

The *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius: Notes on a Recent Edition

The *Apocalypse* (or *Revelationes*)¹ of Pseudo-Methodius was the most influential apocalyptic text written during the Middle Ages. Bernard McGinn calls it «the crown of Eastern Christian apocalyptic literature».² Initially ascribed to Bishop Methodius of Olympus, the *Apocalypse* later became associated with Methodius, Bishop of Patara. Both men were martyred in the early fourth century, and both attributions are equally spurious. In reality, the *Apocalypse* was composed by an anonymous Syriac monk towards the end of the seventh century,³ perhaps as late as 689-691, in response to the existential crisis brought on by the early Muslim conquests.⁴

The *Apocalypse* presents itself as Methodius's revelation concerning the history of the world from the expulsion of Adam and Eve to the second coming of Christ. «History» here means apocalyptic history, which has a beginning and an end, and includes the past, present, and future. Attributing the *Apocalypse* to a fourth-century Greek bishop allowed a seventh-century Syrian author to present the events of his own time as future revelation. The Muslim onslaught, he could claim, is the first event in God's great plan that will culminate with the end of history and the climax of human destiny.

Like the biblical book of Daniel and other apocalyptic writings, the *Apocalypse* divides history into periods. But where Daniel comprehends history in terms of

¹ Although *Apocalypse* is used in this article, the *Revelations* of Ps-Methodius is a better title, since the text is not an apocalypse proper, nor does it call itself one. It is an apocalyptic revelation. The titles vary among the manuscripts. The earliest, Bern 611 (see below), preserves *Incipit facciuncola uel sermo sancti Methodii episcopi de regnum gentium et nouissimis temporibus certa demonstratio*.

² B. McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, New York 1998, p. 70.

³ Dates proposed by most scholars range from the 640s to the 690s.

⁴ The Syriac text survives in one manuscript, Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. syr. 58, ff. 118^v-136^v, and several partial copies. Editions: M. Kmosko, *Das Rätsel des Pseudo-Methodius*, «Byzantion» 6, 1931, pp. 273-296; F. Javier Martínez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Anathasius*, Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1985; H. Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion auf die einfallenden Muslime in der edessenischen Apokalypik des 7. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main-New York 1985, pp. 34-85; and G. J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*, Leuven 1993, the last now the standard. For a bibliography see L. Greisiger, *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (Syriac)*, in D. Thomas, B. Roggema (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. Volume 1 (600-900)*, Leiden-Boston 2009, pp. 163-171.

four world-empires (chs. 2 and 7) or seventy «weeks of years» (ch. 9), the *Apocalypse* segments it into seven millennia, each millennium corresponding to one day of creation.⁵

The first six millennia of the *Apocalypse* (chs. 1-10) describe the events from Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden to the author's present day. These chapters consist of an idiosyncratic retelling of Old Testament history, followed by an account of Alexander the Great and his successors. Although the narrative focuses on chronology and genealogy, its author never lets the apocalyptic horizon get too far out of sight. A good example is the story of the great gates in the North that God erected at Alexander's request, which restrain the evil hordes of Gog and Magog until the appointed day.⁶

This day arrives with the seventh millennium (chs. 11-14) and the rise of «Ishmael» (the Arab Muslims), who rage across the land. After causing much devastation and tribulation, the Ishmaelites succumb to the last Roman king (βασιλεὺς Ἑλλήνων ἦτοι Ῥωμαίων, «rex Gregorum, siue Romanorum»), who brings peace to the world. This era is shattered with the opening of the gates of the North and the rampage of the evil nations. After their defeat, the «Son of Perdition» (Antichrist) appears. The Roman king travels to Golgotha and places his crown on the Holy Cross, which ascends to heaven. Then the Son of Perdition enters Jerusalem and performs miracles, deceiving all. He sits in the Temple, like a god, but is denounced and put to shame by Enoch and Elijah. The *Apocalypse* closes with the return of Christ, the destruction of the Son of Perdition, and the Final Judgment.

