island stronghold at Arkona on Rügen in modern-day northern Germany.[124] Trans-Transforming the Last Emperor's traditional Muslim foes into northern pagans would make sense for a redactor trying to appeal to a Western European audience after central Italy and the Swiss Alps had been cleared of Saracens and the Muslim stronghold of Fraxinet in Provence had been destroyed (973), but before the start of the Crusades, a time when the threat of Islam simply did not loom large.[125] Such a reference would have been especially relevant after Otto II's 982 defeat at the Battle of Stilo, when the pagan Slavs took the opportunity of this blow to imperial power to rise up against Ot-Ottonian rule, and their rebellion remained unsubjugated through the reign of Otto III (when version 1 of the Latin *Tiburtine Sibyl* was most likely composed).

In the end, it seems far more likely that the reference to pagans in the *Vaticinium of Constans* does not refer to the Hellenistic polytheists of the fourth century—men like Libanius or Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, who lived shoulder to shoulder with Christians and served as their teachers and patrons—but to Arabs, or else the Slavic peoples who still practiced traditional pagan religion in the eleventh century. The mention of pagans is certainly not compelling proof that the *Vaticinium of Constans* must have been composed in the fourth century.

The King of the Greeks and King Constans: Differences

Despite the fact that the events described in the reigns of the Last Emperor in the *Vaticinium of Constans* and in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* are very similar, there are a number of details in them that differ. A common argument used by Shoemaker, Möhring, and their predecessors to support the idea that the *Vaticinium of Constans* predated Pseudo-Methodius—and that it probably originated in the fourth century—is that the variant details in the *Vaticinium* reflect a "separate, if not anterior, tradition."[126] McGinn points out four distinct differences that distinguish the Last Emperor King Constans in the *Vaticinium of Constans* from Pseudo-Methodius's Last Emperor (the "King of the Greeks"):[127] 1) the inclusion of the name Constans and his physical

[124] On Riedegost, or Rethra, see Thietmar, *Chronicon* VI.23–25, in Holtzmann (n. 121 above) 302–304; on Arkona, see Saxo Grammaticus, *Deeds of the Danes* xiv.39.2, ed. Alfred Holder, *Saxonis Grammatici Gesta Danorum* (Strassburg 1886) 564–565.

[125] For the process of the defeat of Western European Muslims outside Spain, completed by the end of the tenth century, see Kees Versteegh, "The Arab Presence in France and Switzerland in the 10th Century," *Arabica* 37.3 (November 1990) 359–388.

[126] Quote from Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco 1994) 89. Similarly, Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 243, asserts that there are "too many differences between the accounts [of the Last Emperor] to imagine that Tib. Sib.'s version could possibly derive from Ps.-Methodius, but the content of the Sibyl's prophecies concerning the Last Emperor clearly marks them as late-antique and pre-Islamic." Rangheri (n. 87 above) 708–709 n. 79, asserts that the version of the legend in Pseudo-Methodius is "tramandata in forma diversa, più evoluta," and thus the depiction of the Last Emperor in the *Vaticinium of Constans* could not have been drawn from Pseudo-Methodius. Likewise, Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 287, asserts that the Last Emperor's actions in Jerusalem in Pseudo-Methodius are more complex because it mentions a cross in Jerusalem, while the *Vaticinium* has no cross. He seems to believe that a simpler version implies an earlier version.

[127] McGinn, *Antichrist* (n. 126 above) 306 n. 60. Konrad (n. 87 above) 46, lays out a chart comparing these versions of the Last Emperor with Adso's account, though on most of the details he highlights the *Vaticinium of Constans* and Pseudo-Methodius agree.

description;[128] 2) the length of his reign;[129] 3) the idea that he defeats Gog and Magog himself (as opposed to their defeat by an angel in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*); and 4) different descriptions of the Last Emperor's regalia, i.e., his crown. The differences in the length of reign, along with the name and description of Constans, will be dealt with more below. For now, it should be enough to show that the second two supposed differences on close examination actually reveal that Pseudo-Methodius was without question a major source for the *Vaticinium of Constans*.

Gog and Magog

The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* mentions Gog and Magog in two separate instances. First, it describes in its historical section how Alexander the Great enclosed Gog, Magog, and twenty-two barbarian nations behind the Gates of the North. Later, it describes how after the victory of the Last Emperor over the Ishmaelites, Gog and Magog and their twenty-two filthy nations—who eat dead animals, fetuses, abortions, afterbirth, and all manner of disgusting things—will emerge from the Gates of the North and devastate the earth before being defeated by an angel of God. [130] The *Vaticinium of Constans*, on the other hand, mentions them only once, after the victories of the Last Emperor, but the account is quite similar, stating: "From the north shall arise the very unclean people, whom Alexander enclosed, known as Gog and also Magog. These are twenty-two kingdoms, and their number is like the sand of the sea."[131]

This presence of both Gog and Magog and Alexander's Gate in the *Vaticinium of Constans* led Paul Alexander to change his mind about the date of Last Emperor legend, stating that since "the combination of Gog and Alexander is not attested before the seventh century," the *Vaticinium* must have been based on Pseudo-Methodius, drawing from its description of Gog and Magog, or on a common tradition.[132] Sackur, however, and now more recently Shoemaker have seen the account of Gog and Magog in the *Vaticinium of Constans* as an indication that it preserves an older tradition upon which Pseudo-Methodius built.[133] Their arguments are based primarily on the idea that

[128] It should be noted that Constans only appears as the name of the Last Emperor in three of the nine manuscripts Sackur used to reconstruct version 2 of the Tiburtine Sibyl; see Sackur (n. 44 above) 130–131; Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (n. 52 above) 29. Still, the name is already present in Escorial & I.3, Sackur's model and the earliest manuscript of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*. Nonetheless, the name Constans does not necessarily have to refer to any actual emperor. Wilhelm Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore,* translated into English by A.H. Keane (London 1896) 62–63, suggested that *Constans* was an adjective, not a name: that is, the Last Emperor will be steadfast. Thus, Wortley (n. 102 above) 17 similarly concludes, "*Constans* is either a misreading, or that word is used as an epithet in this context." This is borne out to some degree by the Bedan recension of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* published by Migne, which gives the Last Emperor's initial as H but states that he will be *animo constans*. In Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon*, the Last Emperor will be *nomine et animo Constans.* Conversely, these examples may be later attempts to make sense of the strange name already in use for the Last Emperor.

[129] Unlike Pseudo-Methodius, the *Vaticinium of Constans* assigns the Last Emperor a bizarrely long reign, lasting either 120 or 122 years, depending on the manuscript. Pseudo-Methodius assigns the Last Emperor ten and a half years in Jerusalem, but does not specify a length for his total reign.

[130] Pseudo-Methodius 8.6–10, ed. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above) 15–16 (Syriac), 22–26 (German trans.); ibid. 13.19–21, 41–43 (Syriac), 67–69 (German trans.).

[131] Sackur (n. 44 above) 186: *Et exurgent ab aquilone spurcissime gentes, quas Alexander inclusit, Gog videlicet et Magog. Hec sunt XXII regna, quorum numerus est sicut arena maris.*

[132] Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 163 n. 44.

[133] Sackur (n. 44 above) 171–172; Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 238–240.

the simpler account—the one in the *Vaticinium*—must be earlier, and Pseudo-Methodius must have adopted it and embellished it.[134] This idea, however, is severely flawed, as we know Pseudo-Methodius's sources for his description of Gog and Magog, and such traditions almost certainly do not date as early as the fourth century.

While Magog is mentioned as one of the descendants of Noah's son Japheth in Genesis 10.2, the notion of an eschatological invasions by peoples called Gog and Magog originates in Ezekiel 38–39. God tells Ezekiel that Gog and Magog (or, more accurately, a prince named Gog from the land of Magog) will come out of the north with a great army and attack Israel, interrupting a time of peace. The eventual development of the idea that Alexander the Great had imprisoned Gog and Magog (now understood as two separate nations) behind the Gates of the North is in fact a late combination of two separate traditions. In the first century AD Josephus mentioned offhand in his *Jewish War* iron gates built by Alexander the Great in a mountain pass which obstructed the invasions of a certain barbarian steppe people called the Alans, a Scythian tribe.[135] In a separate work, *The Antiquities of the Jews,* while reconciling contemporary ethnic groups with biblical nations, the same author identifies the Scythians as Magog, descendants of Japheth, mentioned in the Book of Genesis.[136] Nonetheless, Josephus never connects these two concepts, and his association of the Scythians with Magog was simply ethnographic, with no apocalyptic overtones.[137]

It was likely not until the turn of the fifth century that the ethnographic identification of steppe tribes with Gog and Magog took on eschatological connotations. In this time, Syriac writers responded with near apocalyptic shock as steppe tribes like the Huns made destructive raids (through mountain passes such as the Derbent and Darial in the Caucasus) into Syria and Mesopotamia, and in 395 the Huns came within striking distance of Jerusalem.[138] Still, while the extremely learned Saint Jerome (d. 420)

[134] Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 239–240, also argues that the combination of the legends about Alexander's Gate and Gog and Magog could have originated in the fourth century, as they are already attested in Josephus, but as we shall see this is not entirely accurate.

[135] Josephus, *The Jewish War* 7.244–246: Τὸ δὲ τῶν Ἀλανῶν ἔθνος ὅτι μέν εἰσι Σκύθαι περὶ τὸν Τάναϊν καὶ τὴν Μαιῶτιν λίμνην κατοικοῦντες, πρότερόν που δεδηλώκαμεν, κατὰ τούτους δὲ τοὺς χρόνους διανοηθέντες εἰς τὴν Μηδίαν καὶ προσωτέρω ταύτης ἔτι καθ' ἁρπαγὴν ἐμβαλεῖν τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν Ὑρκανῶν διαλέγονται· τῆς παρόδου γὰρ οὗτος δεσπότης ἐστίν, ἣν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος πύλαις σιδηραῖς κλειστὴν ἐποίησε.

[136] Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 1.123: Μαγώγης δὲ τοὺς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ Μαγώγας ὀνομασθέντας ᾤκισεν, Σκύθας δὲ ὑπ' αὐτῶν [i.e., Ἑλλήνων] προσαγορευομένους.

[137] *Pace* Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 240, who claims that "Josephus is an early witness to this emergent tradition" of combining Gog and Magog with Alexander's Gate, E. J. van Donzel, Andrea B. Schmidt, and Claudia Ott, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall* (Leiden 2010) 9–11, note: "While we find in Josephus both the biblical motif of Gog-Magog as a northern and hostile nation and the Jewish Hellenistic tradition of Alexander erecting gates in the north, therefore, it was only subsequent to his work that these motifs fused into the synthetic tradition with which we are presently familiar." See also Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38–39 As Pre-Text for Revelation 19,17–21 and 20,7–10* (Tübingen 2001) 222: "Josephus does not combine his historical note about the Scythian tribe called the Alani and Alexander's Wall with the biblical Gog and Magog. Nor does he signify any eschatological overtones to this point of his report."