Shortly after its composition, the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius was translated from Syriac into Greek, and then again from Greek into Latin by a figure calling himself «Petrus Monachus». Thus, by the first decades of the eighth century, the *Apocalypse* was circulating in Syriac, Greek, Latin, and very likely Armenian.⁷ Although all the surviving manuscripts of the Greek text are late, dozens of Latin manuscripts dating from the eighth to twelfth centuries are extant.

The Greek *Apocalypse* is preserved in four recensions. The earliest, Recension I, is presumed to be the translation that was made from the Syriac original. In 1897-1898, Vasilii Istrin published the first critical edition of Greek Recensions I, III, and IV.⁸ His work, however, appeared in the proceedings of a learned society in

⁵ This periodisation is based on the notion that one day for God is like a thousand years for humans (cfr. 2 Pet 3:8). The author of the *Apocalypse* redeployed elements of the seventy-week schema of Daniel 9 in his description of the events of the seventh millennium.

⁶ This motif is already present in the Syriac *Memra on Alexander*, which was composed in the years 628-636 and was once attributed to Jacob of Serugh. The gate will be opened in the year 7000 *anno mundi*. See W. Witakowski, *Syriac Apocalyptic Literature*, in K. Bardakjian, S. La Porta (eds.), *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition*, Leiden-Boston 2014, pp. 667-687: 673-675.

⁷ A. Topchyan, *The Armenian Version of the «Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius»*, in Bardakjian, La Porta (eds.), *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition*, cit., pp. 362-378.

⁸ V. M. Istrin, *Откровение Мефодія Патарскаго и апокрифическія виденія Даниїла въ византійской и славянорусской литературѣ. Изследование и Тексты [The Apocalypse of Methodius of Patara and the Apocryphal Visions of Daniel in Byzantine and Slavic-Russian Literatures]*, «Чтения в Императорском Обществе Истории и Древностей Российскихъ при Московскомъ Университетѣ»,

Imperial Russia, and so remained unknown, unavailable, or unreadable to most scholars elsewhere. In 1976-1978, Anastasios Lolos edited all four recensions of the Greek text.⁹ His edition of Recension I is based on four manuscript witnesses: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. gr. 27 [SC 722], ff. 8^r-24^r (XV c.); Wien, ÖNB, med. gr. 23, ff. 81^r-95^v (XVI c.); Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 1700, ff. 117^r-157^r (XIV^{2/4} c. [1332-1333 CE]); and Città del Vaticano, BAV, Reg. gr. Pii II 11, ff. 257^v-258^v + 244^r-251^v + 259^r-263^v (XV c.).

The Latin *Apocalypse*, in contrast, was printed early (*editio princeps* ca. 1475) and often.¹⁰ Ernst Sackur in his 1898 volume *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* published the first critical edition of what is now referred to as Recension I (or the long recension) of the Latin text.¹¹ It is a close translation of Greek Recension I and for this reason is usually considered to be the earliest Latin version of the *Apocalypse*.¹² Sackur's edition uses four of the oldest manuscripts: Paris, BnF, lat. 13348, ff. 93^v-94^r (Petrus Monachus's prologue) + 94^v-96^v + 81^r-82^v¹³ + 97^r-110^v (VIII^{med} c.), which is his base text; St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 225, pp. 384-439 (VIII^{2/2} c. [possibly 760-797 CE]); Città del Vaticano, BAV, Barb. lat. 671,¹⁴ ff. 171^r-174^v (VIII^{med}

181-184, 1897/2-4 and 1898/1 (Moskva 1897-1898). The part dealing with the *Apocalypse* appears in the first and the third of the four installments, 1897/1 (introduction) and 1897/3 (texts). In the latter, Istrin edits the text of Greek Recension I, with reference to Recensions II and IV manuscripts in the apparatus (pp. 5-50). This is followed by editions of the text of Greek Recension III (pp. 51-66), the Greek Recension IV from MS Athous, Kutlumusiou, 217, ff. 176^v-182^r (pp. 67-74); Latin Recension II, from Berlin, SBPK Phillips 1904, ff. 146^r-151^v, Oxford, Trinity College 3, ff. 246^v-252^r, and Paris, BnF, lat. 13700, ff. 144^v-148^v (pp. 75-83), and several Slavonic recensions (pp. 84-131). Kutlumusiou 217, Reg. gr. Pii II 11, and Ivron 215 are the only manuscripts cited in this article that I have not examined by autopsy or image reproduction. Minor inconsistencies and errors in manuscript referencing in past studies have been here corrected silently unless otherwise noted.