[138] G. Greatrex and M. Greatrex, "The Hunnic Invasion of the East of 395 and the Fortress of Ziatha," *Byzantion* 69 (1999) 65-75. Syriac hymns about the raids of the Huns were written by the famous theologian and hymnographer Ephraem the Syrian, but these are lost. The Syriac *memra* of Ephraem's likely nephew, Cryillona, on the onslaught of the Huns is preserved in Birmingham MS 69. A translation is available in Simon Landersdorfer, "*Mamre* on Locusts (Cyrillonas)," *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter* 6 (1913) 15–16; and a

was familiar with both the association of Gog/Magog with steppe tribes and with the tradition that Alexander enclosed certain barbarian peoples (now identified as the Huns) behind great gates, nonetheless, as with Josephus, it never occured to him to combine these two stories.[139] Likewise, Isidore of Seville (d. 696) knew of both traditions and did not combine them; in fact, he used the ethnographic association to assert that his Visigothic patrons were descended from Magog son of Japheth in order to give them an Old Testament pedigree.[140]

Contrary to Shoemaker, who asserts that the existence of these two traditions about the gate and about Gog and Magog implies that they were probably quickly united into a single story, it is important to keep in mind that there was no good reason why the two traditions needed to be combined.[141] If Alexander had imprisoned certain tribes of the Scythians behind a great gate, it stood to reason that those tribes would not be the same ones which, as Gog and Magog, would invade the civilized world at the end of time. It took a new innovation—one for which there is no evidence before the seventh century—that God would open Alexander's gate at the end of time, in order to merge the two traditions.[142]

partial translation in Otto Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns: Studies in Their History and Culture* (Berkeley 1973) 56.

[139] Jerome, *Epistle* 77 (composed in 399), *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae,* ed. Isidorus Hilberg, and Margit Kamptner (Vienna 1996) 45, describes the Huns as a people who had broken out of their homeland "between the frigid Tanais River and the inhuman people of the Massagetae; where the gates of Alexander hold back the ferocious peoples behind the Caucasus cliffs" (*Ecce subito discurrentibus nuntiis oriens totus intremuit, ab ultima Maeotide inter glacialem Tanain et Massagetarum inmanes populos, ubi Caucasi rupibus feras gentes Alexandri claustra cohibent, erupisse Hunnorum examina, quae pernicibus equis huc illucque volitantia caedis pariter ac terroris cuncta conplerent*). Jerome, in his ca. 411 commentary, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem, libri XIV,* ed. Francois Glorie (Turnhout 1964) 525, mentions: "The people the Jews and the judaizers among us know as Gog are the Scythians" (*Judaei et nostri judaizantes putant Gog gentes esse Scythicas*). It is important to note that for Jerome, like many of his contemporaries, Gog and Magog may have been names used by the Jews to refer to distant northern tribes, but biblical prophesies that named them were allegorical; the Gog and Magog of prophecy were heretics who would attack the church with the ferocity barbarian tribesmen. For Gog and Magog as heretics, see Jerome's *In Ezechielem,* 11. 38, ed. PL 25.354–363. The fifth-century church historian Theodoret (himself a Syrian from Antioch), in his commentary on Ezekiel, ed. PL 81.808–1256, which the relevant passages appear at 1200–1217; and trans. Robert Charles Hill, *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentaries on the Prophets, vol. 2: Commentary on Ezekiel* (Brookline 2006) 252–263, held that the prophecy of Gog and Magog had thus already been fulfilled historically by the invasion of the Scythians (by which he probably means the Huns), and it was an error of the Jews to associate it with the eschatological future; this was probably a somewhat common view at the time in the east. In the west however, where the Book of Revelation was generally accepted as canonical, commentators had to deal with the fact that invasions by Gog and Magog are associated with the end of times in Revelation 20:7; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 20.19.3, escapes this bind by asserting, similar to Jerome, that Gog and Magog of prophecy are not existing nations, but forces of hell that will only be seen and understood in the final trials at the end of time.

[140] Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologies* 9.2.65, follows Jerome nearly word for word in his description of the gates of Alexander holding back the Huns, adding that these were the Avars. For his identification of the Goths with Magog, see his *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum,* 1 and 66: *Gothorum antiquissima origo de Magog filio Japhet fuit, unde et Scytharum genus exstitit*.

[141] Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 240–241.

[142] Donzel, Schmidt, and Ott (n. 137 above) 16, allow that the themes of Alexander's Gate and Gog and Magog may have already been combined in Syriac tradition by the fourth or fifth centuries. However, if that is the case, one must wonder why it took over three centuries for the earliest traces of the merging of these two popular themes. As they note in ibid. 9, in Greco-Roman oracular literature, Gog and Magog "have no apocalyptic connotation, and the land of Gog and Magog is still treated as an ordinary historical name."

This new innovation appeared in the seventh century specifically in Syriac literature, and only entered the Latin literary tradition with the eighth-century translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. Perhaps the first text to explicitly assert that the tribes imprisoned by Alexander were Gog and Magog (and, significantly, to state that God would allow them to break out at the end of time) was the Syriac *Alexander Legend* around the year 630,[143] and by the end of the seventh century the theme of Gog and Magog's imprisonment by Alexander had become pervasive in Syriac literature. Pseudo-Ephraem's *Homily on the End* was among the works that explicitly mentions that Alexander the Great imprisoned Gog and Magog behind the Gates of the North, from which they would eventually break free.[144] Since both the *Alexander Legend* and the *Homily on the End* are known to have been major influences on Pseudo-Methodius, it is likely that he took the association of Gog and Magog with Alexander from these works and in turn merged this tradition into his story of the Last Emperor.

Moreover, there is good reason to believe that the *Vaticinium of Constans* was following Pseudo-Methodius in its description of Gog and Magog. The filthiness of Gog and Magog—their eating of all manner of unclean things—is not attested in the Bible, but is instead a Syriac theme which also originates in the *Alexander Legend*.[145] The fact that the *Vaticinium of Constans* mentions this seems to confirm that its author was influenced by the Syriac *Alexander Legend* or Pseudo-Methodius (much more likely the latter). In addition, like the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, the *Vaticinium of Constans* mentions that the kingdoms of Gog and Magog will number twenty-two. As Andrew Anderson points out in his classic book on Gog and Magog, in Pseudo-Methodius "the number of tribes or kings excluded [by Alexander's gate] is specified as twenty-two, and this is the number generally specified in the works of which *Pseudo-Methodius* was the source."[146] Thus, there is strong evidence that the description of

[143] Alexander Romances were popular in the late antique world, especially the Greek versions attributed to Callisthenes. Pseudo-Callisthenes seems to have been translated into Syriac before the seventh century. However, the ca. 630 Syriac *Alexander Legend* was the first to include many new elements, including the imprisonment of Gog and Magog; see Donzel, Schmidt, and Ott (n. 137 above) 16. They note in ibid. 21 that: "From the 7th century onwards, [the *Alexander Legend*'s] version of events constituted a point of reference for both Syriac apocalyptic writings and historical chronicles. The Syriac Legend was thus perhaps more influential than any other text…in determining the subsequent course of the Gog and Magog tradition." See also Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, "Alexander the Great in the Syriac Literary Tradition," *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages,* ed. David Zuwiyya (Leiden 2011) 41–72; and Faustina Doufikar-Aerts, "Dogfaces, Snake-tongues, and the Wall against Gog and Magog," *Gog and Magog: Clans of Chaos in World Literature,* ed. A. A. Seyed-Gohrab, F. C. W. Doufikar-Aerts, and S. McGlinn (Amsterdam 2007) 39–42. There is also, of course, the narrative of the enclosure of Gog and Magog in sura 18 of the Qur'an; while the relation of this to the Christian version is a complex problem, Kevin van Bladel, "The *Alexander Legend* in the Qur'an 18:83–102," *The Qur'an in its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Reynolds (New York 2008) 175–203, shows that it is probable that the Qur'anic account was shaped by the story in Syriac literature.

[144] Donzel, Schmidt, and Ott (n. 137 above) 25: "Northern Mesopotamia became the centre of apocalyptic literary activity during the 7th and 8th centuries. Numerous Syriac texts featuring the motif of Alexander's gate-barrier originated within this environment. Even if not all Syriac-language apocalyptic visions feature the construction of Alexander's iron gates, they are all familiar with the idea that Gog and Magog are enclosed behind a barrier and that they would once burst through the Northern *limes*."

[145] Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 285–286; Donzel, Schmidt, and Ott (n. 137 above) 19.

[146] Andrew Runni Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge 1932) 54. Sackur (n. 44 above) 172, was aware of this problem, but he conveniently noted that the the men-

Gog and Magog, like most other elements of the Last Emperor narrative in the *Vatici-Vaticinum of Constans*, was borrowed from the account of Pseudo-Methodius.

The Crown and Its Ascent to Heaven

Another important element of the Last Emperor legend frequently used in attempts to establish the date of the *Vaticinium of Constans* is the surrender of the imperial crown in Jerusalem. The word used for the crown itself has been a source of surprising attention among modern scholars. While Peter the Monk's eighth-century Latin translation of Pseudo-Methodius describes the crown using the word *corona,* the *Vaticinium* in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* uses the word *diadem.*[147]According to Shoemaker, who echoes the argument of several scholars before him: "This detail seemingly reflects the custom of the late ancient emperors who wore on their heads a diadem, an adorned headband, as opposed to the medieval Latin kings who instead favored crowns."[148] All in all, however, this is not a convincing argument, as the use of the word *diadem* need not imply a fourth-century date.[149] The word is found in many later texts.[150] The Syriac word for

tion of the twenty-two nations was a medieval interpolation but the rest of the sentence was genuinely fourth-century. Shoemaker , "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 240, notes that Pseudo-Callisthenes's original third-century Greek *Alexander Romance* notes that Alexander "overcame twenty-two barbarian peoples," so that the number was already established by this early period. However, while this may be the source behind the later tradition that Gog and Magog numbered twenty-two nations, at this early stage it was but one number in a list: "Alexander lived thirty-two years … he was king for ten years; he made war for twelve years and was victorious in his wars; he overcame twenty-two barbarian nations and fourteen Greek peoples; he founded twelve cities …"; see Richard Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander Romance* (London 1991) 158. The Vaticinium of Constans is clearly dependent on a much later tradition in which the twenty-two nations are that of Gog and Magog and associated with Alexander the Great and given eschatological meaning.

[147] It should be noted that only Sackur's version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* uses *diadem.* The other surviving versions use *corona* as well, but these versions borrow language directly from the Latin Pseudo-Methodius in a way that Sackur's version does not.

[148] Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 233; likewise Konrad (n. 87 above) 47–48, notes that the diadem was introduced by Constantine I and worn by his successors, but was falling out of use by the time of Pseudo-Methodius. Sackur 165–168, mentions that the *capitis diademate et omni habitu regali* which the Last Emperor removes in Jerusalem sound like they were taken out of a line in the account of Constantine the Great in the *Epitome de Caesaribus* attributed to Aurelius Victor: *abitum regium gemmis et caput exornans perpetuo diademate.* Sackur also points to the *Alexander Legend* as an example of a crown deposited in Jerusalem, another late antique precedent. However, Sackur incorrectly believed that the *Legend* was written around the fourth century, while in reality it was composed shortly before the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* in the seventh century.

[149] Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 287, is in my view correct when he states that it is "not possible to state with absolute certainty that the diadem in place of the crown attests to a historically more archaic stage." Nonetheless, Potestà goes on to try to make a similar argument using the word, suggesting that since the word in Syriac can be translated either as *diadem* or *corona,* that "the Latin *Vaticinium* was based on an earlier Syriac text without going via the mediation of Pseudo-Methodius, either in Greek or Latin." This is by no means the simplest explanation of why the version of the *Vaticinium* preserved in the *Tiburtine Sibyl* uses the word *diadem* instead of *corona.* Since the words *diadem* and *corona* are so similar in meaning, the author/translator of the *Vaticinium* simply may have chosen *diadem* because it means the same thing. Or, as we shall see, he may have been using the Greek translation of Pseudo-Methodius (or an intermediary apocalyptic work based on that Greek translation), which, *pace* Potestà, also uses the equivalent of *diadem.*

[150] For examples of the use of the word *diadem* for crown in Latin works contemporary with the Latin translation of *the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, with a very similar context, see two seventh- or eighth-century Latin texts, which describe the entry into Jerusalem by Emperor Heraclius in which that emperor removes his royal garments. In both of these Latin texts, the crown Heraclius removes from his head as he enters Jerusalem is specifically called a *diadem.* These texts can be found in Stephan Borgehammar, "Hera-

crown, *tāgā* (ܬܓܐ), can mean either "crown" or "diadem," and this is reflected in the Greek translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, where the crown is not referred to as a στέφανος, as one might expect, but as a στέμμα, that is, a Greek equivalent of *diadem* (itself a word derived from Greek).[151]

In reality, the deposition of the imperial crown (or diadem) and its ascent to heaven on the cross is part of a greater theme, one that reveals the Syriac roots of the Last Emperor legend. G. J. Reinink has shown that the laying down of a crown on the cross is part of a Syriac literary theme that originates in the Syriac *Julian Romance.* In the *Julian Romance*, after Julian the Apostate is struck down by God, he is succeeded by his pious Christian general, Jovian. Jovian at first refuses to become emperor, as he has a saintly lack of interest in power, but instead places the imperial diadem upon a large cross and then prays for guidance before the cross. The cross miraculously ascends into the heavens and the crown comes back down to rest upon Jovian's head. It is a sign that God literally bestowed the crown on Jovian.[152] Reinink has argued that this text provided the direct inspiration for the Last Emperor's surrender of power in Pseudo-Methodius.[153]

A reworking of Pseudo-Methodius in Syriac, generally referred to as the *Edessene Apocalypse*, which Reinink believes to have been written shortly after the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, makes the comparison explicit: "The crown which descended from heaven upon the head of King Jovian of old will pass over the top of our Lord's Cross, and he [the Last Emperor] will raise up the cross and crown towards heaven."[154] Reinink points out that the Last Emperor's surrender of his crown in Jerusalem was also influenced by the Syriac *Alexander Legend*, written around the reign of Heraclius (610–641), which states that Alexander left his crown in Jerusalem in anticipation of its use by Christ.[155] Thus, the surrender of the diadem on the Cross

clius Learns Humility: Two Early Latin Accounts Composed for the Celebration of Exaltatio Crucis," *Millennium – Jahrbuch* 6 (2009) 186–187 and 198–199; for the date of the text, see ibid. 148–160.

[151] Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 186, 188. For commentary on this word choice, see Garstad (n. 40 above) 343 n. 74. Garstad claims that the use of the word στέμμα instead of στέφανος is "hard to explain" in the Greek version of Pseudo-Methodius. However, contemporary Greek writers seem to have preferred the word στέμμα for the crown of the Emperor of the Romans. George of Pisidia, *In Restitutionem Crucis*, ed. Luigi Tartaglia, *Carmi di Giorgio di Pisidia* (Turino 1998) 246, for example, uses στέμμα when he refers to the crown that Heraclius wears on his entry into Jerusalem (αὐτὸς δὲ σιγᾷς στέμμα καὶ σκῆπτρον φέρων/ ὥσπερ βραβευτὴς τῶν παλαιστῶν ἐν μέσῳ). Similar uses can be found in other works of George, as well as in near-contemporaries such as Procopius and Malalas.

[152] In the *Julian Romance*, ed. Hoffmann (n. 36 above) 201; translated in Gollancz (n. 36 above) 216–218.

[153] Reinink, "The Romance of Julian the Apostate" (n. 23 above) 75–86. Compare the scene in the *Julian Romance* to Pseudo-Methodius 14.4; ed. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above): 44 (Syriac), 73 (German trans.): "The Holy Cross on which the Christ was crucified will be taken up to heaven, and the royal crown with it."

[154] *Edessene Apocalypse*, in Paris syr. 350, 103v: ܬܓܐ ܕܢܚܬ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܥܠ ܪܝܫܗ ܕܝܘܒܝܢܘܣ ܡܠܟܐ ܩܕܡܝܐ ܥܠ ܪܝܫ ܨܠܝܒܐ ܕܡܪܢ، ܘܢܪܝܡ ܨܠܝܒܐ ܘܬܓܐ ܠܫܡܝܐ in François Nau, "Révélations et légendes. Méthodius - Clément - Andronicus," *Journal Asiatique* 11.9 (1917) 433; it has been edited again and translated in Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic* (n. 4 above) 226–227 (Syriac), 237 (English translation); and in Palmer, *The Seventh Century* (n. 4 above) 249, which is the translation I quote here; a new translation with a detailed introduction is available in Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims* (n. 4 above) 130–138; see also Reinink, "The Romance of Julian the Apostate" (n. 23 above) 81–85.

[155] Reinink, "Alexander the Great" (n. 31 above) 176.

in Jerusalem is deeply rooted in Syriac literature, derived from the *Alexander Legend* and *Julian Romance*. Pseudo-Methodius was drawing on this tradition, one that would have been completely unknown to a fourth-century source.

There are even further reasons to be confident that the deposition of the imperial crown in Jerusalem originated in the imagination of a Syriac writer of the seventh century. As we have already seen, Pseudo-Methodius was influenced by the *Alexander Legend* in making Jerusalem important in the deeds of the Last Emperor. But as Francisco Martinez has pointed out, Pseudo-Methodius also had scriptural reasons for having the Last Emperor surrender power there. Pseudo-Methodius saw the Roman Empire as the *katechon*, the restraining force, keeping the Son of Perdition at bay. He derived this idea from 2 Thessalonians 2.6–7: "And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way."[156] The phrase "out of the way" is rendered as *men meṣ'atā* (ܡܢ ܡܨܥܬܐ) in the Syriac translation of the Bible, the *Peshitta*, and this phrase in Syriac more literally means "out of the middle."[157] According to the *Cave of Treasures*, a popular Syriac work upon which Pseudo-Methodius relied heavily in his account of Old Testament history, the middle of the earth is Golgotha in Jerusalem.[158] Pseudo-Methodius makes this explicit, mentioning "the life-giving Cross which was set up in the middle of the earth" (ܨܠܝܒܐ ܚܝܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܩܒܥ ܒܡܨܥܬܗ ܕܐܪܥܐ)[159] Thus, because of his uniquely Syriac reading of 2 Thessalonians, Pseudo-Methodius believed that the *katechon*, the restraining force, would be removed at the middle of the earth, i.e., on Golgotha. This is why, before the Son of Perdition can gain power, Pseudo-Methodius has the Last Emperor surrender his earthly power in Jerusalem. A writer outside the Syriac tradition would not have made this connection.

Now, the *Vaticinium of Constans* does not say that the Last Emperor will surrender his power on Golgotha; it simply says that the surrender will happen in Jerusalem. For this reason, Shoemaker, who is well aware of the influence of Syriac literature and biblical readings on the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, asserts that the simpler account implies that it is older: "While *Tib. Sib.* merely notes that this Last Emperor will hand over power in Jerusalem, Ps.-Methodius has further developed this tradition by specifying Golgotha as the site of the Emperor's abdication."[160] On the contrary, it would be an amazing coincidence if the *Vaticinium of Constans* predated Pseudo-Methodius and the author already decided, for whatever reason, that the Last Emperor would go to Jerusalem to surrender his power, and then Pseudo-Methodius got hold of the *Vaticinium* and realized that it just so happened that his unique Syriac reading of 2 Thessalonians 2.6–7 confirmed this and could place it on Golgotha. It makes far better

[156] καὶ νῦν τὸ κατέχον οἴδατε, εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ. τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας· μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται.

[157] Martinez, "The Apocalyptic Genre" (n. 34 above) 350–351. The Syriac is an over-literal translation of the Greek ἐκ μέσου.

[158] Reinink, "Pseudo-Methodius: A Concept of History" (n. 23 above) 150 n. 2, 77 n. 119; idem. "Die syrischen Wurzeln" (n. 31 above) 200–201.

[159] Pseudo-Methodius 9.9, ed. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above): 20 (Syriac) 32–33 (German trans.). See also ibid. 32 n. 9.8.2.

[160] Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 236.

sense to suppose that the narrative was written to fit the proof texts and not the other way around. The Last Emperor and his journey to Jerusalem originated in Pseudo-Methodius, and the reference to Golgotha likely dropped out in versions of the Last Emperor outside the Syriac tradition, such as the *Vaticinium of Constans,* where the relevance of the Peshitta's translation of 2 Thessalonians was unknown.

The Son of Perdition

2 Thessalonians 2.6–7 had additional influence on how Pseudo-Methodius envisioned the end-times scenario. The verse states that "the secret power of lawlessness is already at work," but then it states that this evil would only gain full power once the restraining force, the *katechon*, is removed. Pseudo-Methodius deals with this ambiguity in a rather unique way, by mentioning the rise of the Son of Perdition during the reign of the Last Emperor, and then he repeats this again after describing the King of the Greeks giving up his power at Jerusalem.[161] This repetition apparently troubled the Greek translator enough that he varied the words to make clear that the second appearance of the Son of Perdition would be more visible, and Peter the Monk followed this in his Latin translation.[162]

Tellingly, the *Vaticinium of Constans* not only follows the same idiosyncratic narrative pattern of having the Antichrist arise at two distinct points, but adopts the same solution as the translators in Greek and Latin, varying the words and clarifying that while the first appearance of the Antichrist must be secret, the second will be overt.[163] Sackur's version of the *Vaticinium of Constans* is clearly following an order of events established in a translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.

In addition, certain aspects of the Son of Perdition in the *Vaticinium of Constans* point to a date of composition later than the fourth-century. The Syriac text of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* talks only of the Son of Perdition; it never refers to this figure as the Antichrist, nor do the initial Greek and Latin translations. It is only in the slightly later recension, the "short Pseudo-Methodius," that the author specifically makes a point of appending to every instance in which Pseudo-Methodius mentions the Son of Perdition a notice that the Son of Perdition is the Antichrist.[164] In contrast, the *Vaticinium of Constans* calls him "the Prince of Iniquity of the tribe of Dan, who will be called the Antichrist; this will be the Son of Perdition."[165] While in the western

[161] Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above) 71 n.14.2.1, shows that the double rise of the Son of Perdition is a result of Pseudo-Methodius's unique reading of 2 Thessalonians 2.6–7.