⁹ A. Lolos, *Die Apokalypse des Ps.-Methodios*, Meisenheim am Glan 1976; *Die dritte und vierte redaktion des Ps.-Methodios*, Meisenheim am Glan 1978.

¹⁰ S. Bonaventura, *De triplici via. Pseudo-Methodius: Revelationes. De praeparatione ad missam*, Köln: Ulrich Zell, 4°, ca. 1475 (ISTC nr. ib00970000). Wolfgang Aytinger's *Commentary on Methodius* was published in 1496 (ISTC nr. im00522000), and in 1498 Sebastian Brand produced an illustrated version of the text (ISTC nr. im00524000; McGinn, *Visions of the End*, cit., p. 271; cfr. J. Green, *Printing and Prophecy: Prognostication and Media Change 1450-1550*, Ann Arbor, MI 2012). Johann Jakob Grynæus included the Greek and Latin texts of the *Apocalypse* in his *Monumenta S. patrum orthodoxographa* (Basel 1569), which until the late nineteenth century was the primary reference point for scholars and cataloguers.

¹¹ E. Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen. Pseudomethodius, Adso und die Tiburtinische Sibylle*, Halle an der Saale 1898, pp. 59-96.

¹² That said, the Latin is not an exact copy of the Greek, and Petrus Monachus was not without his own agenda. See R. M. Pollard, *One Other on Another: Petrus Monachus' «Revelationes» and Islam*, in M. Cohen, J. Firnhaber-Baker (eds.), *Difference and Identity in Francia and Medieval France*, Farnham-Burlington, VT 2010, pp. 25-42.

¹³ The binding error in which a *bifolium* containing the text of Recension I, 4.3b-5.9a was displaced to ff. 81^r-82^v of the codex was unknown to Sackur and is unnoticed by Garstad, but is described in W. J. Aerts, G. A. A. Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*, Louvain 1998.

¹⁴ Sackur cites this manuscript by its former shelf mark, XIV 144.

c.), a partial copy containing 1.1-5.9; and Bern, Burgerbibliothek, 611, ff. 101^r-113^r (VIII^{2/4} c. [likely 727 CE]), which is the oldest text of the *Apocalypse* preserved in any language. I find it amazing that the Latin text of Bern MS 611, which I have held in my hands, is only one or two generations removed from the composition of the *Apocalypse* in its Syriac original, half a world away.

In 1988 Marc Laureys and Daniel Verhelst published an article that listed a staggering 196 manuscript copies of the Latin *Apocalypse*.¹⁵ They also identified four distinct recensions of the Latin text, which are represented in 141 manuscripts by forty-four copies of Recension I (Sackur's text), ninety-one copies of Recension II,¹⁶ one copy of Recension III, and five copies of Recension IV.

In 1998, Willem J. Aerts and George A. A. Kortekaas published their two-volume edition, translation, and commentary of Recension I of Greek text of the *Apocalypse* and Recension I of the Latin text.¹⁷ This is now the standard critical edition of both recensions. For the Greek text, Aerts and Kortekaas employed the four manuscripts used by Lolos, with reference to Città del Vaticano, BAV, Ottob. gr. 192, ff. 71^v-85^r (XVI-XVII c.), Vat. gr. 859, ff. 19^{vb}-27^{ra} (XV c.), Athous, Iviron 215, ff. 119^v-140^v (XVII c.) and Roma, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, Allacci 34, ff. 109^r-122^v (XVII c.). For the Latin text, they employed the four manuscripts used by Sackur, with reference to the *editio princeps* and the four Greek manuscripts.¹⁸