[162] The Greek translation of Pseudo-Methodius varies the form of the verb and the word order to distinguish the two appearances; the first appearance is described thus, Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 184: φανήσεται ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας; the second, ibid. 188: ἐμφανῶς γέεηται ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας. Peter the Monk, the Latin translator, in turn, used the same verb both times (*apparere*) but added *manifestus* to the second appearance to differentiate it; thus ibid. 185: *et cum supplebuntur decem et demedium anni, apparebit filios perditionis;* and ibid. 189, 191: *Tunc distruetur omnem principatum et potestatem, ut appareat manifestus filius perditionis.*

[163] The first time, Sackur (n. 44 above) 185: *In illo tempore surget princeps iniquitatis de tribu Dan, qui vocabitur Antichristus*; the second instance, ibid. 186: *Tunc revelabitur manifeste Antichristus*.

[164] Prinz (n. 46 above) 15: *filius perdicionis, quod dicitur antechristus*; ibid. 15, 16: *filius perdicionis, qui est antechristus.*

[165] Sackur (n. 44 above) 185: *princeps iniquitatis de tribu Dan, qui vocabitur Antichristus. Hic erit filius perditionis.*

tradition Irenaeus and Hippolytus identified the Antichrist as the same figure as the Son of Perdition, this was by no means universally accepted until much later.[166] For the *Vaticinium of Constans* to equate the Son of Perdition and the Antichrist implies that it was using material from the eighth century or later, certainly far later than the fourth century.[167]

Similarly, the *Vaticinium of Constans* refers to Enoch and Elijah, who come to oppose the Son of Perdition at the end of time, as "two very illustrious men" (*duo clarissimi viri*).[168] In the fourth century, this title was a technical rank in the Roman *cursus honorum* which would imply that they were literally Roman senators, a distractingly strange claim.[169] Only after the fall of the Western Roman Empire did such senatorial titles come to be general terms of honor.[170]

Psalm 68.31

In addition to 2 Thessalonians, there is another scriptural proof text for the Last Emperor that deserves a closer look. A decisive piece of evidence revealing that the Last Emperor scenes in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and the *Vaticinium of Constans* must share some connection is the use common to both of them of the same biblical verse, Psalms 68.31: "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." While it appears in both the Sackur's version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, it does so in completely different contexts. In Pseudo-Methodius the verse is used as a proof-text of the Last Emperor's Ethiopian ancestry and is read as a prophecy that Ethiopia (that is, the Last Emperor, the King of the Greeks, who is descended from Ethiopia through Romulus and Byzantia) will fulfill a major eschatological role in the end times. As we have seen, this idea is critical to Pseudo-Methodius's program of Christian cooperation in the face of Islam—some combination of either appropriating a prophecy Miaphysites associated with Ethiopia and/or attempting to convince Miaphysites to be more receptive to the idea of a Last Emperor from the Roman Empire.

Alternatively, the *Vaticinium of Constans* uses the verse to describe the impact of the Last Emperor's campaigns on Egypt and Ethiopia: "[King Constans] will call all pagans to baptism and in every temple the Cross of Christ will be erected. Then Egypt and Ethiopia will be eager to stretch their hands to God."[171] Scholars generally have been unsure of what to do with the presence of the same verse, in different contexts, in

[166] Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 288; idem. *L'ultimo messia* (n. 111 above) 51–53.

[167] Potestà "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 288, is troubled by this, since he attempts to date the *Vaticinium of Constans* to the seventh century. He can only explain it away by claiming that it is the result of a later "Latin veneer," a later interpolation by a Latin translator. There is, however, a much simpler explanation: the *Vaticinium of Constans* is simply a later work, part of a later world in which the Antichrist and Son of Perdition were synonymous.

[168] Sackur (n. 44 above) 186.

[169] For the rank in late antiquity, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: 284–602,* vol. 1 (Baltimore 1964) 528–530.

[170] See, for example, the discussion of such titulature in an ecclesiastic context in Frank D. Gilliard, "Senatorial Bishops in the Fourth Century," *The Harvard Theological Review* 77.2 (April 1984) 153–175, esp. 163–167.

[171] Sackur (n. 44 above) 185: *Omnes paganos ad babtismum convocabit et per omnia templa crux Iesu Christi erigetur. Tunc namque preveniet Egiptus et Etiopia manus eius dare Dei.*

both works.[172] Bernard McGinn sees the shared use of this biblical allusion as proof that at least part of the Last Emperor story in the *Vaticinium of Constans* was indeed an interpolation inspired by Pseudo-Methodius.[173]

In contrast, Möhring and Shoemaker have argued that the use of the Psalm verse fits much better in the context of the fourth century, when Ethiopia was being converted to Christianity and would for the first time "stretch its hands out to God." They show that Eusebius also used this same verse when describing the conversion of Ethiopia, and so its use in the *Vaticinium of Contans* supposedly fits a fourth-century context. They assert that Pseudo-Methodius, dependent on the tradition found in the *Vaticinium of Constans*, reused this verse to fit his own meaning.[174] As proof of this, Shoemaker argues that Pseudo-Methodius's attempt to show that the Greeks and Romans are descended from the Ethiopians, and thus that the final King of the Greeks will be part Ethiopian, reveals that his "interpretation is so awkward, so forced, that one would imagine that the author had inherited a tradition already linking this verse with the Last Emperor's appearance, thus requiring him to rethink the verse's eschatological meaning."[175]

On the contrary, a close understanding of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* reveals that the interpretation of the verse there is not forced, but in fact fits much better with the author's intentions. In Syriac, because of linguistic ambiguity, Psalm 68.31 could be interpreted to mean either "Kush will stretch its hands to God," or "Kush will surrender [more literally 'hand over'] to God."[176] It was clearly often read as the latter, and as Pseudo-Methodius makes clear, the verse was popular in his own time and was being read as a prophecy by "brothers of the clergy," who believed that it meant Kush (Ethiopia) would surrender power to God at the end of time.[177] On the face of it, Pseudo-Methodius's Ethiopian ancestry for the Greeks and Romans may seem odd or even forced, but it was necessary not because he was adapting Psalm 68.31 to fit a new context, but because he needed to show that this prophecy being repeated by his

[172] Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 169, writes, "It remains puzzling why the Latin version of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* and the Pseudo-Methodian tradition agreed in connecting this verse with the Last Emperor but disagreed in the activity concerned."

[173] McGinn, *Visions of the End* (n. 15 above) 294 n. 7.

[174] Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser* (n. 7 above) 42–44; Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 233, 236–238. In addition, Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 167–169, similarly saw the verse as fitting a fourth-century context in which Ethiopia represented a pagan land still open to conversion, though this was before he changed his mind to favor a later date for the *Vaticinium of Constans*.

[175] Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor" (n. 12 above) 237.

[176] See Witakowski (n. 28 above) 39–40; Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic* (n. 4 above) 181: Psalm 68.31 is actually an obscure line, and in the original Masoretic Hebrew text translates closer to "Kush will hasten its hands to God," with the Hebrew verb *tārīṣ* (תָּרִיץ) ("to bring something quickly") providing the source of the confusion. In the Septuagint, *tārīṣ* (תָּרִיץ) is translated as προφθάσει (from προφθάνω, "to outrun," or "anticipate"), making the line Αἰθιοπία προφθάσει χεῖρα αὐτῆς τῷ Θεῷ slightly ambiguous. In the Syriac *Peshitta*, which Pseudo-Methodius used, the line is rendered as *kūš tašlem 'īdhā l-'alāhā* (ܟܘܫ ܢܫܠܡ ܐܝܕܗ ܠܐܠܗܐ), wherein the Syriac phrase "to extend one's hands" (ܢܫܠܡ ܐܝܕܗ, *Ašlem 'īdhā*) takes on a new meaning. It is a Syriac idiom which means 'to hand over the power, to yield, to surrender,' giving the verse a new meaning that it lacks in any other version of the Bible. See also Bonura (n. 13 above) 511–514.

[177] Pseudo-Methodius 9.7, ed. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above): 19 (Syriac), 31 (German trans.).

"brothers of the clergy" applied to the Greeks/Romans—that they would be the final empire that surrendered power to God.

Moreover, because of this unique Syriac translation, Pseudo-Methodius was able to read the Psalm verse in connection with 1 Cor. 15.24: "Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power." While in its biblical context this verse refers to Christ, Pseudo-Methodius clearly read "hands over the kingdom to God the Father" (*mašlem malkūtā l-'alāhā 'abbā*, ܡܫܠܡ ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܐܒܐ) here in connection with Psalm 68.31, "Kush will hand over to God" (*kūš tašlem 'īdhā l-'alāhā*, ܟܘܫ ܬܫܠܡ ܐܝܕܗ ܠܐܠܗܐ).[178]

Pseudo-Methodius combines Psalm 68.31 with 1 Cor. 15.24 to provide the prophecy which he argues that the Last Emperor will fulfill. It is the scriptural basis for the Last Emperor's surrender of his crown to God. Psalm 68.31 plays a crucial role for Pseudo-Methodius, and therefore it seems most likely that his was the original work connecting the verse to the Last Emperor, not the *Vaticinium of Constans.* Western medieval interpreters of Pseudo-Methodius were simply puzzled by the connection.[179]

Thus, the position of Möhring and Shoemaker—that the verse was used in a fourth-century *Vaticinium of Constans*, chosen for its eschatological relevance concerning what would happen to Egypt and Ethiopia under the Last Emperor's rule, and that Pseudo-Methodius then by a stroke of luck and coincidence discovered that the Psalm in the *Vaticinium* fit with his Syriac reading of 1 Cor. 15.24 and allowed him to use the verse in a completely different context to refer to how the Last Emperor will surrender to God—seems extremely unlikely. Rather, since Pseudo-Methodius's use of the verse comes from a very real idiosyncratic translation in the Peshitta, it seems much more probable that the *Vaticinium of Constans* must have taken the reference from Pseudo-Methodius. The author of the *Vaticinium of Constans* probably believed the verse important to the description of the Last Emperor, since it is referenced numerous times in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. But the author of the *Vaticinium of Constans* had no knowledge of the verse's original context, and so had

[178] Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic* (n. 4 above) 181.

[179] It is clear that the medieval translators of Pseudo-Methodius did not understand the Syriac idiom connecting the raising of hands to the act of surrender, and even the original Greek translator of Pseudo-Methodius seems to have been confused as to the meaning of the Psalm verse as Pseudo-Methodius used it (a fact which fits well with Alexander's hypothesis in *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (no. 4 above) 59–60, that this translator was a native speaker of Greek, not Syriac). Apparently, the Greek translator had trouble distinguishing when Pseudo-Methodius meant "surrender to God" and when he meant "stretch/hasten hands." Evidence of this can be found in chapter 10.3 of Pseudo-Methodius; for the original Syriac, see Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above) 21 (Syriac), 36 (German trans.); for the Greek translation, see Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 130: the original Syriac uses 1 Cor. 15.24 to conclude that "when the Son of Perdition is revealed, there will remain no sovereignty or power in the whole world, except the kingdom of the Greeks, which will surrender to God." While the Syriac makes no mention of Psalm 68.31 here, the Greek translator apparently thought it was another reference to that verse, and mistranslated "surrender to God" as "hasten its hands" (thus *malkūtā d-yawanāyē dāhā mašlema idē l-'alāhā*—not a reference to Psalm 68:31—is replaced in the Greek translation of Pseudo-Methodius with the Septuagint version of the Psalm, προφθάσει χεῖρα αὐτῆς τῷ θεῷ). It is thus likely that later western readers of Pseudo-Methodius, unfamiliar with Syriac, would have been even more confused by Pseudo-Methodius's connection of Psalm 68.31 and 1 Cor. 15.24.

to force the verse to fit rather artificially into the text, changing it to refer to the impact of the Last Emperor's conquests on Egypt and Ethiopia.[180]

A Syriac *Vaticinium*?

The Last Emperor tradition, in both the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and in the *Vaticinium of Constans,* was without doubt heavily influenced by ideas from Syriac literature and Syriac understanding of scripture. It would seem necessary to conclude that the *Vaticinium of Constans* was influenced by—and thus postdates—the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. However, one last attempt has been made to try to hold out the possibility that the *Vaticinium of Constans* was composed in some form before the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, and thus represents an earlier, independent tradition about the Last Emperor. As mentioned above, Potestà, who realized many of the problems I have discussed, offered the solution that the *Vaticinium of Constans* was actually originally a Syriac text and that internal evidence suggests it was written in the mid-seventh century. This would allow for a Last Emperor tradition that predates the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* while at the same time acknowledging and explaining the clear Syriac influence on the legend.

Potestà proposes that the *Vaticinium* was a sort of update of the *Alexander Legend*: he claims that the lost Syriac *Vaticinium of Constans* was a pro-Chalcedonian apocalypse written during the mid-seventh-century reign of Constans II to glorify him as a new Alexander (an attempt, supposedly, to improve his standing among Miaphysites) and to assure readers of Constans's future victory over the Arabs. According to Potestà, this hypothetical *Vaticinium* was used as a source by Pseudo-Methodius before being translated into Greek and Latin and making its way into the *Tiburtine Sibyl*.[181] Worryingly, Potestà's hypothetical Syriac *Vaticinium* has already taken on a life of its own, with some scholars already discussing this work as if its existence were certain.[182]

Nonetheless, the problem with Potestà's theory of a Syriac *Vaticinium* is that there is absolutely no evidence that such a work ever existed. It is purely speculation. And there are some major reasons to doubt such a Syriac original *Vaticinium* ever did exist. These include:

1. There are no linguistic indications that the *Vaticinium* originated in Syriac, as opposed to the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, for which such indications are abundant.[183]

[180] In fact, the *Tiburtine Sibyl* has to play with the wording of the verse to make it fit the context. Although the Latin Vulgate has *Venient legati ex Aegypto, Aethiopia praeveniet manus eius Deo,* and the Latin translation of Pseudo-Methodius uses the exact same wording—see Aerts and Kortekaas (n. 40 above) 94—in the *Tiburtine Sibyl,* Sackur (n. 44 above) 185, it is rendered as *Tunc namque preveniet Egiptus et Etiopia manus eius dare Dei*.

[181] See especially Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 279–280.

[182] See, for example, Palmer (n. 43 above) 112 n. 23. Potestà, naturally, treats the existence of a Syriac *Vaticinium* as fact throughout his *L'ultimo messia* (n. 111 above).

[183] Even Sackur (n. 44 above) 55, working before the Syriac version of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was found and under the impression that the work originated in Greek, still had to speculate that the author was a Syrian (albeit one writing in Greek) based on the clear Syriac literary and linguistic influence on that work.

2. For the *Vaticinium of Constans* to have originated in Syriac but survive only in Latin as the last part of the eleventh-century *Tiburtine Sibyl*, it would have to had been translated sometime between the seventh and eleventh centuries either directly into Latin or through a lost Greek intermediary. Such translations, however, are extremely rare.[184] Since we actually have hard evidence that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was translated into Greek and Latin, and was widely read in these languages, it is a much simpler explanation that the *Vaticinium* originated in Latin and was based on Pseudo-Methodius and not this phantom source.

3. There is clear influence from the Book of Revelation on the *Vaticinium of Constans*. For example, the *Vaticinium of Constans* has Enoch and Elijah return to fight the Son of Perdition, following the tradition that they will be the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11. The tradition that Enoch and Elijah would return just before the end of the world probably originated in late antique Judaism, and it is attested in a number of early Christian works in Latin, Greek, and Syriac, so it is not necessarily drawn directly from the Book of Revelation;[185] however, the version of the story of the return of Enoch and Elijah in the *Vaticinium of Constans* includes the detail, specifically from the Book of Revelation, that the witnesses will be killed and then rise again after three days.[186] The *Vaticinium* also mentions that the armies of Gog and Magog will be as numerous as the sand in the sea (*quorum numerus sicut est arena maris*). This line comes directly from a reference to Gog and Magog in Revelation 20.7.[187] The Book of Revelation is not part of the Syriac New Testament, and so Syriac apocalyptic works virtually never use it. This would seem to suggest that the *Vaticinium of Constans* was not produced in a Syriac environment.[188]

4. Finally, if one accepts Potestà's theory, the shared use of Psalm 68.31 in the *Vaticinium* and in Pseudo-Methodius again causes problems. The *Vaticinium* seems to have no understanding that this verse, in Syriac, can mean that Ethiopia will surrender

[184] While the translation of Greek texts into Syriac was quite common, the translation of Syriac texts into Greek was much rarer. As Sebastian Brock points out in "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam" (n. 23 above) 19–20, no other Syriac text of the early Islamic period other than the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was translated into Greek, not to mention Latin. The idea that the hypothetical Syriac *Vaticinium of Constans* followed this same route of transmission is hard to believe.

[185] See Richard Bauckham, "The Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian?" *Journal of Biblical Studies* 95.3 (1976) 447–458; Bauckham includes an extensive list of late antique and early medieval works that contain the tradition, as well as a chart illustrating which work contains which elements, on ibid. 447–449.

[186] Revelation 11.11; Sackur (n. 44 above): *Helias et Enoch ad annuntiandum Domini adventum et Antichristus occidet eos, et post dies tres a Domino resuscitabuntur.* The *Oracle of Baalbek* and the *Edessene Apocalypse* both include the return of Enoch and Elijah, but tellingly they do not include the resurrection after three days, since they are not dependent on the Book of Revelation.

[187] Sackur (n. 44 above) 186. Significantly, this phrase in the *Vaticinium* (*quorum numerus sicut est [h]arena maris*) is line-for-line the same as from the translation of Revelation in the Vulgate Bible. While this could possibly have been interpolated, it is more likely that it is a further indication that the *Vaticinium* was composed in Latin.

[188] These references to the Book of Revelation in the *Vaticinium of Constans* could be later interpolations, just as Enoch and Elijah were added to the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* by its Greek translator. But in this case these are such small asides that there is no obvious reason to interpolate them. Also, if they were interpolations, it would once again this suggests a parallel development so close to that of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* that it would again be much simpler and more convincing to suspect that the *Vaticinium of Constans* was simply the work of a Latin author familiar with the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.

to God. Its use in the Last Emperor tradition is therefore best explained as originating in Pseudo-Methodius's complex understanding of the Last Emperor's basis in scripture.[189]

In the end, scholarly research cannot depend on the assumed existence of hypothetical texts, especially when such a text is not necessary for tracing the connection between two extant works. There is nothing that Pseudo-Methodius would need to take from this proposed Syriac *Vaticinium of Constans* that it could not be taken from any of its known Syriac sources.[190] In the end, no explanation or theory can convincingly place a tradition of a Last Emperor surrendering earthly power in Jerusalem prior to the composition of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.

IV. A Context for the *Vaticinium of Constans*

The arguments asserting that a version of the Last Emperor legend must have existed before the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*—representing an earlier tradition evidenced by internal aspects of the *Vaticinium of Constans*—are thus unpersuasive. The views of Shoemaker, Potestà, Möhring, and their predecessors have largely stood, however, because no one has offered a compelling alternative explanation for the composition of the *Vaticinium of Constans*. If the *Vaticinium* was not composed in the fourth century (nor in the mid-seventh century in Syriac), when and why was it composed? And why does it contain traditions about the Last Emperor that differ from those of Pseudo-Methodius?

I believe the most likely time of the composition of the *Vaticinium of Constans* is around the year 1000. All surviving versions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* contain both the first king-list with its termination at the reign of Otto III, as well as the *Vaticinium of Constans*. At the same time, they all share a common source, which is likely the lost version 1 (Ottonian Sibyl). Thus it is likely that version 1, ca. 1000, contained both the

[189] Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 283, and idem. *L'ultimo messia* (n. 111 above) 26–27, claims that the Psalm was used in the *Vaticinium* to refer to the predicted conversion of Egypt and Ethiopia, not from paganism as Möhring and Shoemaker contend, but from Miaphyistism to Chalcedonian Christianity. In Potestà's opinion, the *Vaticinium of Constans* mentions that Egypt and Ethiopia will stretch out their hands in prayer because those were Miaphysite-dominated lands, and so the Last Emperor would convert them Chalcedonian Christianity and put to death all who denied the saving nature of the cross (thus, *qui vero cruce Iesu Christi non adoraverit gladio punietur*). This is still not convincing. Miaphysites did worship the cross, unlike pagans or "pagan" Muslims, and there would have been no real justification or precedent to call Miaphysites "pagans"; nor is there any reference to Miaphysitism, or any Christian heresy, in the *Vaticinium*. Not to mention, if the author of the *Vaticinium* lumps Egypt in with Ethiopia in the passage, why is there no reference to Syria, home of the Miaphysite Jacobite Church? More significantly, the same reliance on coincidence that hampers Möhring's theory also hampers Potestà's: the reading of Psalm 68.31 in conjunction with 1 Cor. 15.24 by Pseudo-Methodius provides the biblical basis for the surrender of power by the Last Emperor. If this verse was originally used in an earlier *Vaticinium* to refer to Miaphyistes, it would require an unlikely stroke of luck that Pseudo-Methodius would happen to be able to find the verse in the *Vaticinium* and realize that he could read it in connection with 1 Cor. 15:24 and use it as a basis for the Last Emperor.

[190] For example, Pseudo-Methodius drew directly from the *Alexander Legend* and Pseudo-Ephraem for the names of the twenty-two nations of Gog and Magog; see Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (n. 4 above) 24 n. 8.10.1. Since the *Vaticinium of Constans* does not mention the names of the kingdoms, Pseudo-Methodius must have been taking them from these other sources. What, then, could Pseudo-Methodius have derived from this hypothetical *Vaticinium of Constans* that it could not have taken directly from another source?

first king-list and the *Vaticinium*. We know that the Ottonian material would have been composed in the reign of Otto III (996–1002), or very immediately after.[191] This would suggest that the redactor who composed the Ottonian material may have also composed the *Vaticinium of Constans* around the year 1000.

In addition, I believe the internal evidence, so often marshaled to support a late antique origin of the *Vaticinium*, actually also suggests a time of composition around the year 1000. For example, King Constans's title *rex Grecorum,* which a sentence later become *rex Grecorum et Romanorum,* would have been anachronistic in the fourth century.[192] It sounds like a direct borrowing from the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (*rex Gregorum, sive Romanorum*), a survival from the original Syriac where Romans and Greeks are synonymous. In a Latin work it would have taken on a real meaning in the Middle Ages, when the title of *rex Romanorum* was established for German emperors (in the eleventh century, in fact), and the emperors in Constantinople were dismissed as merely "Kings of the Greeks."[193] There is a distinctly medieval ring to these lines.