Yet despite the fine scholarship on the Greek and Latin versions that has been published since the volumes of Aerts and Kortekaas,¹⁹ significant questions remain. Historically, the lion's share of scholarly attention has gone to Recension I of

¹⁵ M. Laureys, D. Verhelst, *Pseudo-Methodius, «Revelationes»: Textgeschichte und kritische Edition. Ein Leuven-Groninger Forschungsprojekt*, in W. Verbeke et al. (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Leuven 1988, pp. 122-136.

¹⁶ Edited by Istrin, *Омъповеніе*, cit. He did not use the oldest manuscripts and appears to have had minimal knowledge of the Latin textual tradition.

¹⁷ Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*, cit.

¹⁸ Aerts and Kortekaas also edited the Latin text of the prologue of Petrus Monachus. It is extant in two forms that are preserved in a total of seven manuscripts.

¹⁹ Notable studies on the Greek and/or Latin *Apocalypse* published since the turn of the century include H. Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung*, Stuttgart 2000, esp. pp. 311-317; W. Witakowski, *The Eschatological Program of the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius: Does It Make Sense?*, «Rocznik Orientalistyczny» 53, 2001, pp. 33-42; W. Brandes, *Die Belagerung Konstantinopels 717/718 als apokalyptisches Ereignis. Zu einer Interpolation im griechischen Text der Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse*, in K. Belke et al. (Hrsgg.), *Byzantina Mediterranea. Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wien 2004, pp. 65-91; M. W. Twomey, *The «Revelationes» of Pseudo-Methodius and Scriptural Study at Salisbury in the Eleventh Century*, in C. D. Wright et al. (eds.), *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill*, Toronto 2007, pp. 370-386; A. Kraft, *The Last Roman Emperor 'Topos' in the Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, «Byzantion» 82, 2012, pp. 213-257; C. Grifoni, *A New Witness of the Third Recension of Pseudo-Methodius' Revelationes: Winithar's Manuscript St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 238 and the Role of Rome in Human History*, «Early Medieval Europe» 22, 2014, pp. 446-460; J. T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, Cambridge 2014, esp. pp. 107-129 (and the review of this book by R. Landes in «The Medieval Review» 16.10.19); C. Bonura, *A Forgotten Translation of Pseudo-Methodius in Eighth-Century Constantinople: New Evidence for the Dispersal of the*

the Greek text and Recension I of the Latin text. Yet this is not entirely in step with the manuscript evidence, which remains imperfectly understood.

With respect to the Greek text, Lolos cites forty-five manuscript copies of the *Apocalypse* in all four of its recensions. This figure represents only a fraction of the total. I estimate that there are between fifty and seventy-five additional manuscripts that contain whole or partial copies of the Greek text.²⁰ A fresh study that is based on a fuller appreciation of the manuscript evidence might offer new details on the Greek recensions and their relationship to each other and to the recensions of the Latin text. It also might shed light on the translation of the Greek *Apocalypse* into Armenian (which may have occurred as early as the late seventh or early eighth century)²¹ and Slavonic.²²

With respect to the Latin text, one must begin with the fact that fifty-five of the 196 manuscripts that are included in Laureys and Verhelst's study are listed as either «fragmenta incertae sedis» or «noch nicht verarbeitet». These copies, which represent nearly forty percent of the total number, must be verified by autopsy. Moreover, it is clear that Laureys and Verhelst did not consult every one of the other 141 manuscripts, and were unaware of scholarship that would have prevented many of their errors and omissions.²³ Such oversights do not lessen the value of Laureys and Verhelst's article, which no serious study of the Latin *Apocalypse* can ignore. Yet numerous major and minor emendations to their list of manuscripts are now necessary.²⁴

Of equal significance is the fact that Laureys and Verhelst did not seek to inter-

Greek Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius during the Dark Age Crisis, in N. S. M. Matheou et al. (eds.), *From Constantinople to the Frontier: The City and the Cities*, Leiden 2016, pp. 260-276; and M. W. Herren, *The «Revelationes» of Pseudo-Methodius in the Eighth Century*, in G. Guldentops et al. (eds.), *Felici curiositate. Studies in Latin Literature and Textual Criticism from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century. In Honour of Rita Beyers*, Turnhout 2017, pp. 409-418.

²⁰ These numbers are subject to verification. Byzantine Greek apocalyptic have a tendency to stray from their original attribution. For example, several Daniel apocalypses are preserved in manuscript copies that are attributed to Methodius or John Chrysostom. See L. DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature*, Leiden-Boston 2005, and D. Sakel, *A Daniel Apocalypse Attributed to Methodius of Patara*, in K. Dörtlük et al. (eds.), III. *Uluslararası Likya Sempozyumu. Sempozyum Bildiriler. The IIIrd International Symposium on Lycia. Symposium Proceedings*, Antalya 2006, pp. 665-678.

²¹ Topchyan, *The Armenian Version*, cit., esp. p. 372.

²² In addition to Istrin, *Откровение*, cit. see P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1985, which remains an essential study of the *Apocalypse's* influence in Byzantine and Slavonic milieu. Among the recent studies, see esp. V. Tăpkova-Zaimova and A. Miltenova, *Историко-апокалиптичната книжнина във Византия и в средновековна България*, Sofia 1996 (English trans. *Historical and Apocalyptic Literature in Byzantium and Medieval Bulgaria*, Sofia 2011), and J. Petkov, *Altislavische Eschatologie. Texte und Studien zur apokalyptischen Literatur in kirchenslavischer Überlieferung*, Tübingen 2016.

²³ See the criticisms in G. H. V. Bunt, *The Middle English Translations of the Revelations of Pseudo-Methodius*, in H. Hokwerda et al. (eds.), *Polyphonia Byzantina: Studies in Honour of Willem J. Aerts*, Groningen 1993, pp. 131-143.

²⁴ See L. DiTommaso, *The Latin Manuscripts of the «Revelationes» of Pseudo-Methodius* (in progress). At least three dozen new manuscript copies of the Latin text have been identified.

pret the patterns of manuscript composition and distribution that might have been revealed by their data. A correlation of these patterns with the *Apocalypse's* influence on apocalyptic speculation in the mediaeval West is a *desideratum*. A good illustration of the benefits of such an investigation is Michael W. Twomey's article on the manuscripts of the Latin *Apocalypse* in British libraries, which discloses a predominance of Recension II texts.²⁵ Twomey's observations are reflected in the manuscript evidence for the Latin text generally, insofar as the copies of Recension II outnumber those of Recension I by a factor of two to one. If Recension II was the most common version of the *Apocalypse* in England, was it also the most instrumental version elsewhere? According to Matthew Gabriele, the substitution of a «rex christianorum et romanorum» for the «rex gregorum, siue romanorum» in the text of Recension II²⁶ indicates the (western) Christianization of the figure of the last Roman king and suggests a mental shift in political ideology.²⁷

A focused study of the manuscript evidence might also shed new light on the early history of the Latin text. Several Recension II manuscripts date from the eighth to the tenth centuries and display important textual differences among themselves.²⁸ As for Recension I, Michael W. Herren in a recent study suggests that Bern MS 611 should be identified with (or else is related to) the copy of the Latin *Apocalypse* in Bobbio, now lost.²⁹ If so, Petrus Monachus translated the Greek text in Northern Italy, not France, which eliminates the need to posit a Merovingian nexus of Greek study in the eighth century. A better understanding of the manuscript tradition of the Latin text in all its recensions might clarify the early history of its transmission, as well as the development of the secondary vernacular translations of the *Apocalypse* and their impact at the regional levels.