In addition, the detail, unique to the *Vaticinium of Constans*, that the Antichrist would be killed by the archangel Michael seems to reflect the enormous popularity of Michael in the Latin Christendom, Byzantium, and the kingdoms of its commonwealth, such as Bulgaria, from the late tenth through eleventh century, and Michael's intergration in this period into apocalyptic literature.[194] Indeed, to better understand some of the internal evidence we must look to Byzantium.

[191] Since the manuscripts of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* predict a reign of either four or five years for Otto III, one would expect that the original of this prophecy was composed sometime before the fourth or fifth year of Otto's reign, after which the prediction would be invalidated. This would give a date of composition sometime between 996 and 1000. However, as Roach, "The Legacy of a Late Antique Prophecy" (n. 78 above) 4–5, points out, the prophecy could have been composed after Otto's death, with the short reign, though numerically inaccurate, suggestive of his premature death. Still, Roach plausibly argues that if it were composed after Otto's death, it must have been very soon after.

[192] Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of* Constans" (n. 53 above) 278, rightly points this out. Less plausibly, however, he argues in ibid. and in "*L'ultimo messia* (n. 111 above) 24–25, that the title *rex Grecorum et Romanorum* points to a seventh-century origin, when "the adoption of the title 'king' by an emperor took place in the time and by the decision of Heraclius after his triumph over the Persians." Indeed, Heraclius took the title βασιλεύς, which Potestà views as the equivalent of the Latin *rex.* However, the nature of the adoption of this title by Heraclius is a matter of debate among scholars—see Evangelos Chrysos, "The Title Βασιλεύς in Early Byzantine International Relations," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 32 (1978) esp. 31–34—and at most it was a change that affected protocols of official imperial documents, not a widespread practical change in how people viewed the monarch. Potestà's argument is undermined by the fact that the many Greek sources from before the time of Heraclius (including the *Oracle of Baalbek*) regularly referred to all the Roman emperors as βασιλεύς.

[193] Liutprand of Cremona, for example, during his 963 embassy to Constantinople dismissively calls the Byzantine emperor "King of the Greeks" in his report to Otto I, and proceeds to heap abuse upon the eastern emperor; see *Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona,* ed. Joseph Becker (Hannover 1915) 197: *Grecorum rex crinitus, tunicatus, manicatus, teristratus, mendax, dolosus, immisericors, vulpinus, superbus, falso humilis, parcus, cupidus, allio, cepe et porris vescens, balnea bibens.*

[194] Daniel F. Callahan, "The Cult of St. Michael the Archangel and the 'Terrors of the Year 1000,'" *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Colin Gow, and David C. Van Meter (Oxford 2003) 181–204; Tsvetelin Stepanov, "From 'Steppe' to Christian Empire and Back: Bulgaria between 800 and 1100," *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages: Avars, Bulgars, Khazars and Cumann,* ed. Florin Curta (Leiden 2007) 366; Glenn Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley 2001) 157–193.

Byzantine Influence on the *Vaticinium*

By the year 1000, a complex mythology about the Last Emperor had already developed in the Byzantine world. This Byzantine tradition about the Last Emperor is evidenced in a wide array of prophetic works, such as the "Visions of Daniel" texts which, in the 960s, Liutprand of Cremona reported were popular in Constantinople.[195] Several such "Visions of Daniel" texts—prophecies ascribed to the Old Testament prophet Daniel, but usually touching on contemporary Byzantine political concerns—survive in Greek manuscripts, usually alongside the Greek *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* and these give accounts of the coming of the Last Emperor lifted almost directly from Pseudo-Methodius, but embellished with new narrative elements.[196] If

[195] Liutprand of Cremona, in his *Relatio de legatione*, his report on his embassy to Constantinople, ed. Becker (n. 193 above) 195, states that "the Greeks and the Saracens have books that they call ὁράσεις, or visions, of Daniel, and I call Sibylline books," and adds that these foretold such things as the length of the rule of certain emperors and that they predict military success against the Arabs (*Habent Greci et Saraceni libros, quos ὁράσεις sive visiones Danielis vocant, ego autem Sibyllanos, in quibus scriptum reperitur, quot annis imperator quisque vivat; quae sint futura eo imperitante tempora, pax an simultas, secundae Saracenorum res an adversae*).

[196] Here I will focus on five of these so-called "Visions of Daniel" texts. There are some difficulties involved in their use, as they have been edited and discussed in secondary literature under different names, and their dates and relationship to one another have not been fully worked out in modern scholarship. The first text I will use here is called alternately the *Vision of Daniel on the Last Times* or, after its incipit, *Daniel καὶ ἔσται.* It has been edited, with a German translation, in Hans Schmoldt, "Die Schrift 'Vom jungen Daniel' und 'Daniels letzte Vision'" (Ph.D. diss., University of Hamburg 1972) 202–219; it is discussed in great detail in Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 77–95; a more recent discussion of this text can be found in Lorenzo DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature* (Leiden 2005) 158–162. Paul Alexander has convincingly shown that this work attempts to justify Basil I's murder of Michael III, and thus can probably be dated to the late 860s; Kraft (n. 15 above) 58 agrees with this dating. The second "Visions of Daniel" work I will be using is generally called *The Vision of Daniel on the Future of the Seven-Hilled City,* or *The Seven-Hilled Daniel,* and has been edited by Schmoldt, 190–199. DiTommaso, 130, dates this work to the eighth or ninth century, and Kraft, 61, dates to the late ninth century. The next "Visions of Daniel" work is *Diegesis Danielis,* preserved in two manuscripts, one of which actually claims that the author is Methodius, linking it explicitly with the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. It has been edited by Klaus Berger in *Die griechische Daniel-Diegese: eine altkirchliche Apokalypse: Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Leiden 1976) 12–23. Berger, ibid. 36, dates the work to the year 801–802, in the reign of Empress Irene, on account of a mention of the transfer of *imperium* from east to west; Cyril Mango, "The Life of Saint Andrew the Fool Reconsidered," *Rivista di studi bizantini e slavi* 2 (1982) 310–313, and Hoyland, *Seeing Islam* (n. 21 above) 297–299, date it instead to around the time of the Arab siege of Constantinople in 717–718; DiTommaso 135–139, raises problems with both these dating theories, but ultimately suggests that it was composed in the late eighth century. Another "Visions of Daniel" text is the so-called "Discourses of John Chrysostom Concerning the Vision of Daniel," or "Pseudo-Chrysostom," which lifts directly from many sections of Pseudo-Methodius, not just the abdication of the Last Emperor. It has been edited by Schmoldt, 220–237. It is discussed by Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition,* 72–77; DiTommaso, 155–158; and Kraft, 55–57. It likely dates to the ninth century, as it is deeply concerned with the Arab invasion of Sicily. Its content is close enough to that of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* that of the five manuscripts in which it is preserved, in one it is attributed to Methodius, for which see François Halkin, *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, vol. 3 (Brussels 1957) no. 1874m; while another contains a marginal note that reads: "This is not by Chrysostom but by Methodius!" (οὐκ εἰσὶ τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου ἀλλὰ τοῦ ΜΕΘΟΔΙΟΥ); see E. Feron, F. Battaglini, and Giuseppe Cozza-Luzi, *Codices manuscripti graeci ottoboniani Bibliothecae Vaticanae descripti praeside Alphonso cardinali Capecelatro* (Rome 1893) 229–232. The latest of the "Visions of Daniel" works I will refer to, known as *The Last Vision of the Prophet Daniel,* likely dates to after the period under discussion here, but it is still valuable in that it likely preserves traditions not recorded in the other "Visions of Daniel" A critical edition can be found in Schmoldt 122–145; described in detail by DiTommaso 186–192, who suggests that it dates to the eleventh or twelfth century; while Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser* (n. 7 above) 311, believes that it can be dated to the ninth century, Wortley (n. 102 above) 8–9 believes *The Last Vision* as we possess it can be dated to the thirteenth

we suppose that the author of the *Vaticinium of Constans* was influenced by Byzantine traditions about the Last Emperor, the differences in the depiction of the Last Emperor in the *Vaticinium* from that of Pseudo-Methodius suddenly stand out not as evidence of an earlier, late-antique tradition, but of influence from the more complex tradition that had been evolving in Byzantium since the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* first appeared in Greek translation in the early eighth century.

Let us return to the four major differences between the Last Emperor in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and in the *Vaticinium of Constans* pointed out by McGinn: 1) the inclusion of the name Constans and his physical description 2) the length of his reign 3) the idea that he defeats Gog and Magog, and 4) different descriptions of the Last Emperor's regalia, i.e., his crown. All of these can be accounted for by the theory that the Last Emperor in the *Vaticinium of Constans* derived from the well-developed Byzantine tradition about the Last Emperor (excluding the difference regarding Gog and Magog, which I believe has been thoroughly explained above).

First let us deal with the name and physical description for the Last Emperor. Byzantine apocalyptic texts, such as the "Visions of Daniel" works, began sometimes to refer to the Last Emperor by a name, or else, as in many manuscripts of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, these Byzantine texts withheld his name but referred to him by an initial, such as *kappa*.[197] In addition, by the ninth century Byzantine apocalypses began in some cases to physically describe the Last Emperor, often in terms remarkably similar to the description in the *Vaticinium of Constans,* making general statements about his face and stature.[198] An interest in the Last Emperor's appearance

century, though it is likely "an amended version of a document which existed in the ninth century," on which point Kraft 63–64 agrees.

[197] Kraft (n. 15 above) 70–72. In *Diegesis Danielis*, the Last Emperor has the initial *kappa* and the name of a beast; in Pseudo-Chrysostom and *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* he has the initial *lambda*, and in the Seven-Hilled Daniel 2.5, Schmoldt (n. 196 above) 194, he is called a "poor lion" named John (ὁ λέων πτωχὸς…ὀνόματι Ἰωάννης). In all these cases, it is clear that the name of the Last Emperor is influenced by the Emperor Leo III, whose given name was Konon, and who led the Byzantines to victory in the great 717–718 Arab siege of Constantinople. The fact that these Byzantine apocalypses also include a foul woman, who appears to be based on the Empress Irene (r. 797–802), implies that the crucial period of development of these works, with their expanded information on the Last Emperor such as his name and description, was the time of the Isaurian Dynasty (717–802), and may have been tied up in the ideological conflict over Byzantine Iconoclasm. Thus, by the start of the eleventh century, it would be common for the last emperor to bear a name. It should be noted that in apocalyptic literature in Old Church Slavonic, which also imported the concept of the Last Emperor from the Byzantine tradition, a name for the Last Emperor—Michael—appears, even sometimes interpolated in the Slavonic translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*; this name may be derived from Byzantine Emperor Michael III (r. 842–867) or Bulgarian Khan Boris-Michael (r. 852–889); see A. A. Vasiliev, "Michael III in Apocryphal Literature," *Byzantina Metabyzantina* 1 (1946) 237–248; and Tăpkova-Zaimova and Miltenova (n. 97 above) 88–90.

[198] The *Vaticinium of Constans*, Sackur (n. 44 above) 185, describes the King Constans as "tall of stature, of handsome appearance with shining face, and well put together in all parts of his body" (*statura grandis, aspectu decorus, vultu splendidus atque per singular membrorum liniamenta decenter conpositus*). In the Byzantine work known as *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* 2.1–2, ed. Schmoldt (n. 196 above): 204 (Greek text), 205 (German trans.), the Last Emperor is described as "having signs inscribed upon his finger, his voice sweet, his nose crooked, and his stature short" (σημεῖα ἔχων τίτλωμα ἐπὶ τὸν δάκτυλον αὐτοῦ. ἡ λαλία αὐτοῦ ἡδεῖα, ἡ ῥὶς αὐτοῦ ἐπίκυφος, κολοβὸς τῇ στάσει); *The Last Vision of the Prophet Daniel* §47, in Schmoldt 132–135 (Greek with German translation), describes the Last Emperor as, "very just, merciful, wearing poor clothes and austere in appearance, yet in character mild and fully mature" (Πολιὸν δίκαιον ἐλεήμονα φορῶν πενιχρὰ τῇ ὄψει αὐστηρόν, τῇ δὲ γνώμῃ πραῦν, μεστὸν τῇ ἡλικίᾳ). Thus, these Byzantine apocalyptic texts

was a natural outgrowth of a Byzantine interest in physiognomy, inherited from Greek antiquity, and often applied to rulers.[199] It makes sense that the Byzantines would have wanted to know about the appearance of the Last Emperor, which had been left unstated in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. A work of unknown date that appears in post-Byzantine Greek manuscripts alongside "Visions of Daniel" texts and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, called the *Cento of the True Emperor*, attests to this physiognomic interest in the Last Emperor, and it records a mass of information about the Last Emperor culled from a wide variety of Byzantine apocalyptic works, many of which are probably now otherwise lost. It hints at the Last Emperor's name and contains many, often mutually contradictory, details about his appearance: at one point it says he will be short, at another it says he will be tall; he will be richly dressed, he will be humbly dressed, he will be naked; he will have black hair, he will have gray hair, he will be bald. It describes his hands and feet, and the placement of moles on his body— important details for physiognomy. All this attests to a robust and vaired tradition in Byzantium about the appearance of the Last Emperor. The *Cento* even includes a description very similar to the one in the *Vaticinium of Constans*: the emperor will be "having shining-red cheekbones, [he will be] lovely [and] tall."[200]

A Byzantine source might also explain the disparity in the length of the Last Emperor's reign. The *Vaticinium of Constans* gives King Constans a reign of 112 years (*ipius regnum C et XII annis terminabitur*);[201] this might be a scribal error that crept into a very early manuscript copy but which is actually meant to read twelve (12) years.[202] If so, this number would match the length of rule given to the Last Emperor in several of the Byzantine "Visions of Daniel" works, such as the so-called *Seven-Hilled Daniel*: "And after twelve years the [Last] emperor will go into Jerusalem, in order to hand over the imperial authority to God."[203]

portray the Last Emperor in humble terms almost opposite the description of King Constans, though it is noteworthy that their focus (on his appearance, his face, his stature) is almost exactly the same.

[199] Perhaps the most important figure in the Byzantine reception of the (pseudo-) science of physiognamy was Marcus Aurelius Polemon, who wrote a manual on the subject which is preserved in several late Byzantine manuscripts.

[200] Patrologia Graeca 107.1141–1150, with the line on 1145: ἐξερυθραίνων τὰ μήλα, χαρίεις, εὐμήκης. This edition is a reprint of Lambechius's 1655 edition, which he titled *Anonymous Paraphrase of the Oracles of Emperor Leo* (Ἀνωνύμου παράφρασις τῶν τοῦ βασιλέως Λέοντος χρησμῶν). Paul Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (n. 4 above) 103, describes the work and notes that Lambechius' title is misleading as it is a collection of material on the Last Emperor from a number of works, not just the *Oracles of Leo*. It was Alexander who gave the work the title *Cento of the True Emperor*. It has also been edited and translated, though on the basis of a single manuscript, in Walter Brokkaar et al., *Sapientissimi Imperatoris Leonis Oracula et Anonymi Narratio De Vero Imperatore (Amstelodamensis Graecus VI E 8): Text, Translation and Introduction* (Amsterdam 2002) 90–101. The *Cento of the True Emperor* appears with the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* in at least two manuscripts: Vienna Suppl. Gr. 172, and in Turino B.V.27, which was lost in a fire at the beginning of the twentieth century, but was fortunately catalogued in detail beforehand in Spyridon Lambros, "Τὸ ὑπ᾽ἀριθμὸν ΛΘ κατάλοιπον," *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 19 (1925) 116–124.

[201] Sackur (n. 44 above) 185.

[202] Samuel Krauss, in "Zur Erklärung der tiburtinischen Sibylle," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 10.1 (January 1901) 200–203, first suggested that this was simply a scribal error, and that the original author of the *Tiburtine Sibyl/Vaticinium of Constans* originally wrote or intended to write 12 years, with the C initial of the Last Emperor being mistaken by a later scribe as Roman numeral 100 and appended to the Roman numeral XII.

[203] *Seven-Hilled Daniel*, ed. Schmoldt (n. 196 above) 196: καὶ μετὰ χρόνους δώδεκα εἰς τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα ὁ βασιλεὺς εἰσέλθῃ, ἵνα παραδῷ[σῃ] τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ Θεῷ); *The Last Vision of the Prophet Daniel* 60–61,

Finally, if the author of the *Vaticinium of Constans* were deriving his information about the Last Emperor from the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition, it would even explain why the *Vaticinium* refers to the Last Emperor's crown as a *diadem:* as noted above, the Greek translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* refers to the Last Emperor's crown as a στέμμα, a word which translates into Latin more naturally as *diadem* than *corona,* and this word is used in nearly all Byzantines apocalyptic works to refer to the Last Emperor's crown—though one very popular tenth-century Byzantine apocalypse, the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* (Andrew the Holy Fool), actually calls the crown surrendered by the Last Emperor τὸ διάδημα.[204]

Thus, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* may not have been the direct source for the author of the *Vaticinium of Constans*, but rather influenced that author through an intermediary Byzantine apocalyptic work such as one of the "Visions of Daniel" texts. Unlike Potestà's hypothetical Syriac intermediary, we know these Byzantine texts existed, since we actually possess them in manuscripts. And unlike the theoretical Syriac *Vaticinium*, there is good reason to believe an Italian redactor would have had access to such Byzantine apocalyptic works. In Liutprand we even have a near-conemporary example of a Latin writer from Italy who knew Greek and had evidently read these works (albeit while visiting Constantinople). While no single extant Byzantine apocalyptic work contains all the elements included in the *Vaticinium of Constans,* the *Vaticinium* could have been a translation of a lost Greek apocalyptic work, or, much more likely, the redactor who added it to the *Tiburtine Sibyl* may have composed it on his own in Latin while borrowing here and there from the diverse and complex Byzantine Last Emperor tradition. A Byzantine influence seems all the more likely when one considers that it is fairly certain, based on the interest in Italian politics evidenced by the king-lists in the *Vaticinium of Constans*, that the redactor who added this material was from Italy, where Greek-Latin bilingualism was common.[205] Indeed, recent attempts to locate the place of redaction of version 1 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* have pointed to Greek-speaking southern Italy or else one of the Greek monasteries in Rome.[206]

ed. Schmoldt, 136: "And after him [the previous emperor] another [descending] from him will rule for twelve years; and foreseeing his own death he will go to Jerusalem in order to hand over his imperial authority to God" (καὶ μετ' αὐτὸν βασιλεύσει ἕτερος ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἔτη δώδεκα. καὶ οὗτος προϊδὼν τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ πορευθήσεται εἰς τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα, ἵνα παραδώσῃ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ τῷ Θεῷ). It should be noted that a number of Byzantine apocalypses alternatively give the Last Emperor a reign of thirty-two years.

[204] The *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 860C; ed. Lennart Reydén, "The Andreas Salos Apocalypse: Greek Text, Translation, and Commentary," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974) 206 (Greek), 219 (English trans.): Καὶ αὐτὸς γενόμενος ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐν τόπῳ οὗ ἔστησαν οἱ πόδες Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν οἰκείαις χερσὶν αὐτοῦ παραθήσει ἐκεῖ τὸ τίμιον ξύλον καὶ τὸ τῆς βασιλείας διάδημα. Mango, "The Life of Saint Andrew" (n. 197 above) 297–313, has suggested a late seventh-century date for the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse*, but his views have not been readily adopted, and Reydén much more convincingly dates the work to the 960s. It is perhaps worth mentioning that *The Last Vision of the Prophet Daniel* 26, in Schmoldt (n. 196 above) 128, also refers to an imperial crown as τὸ διάδημα, though not in the context of the Last Emperor's abdication in Jerusalem.

[205] For knowledge of Greek in Italy at this time, see Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages: From Jerome to Nicholas of Cusa,* trans. Jerold Frakes (Washington, D.C. 1988) 157–171.

[206] Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser* (n. 7 above) 37–39, has suggested that the author of the lost original version 1 of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* ca. 1000 may have been a Byzantine subject of southern Italy, writing to contest "Frankish" claims over Italy. Potestà, "The *Vaticinium of Constans*" (n. 53 above) 289, also contends that the author of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* was interested in "the hope of the revival of Byzantine power in Italy." In

The *Vaticinium* as Political Polemic?

While this theory of Byzantine influence on the *Vaticinium* cannot be definitively proven, it would be a much simpler and neater explanation for understanding the relationship between the *Vaticinium of Constans* and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.* There is no reason to doubt that the *Vaticinium of Constans* could have been written in the early eleventh century.

Indeed, the most recent scholarly work on the *Tiburtine Sibyl* has situated the composition of the lost version 1, the "Ottonian Sibyl," within the context of political opposition to Otto III.[207] This research has focused on the first king-list, with its starkly negative view of Otto, and not on the *Vaticinium of Constans*. However, if the *Vaticinium of Constans* were added to the *Tiburtine Sibyl* at the same time as the first king-list (ca. 1000), which is likely considering its presence in all surviving versions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, it might also fit into this anti-Ottonian context.

Otto III seems to have, as the scholar Simon MacLean has put it, "artfully played with eschatological symbolism to enhance his own imperial stature."[208] Matthew Gabriele has explored how this included conciously appropriating for himself the characteristics of the Last Emperor.[209] And indeed, Otto experienced opposition to his

response, Holdenried, "Many Hands" (n. 53 above) 38–39, has asserted that the redactor was from Rome, but probably operating in the Greek-speaking monastery of Ss. Alexius and Boniface. Building on Holdenried in an article in the next issue of the same journal, Levi Roach, "The Legacy of a Late Antique Prophecy" (n. 78 above) 1–33, suggested either Rome, Monte Cassino in the south, or Fruttuaria in Piedmont in the north as possible locations where the late antique prophecy was translated from Greek into Latin and expanded with the medieval material that transformed it into the *Tiburtine Sibyl*. In all but the possible case of Fruttuaria, these were places where Byzantine works would have been generally available.

[207] Holdenried, "Many Hands" (n. 53 above) 23–42; Roach, "The Legacy of a Late Antique Prophecy" (n. 78 above) 1–33.

[208] Simon MacLean, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World in Tenth-Century France: Adso's 'Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist' reconsidered," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire/ Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Gechiedenis* 86.3–4 (2008) 651. Likewise, Johannes Fried has opined: "No other German emperor of the Romans before him, nor anyone after him, including Frederick II, would avail himself of things millenarian in a comparable way." See Johannes Fried, "Awaiting the End of Time around the Year 1000," *The Apocalyptic Year 1000 Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Colin Gow, and David C. Van Meter (Oxford 2003) 41–42. In order to support this apocalyptic image of Otto III, Fried, and more recently Matthew Gabriele, "Otto III, Charlemagne, and Pentecost 1000 A.D.: A Reconsideration Using Diplomatic Evidence," *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York 2002) 119–122, discuss how Otto III's royal charters used unprecedented apocalyptic language. Finally, according to *Miracula S. Alexii*, ed. Georg H. Pertz, MGH (Hannover 1841) 619–620, at his coronation at Rome in 996 Otto III wore a pearl and gem-encrusted mantle (later donated to the monastery) upon which "the whole Apocalypse was marked out in gold" (*in quo omnis Apocalypsis erat auro insignita*). See also Levi Roach, "Otto III and the End of Time," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25 (2013) 75–102.

[209] Gabriele, "Otto III, Charlemagne, and Pentecost" (n. 208 above) 111–132. Otto opened up the tomb of Charlemagne and went inside on Pentecost of the year 1000, an act with strong apocalyptic resonances, especially when one realizes that Charlemagne was already closely associated with the Last Emperor legend. On the last point, see Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory* (n. 5 above) 107–128; idem. "Asleep at the Wheel? Apocalypticism, Messianism and Charlemagne's Passivity in the Oxford Chanson de Roland," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 43 (2003) 46–72. Otto certainly would have been aware of the Last Emperor tradition, if not from the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, from Adso's letter on the Antichrist, which was incidentally addressed to Otto's great aunt. A famous copy of Ados's letter was owned by Otto's chancellor, Heribert of Cologne. Nonetheless, I am hesitant about Gebriele's suggestion that Otto may have sincerely viewed himself as the fulfillment of the Last Emperor prophecy.

rule from Italian Greeks, the very group among which the author of the *Vaticinium of Constans* likely originated.[210]

As the half-Byzantine, half-Saxon who claimed the titled of Roman Emperor (and who, had he survived to 1028, would have become Byzantine Emperor through his marriage-alliance with Zoe Porphyrogenita), Otto III seemed to have had grand imperial ambitions. The *Vaticinium,* on the other hand, seems to predict a Last Emperor who would restore Byzantine rule over Italy (not so outlandish a claim in the time of Basil II), reclaim the title *rex Romanorum*, and unite eastern and western Christendom under a universal empire, a sort of inverted vision of Otto III's ambitions.[211]

The concept of the *Vaticinium* as a response to Otto III remains to be demonstrated and would require a fuller analysis of Otto's imperial claims beyond the scope of this article, but it is a promising area for further research. Whatever the case, the exact message and goal intended by the redactor behind the *Vaticinium of Constans* will necessarily probably remain obscure. Nonetheless, the medieval imperial titulature, the role of archangel Michael, and the apparent influence from middle-Byzantine apocalyptic literature all contradict a late antique origin. Rather than an expression of hope for liberation by a resurrected Constans I, son of Constantine the Great (as Sackur, Möhring, and Shoemaker have suggested), or an outburst of apocalyptic fear after the Battle of Adrianople in 378 (as Paul Alexander has suggested), or as eschatological propaganda for Constans II (as Potestà has asserted), the *Vaticinium of Constans* fits very well in the context of the early eleventh century, and does not necessitate complex attempts to date it to these earlier periods.

[210] The Southern Italian Greek John Philagathos was chaplain of Otto's Byzantine mother Theophanu and godfather and tutor to Otto, but in 997 he was declared pope (Antipope John XVI) in a rebellion orchastrated by memebers of the Roman nobility with the coordination of Byzantine emperor Basil II. Otto captured John, had his fingers broken, blinded him, cut off his ears and nose, and cut out his tongue. Nilus of Rossano, the founder of the monastery of Grottaferata, denounced Otto for this harshness and convinced him to make a penitential pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Michael on Mount Gargano, and this act of political defiance toward Otto was instrumental in Nilus' eventual sainthood; see *Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου Πατρός ἡμών Νείλου τοῦ Νέου*, ed. P. Germano Giovanelli (Grottaferrata 1972); Roach, "The Legacy of a Late Antique Prophecy" (n. 78 above) 6–7. It is tempting to speculate that the author of the *Vaticinium* came from one of the Italo-Byzantine communities which supported John Philagathos or who were later enraged at Otto's treatment of the old priest and for whom Nilus was speaking. This point of view may also explain the mysterious name of the Last Emperor in the *Vaticinium of Constans*. Perhaps the name "Constans" was indeed chosen to invoke Constans II, who fought in southern Italy and died in Sicily, but as a memory three and a half centuries later, in a time when the Byzantines continued to fight for control of Italy.

[211] The *Vaticinium of Constans* predicts that the Last Emperor would "devastate the islands and cities of the pagans," which, as we have seen, may refer to the Arabs on Sicily or the pagan Slavs on the Elbe, both of which were problems inherited by Otto III from his father and which he proved incapable of effectively dealing with. And instead of this victorious final ruler being a western king, the *Vaticinium* predicts that the Last Emperor would be a "king of the Greeks whose name is Constans who will become king of the Greeks and Romans" (*rex Grecorum, cuius nomen Constans, et ipse erit rex Romanorum et Grecorum*). This is switched in later redactions, such as Version 4, McGinn, "Oracular Transformations" (n. 80 above) 643, where the Last Emperor "will be king of the Romans, who will have the name Constans in Greek and in Latin … and he will become king of the Greeks (*erit rex Romanorum, qui nomen habebit Constans in greco et in latino… et fiet rex Grecorum*), and these may thus represent an inversion of the pro-Byzantine prophecy.

V. Conclusions

In sum, the evidence indicates that the *Vaticinium of Constans* was almost certainly borrowing from the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* for its concept of the Last Emperor, though not necessarily directly and perhaps through the intermediary of a Byzantine Last Emperor account such as a "Visions of Daniel" work.

Perhaps at this point it is still possible for critics of my theory to claim that the *Vaticinium* could have derived something of its vision of the Last Emperor from a lost source predating Pseudo-Methodius. It is always possible to hypothesize missing links. But what could the *Vaticinium of Constans* have taken from such a source? The specific name Constans, certainly, for despite numerous theories its exact origin and significance remains mysterious; but what else of consequence to the Last Emperor tradition? The surrender of power by the Last Emperor derives from a Syriac understanding of scripture and sources that were available only from the sixth century. Perhaps the Last Emperor's entry into Jerusalem—except there is no meaningful reason for him to go there unless to surrender his power, and the choice of Jerusalem as the place of the *katechon* is again based on a Syriac understanding of scripture and Syriac sources from the sixth century and later. Perhaps the *Vaticinium* preserves some earlier version of a Last Emperor who would violently wipe out the pagans who clung to the traditional cults of the Greco-Roman world. Such a concept, however, would have been simply out of place in the culture of late antiquity, and better explanations exist for the *Vaticinium*'s references to pagans. The emergence of a Last Emperor tradition makes much better sense as a product of Christian concerns after the rise of Islam, when it really did seem that the faith needed a military deliverer to fight the forces of Islam, the first true existential threat to Christian domination. It was the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* that provided the first major Christian apocalyptic response to that threat.

Finally, if there existed a Last Emperor tradition in late antiquity prior to the *Apoc-Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and it exerted any influence, why do we hear nothing of it in any source? Arguments from silence are always weak, but it is worth noting that there is no mention of a Last Emperor tradtion in imperial panegyrics. For all of Heraclius' supposed parallels there is no hint of knowledge of the Last Emperor tradition in sources contemporary with his reign, not even George of Pisidia's celebration of Heraclius' entry into Jerusalem. No Last Emperor story is mentioned by Augustine in Book 20 of his *City of God*, or other late antique writers who likewise commented upon (if only to dismiss) popular traditions which contemporaries held about what would happen in the events leading up to the apocalypse (such as the return of Nero). Nor is it mentioned in the numerous commentaries on books of the Bible, not even those that deal with Jerusalem, Gog and Magog, the Antichrist, and the *katechon*. Bede, writing about the end of the world in 725 (around the time of the translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* into Latin, and so one of the last medieval Christians writing in an atmosphere free of the influence of that work)

knows nothing of a Last Emperor despite drawing on numerous apocalyptic traditions.[212] On the other hand, after the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* began to circulate, the number of references to the Last Emperor in medieval works are too numerous to count, in everything from letters to commentaries to chronicles.

There is but one satisfying explanation of the origin of the Last Emperor *topos*: it must have originated in the work of Pseudo-Methodius, based on Syriac literary themes and a unique Syriac reading of scripture (specifically Psalm 68.31 with 1 Cor. 15.24 and 2 Thessalonians 2.6–7). The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was translated into Greek and Latin, and through its widespread popularity the Last Emperor became a common theme in medieval apocalypticism. Since the earliest of the four versions of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* in Latin was composed around the year 1000, and this is the earliest Tiburtine text that must have included the Last Emperor prophecy, the simplest and best explanation is that this is the earliest version containing the Last Emperor. Whatever differences exist between this version of the Last Emperor and that of Pseudo-Methodius need not imply that it is dependent on some otherwise unattested late antique tradition, but more likely through influence from contemporary Byzantine depictions of the Last Emperor.

Thus, the concept of the Last Emperor cannot have factored into the triumphant symbolism exhibited by Heraclius after his victory over the Persians; and whatever the extent of Christian influence on the formation of Islamic eschatological theology, scholars cannot plausibly continue to claim that the Last Emperor legend was already an established belief in the time of Muhammad. The Last Emperor tradition was a reaction to, not a motivating influence upon, the Islamic conquests.

On the other hand, the realization that the Last Emperor tradition originated in Syriac apocalyptic literature of the late seventh century need not simply invalidate various historical theories, for it can also tell us a great deal. It reveals the impact of Islamic conquests on late antique concepts of rulership, and confirms the idea that the integration of the office of emperor into Christian theology was a slow process, not one that happened instanteously in the fourth century.

Finally, by recognizing the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* as the source of the Last Emperor tradition, one of the most enduring popular legends of pre-modern Christendom, we can better appreciate the role of Syriac literature in a larger, medieval Christian history. Pseudo-Methodius's work touched a nerve, and as it circulated around Christendom its unique concept of a Last Emperor would fundamentally change how medieval peoples—in contexts as diverse as Byzantium, the Syriac-speaking monasteries of Mesopotamia, the Ottonian Empire, and Early Modern Europe—understood the relationship between earthly power and the coming Kingdom of Heaven.

[212] Peter Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Burlington 2012) 95–124. The influence of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, however, is immediately perceptible in Latin works after its translation in the first quarter of the eighth century, such as in the commentary on the *Apocalypse* by Ambrosius Autpertus, and in the *Cosmology of Aethicus Ister*; on the former see see Palmer (n. 43 above) 114; on the latter see Michael Herren, *The Cosmology of Aethicus Ister* (Turnhout 2011) xxiv–lxxii.