²⁵ Twomey, *The «Revelationes» of Pseudo-Methodius*, cit. Stephen Pelle has since called attention to an Old English Antichrist text that reflects a dependence on the Recension I version (*The 'Revelationes' of Pseudo-Methodius and 'Concerning the Coming of the Antichrist' in British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D.XIV*, «Notes and Queries» 56, 2009, pp. 324-330). As Pelle remarks, «we can now see that Recension 1 of the *Revelationes* was not entirely neglected by Old English authors, despite the clear preference in medieval England for Recension 2 texts» (p. 328).

²⁶ O. Prinz, *Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung der lateinischen Übersetzung des Pseudo-Methodius*, «Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters» 41, 1985, pp. 1-23, text p. 14.

²⁷ M. Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade*, Oxford 2011, pp. 108-109. Luigi Silvano, however, observes that the formula «rex christianorum et romanorum» probably stems from a cultural *milieu* that assumes the Byzantine Emperor is the «rex romanorum», whereas the title «rex gregorum, siue romanorum» more likely reflects a setting in which the Byzantines were no longer considered true heirs of the Romans (private correspondence). An examination of the forms of this title in all the Latin manuscripts might prove useful.

²⁸ T. Frenz, *Textkritische Untersuchungen zu 'Pseudo-Methodios.' Das Verhältnis der griechischen zur ältesten lateinischen Fassung*, «Byzantinische Zeitschrift» 80, 1987, pp. 50-58. The rare Recension III text, of which Laureys and Verhelst identified only one manuscript copy but which may exist in as many as three, is also early. See Grifoni, *A New Witness*, cit. The place of Recension III in the textual tradition of the Latin *Apocalypse* requires further study.

²⁹ Herren, *Pseudo-Methodius in the Eighth Century*, cit. Bonura, *A Forgotten Translation*, cit., suggests Constantinople as the nexus of the translation of the *Apocalypse* and its transmission to points east and west.

This overview of the Greek and Latin manuscript evidence demonstrates that our knowledge of the nature and influence of the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius remains incomplete. Many questions remain, and much work is required. It is an exciting time for scholars of this fascinating text. The study of apocalyptic literature has undergone a major revival in many fields, including Byzantine and mediaeval studies.³⁰ New communication technologies have revolutionised manuscript research, opening new vistas for textual and literary scholars. And the present state of the world appears to have encouraged studies on the history of Muslim relations with the West.³¹

Benjamin Garstad's new volume, in the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library series, provides facing-page texts and translations of the *Apocalypse* and another early mediaeval writing, the *Alexandrian World Chronicle*.³² Each text is prefaced by an introduction and accompanied by notes on the texts and their translations, as well as a brief bibliography.

Unfortunately, G.'s edition tells us nothing new about the *Apocalypse* and answers none of the questions. His Greek and Latin texts are virtually identical to the editions of Aerts and Kortekaas, as G. himself acknowledges (p. xiv). No fresh insights are presented here. Similarly, his notes on the texts (pp. 315-321) reproduce a small selection of those in Aerts and Kortekaas, while his sparse notes on the translations (pp. 337-347) rarely contain more than references to biblical quotations or allusions. These notes would have been an ideal venue in which to engage the ethnographic data and eschatological themes of the *Apocalypse*, and to trace their influence on the later literature.

G.'s introduction (pp. viii-xviii) is sound but basic. Its first half covers all the main points: the history of the text, as well as its translations, sources, and reception. The second half contains an outline of the contents of the *Apocalypse*, which is necessary and helpful, especially for a general audience. But in many places the introduction's lack of depth will stymie the reader's curiosity. For instance, G.

³⁰ The number of comprehensive encyclopaedias and handbooks on apocalyptic and related topics (millennialism, eschatology, etc.) grows each year.

³¹ Recent studies on this topic that highlight the *Apocalypse* include P. Ubierna, *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (Greek)*, in D. Thomas, B. Roggema (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. Volume 1 (600-900)*, Leiden-Boston 2009, pp. 245-248; E. J. van Donzel, A. B. Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall*, Leiden 2010, esp. pp. 16-56; M. M. Tischler, *Eine fast vergessene Gedächtnisspur. Der byzantinisch-lateinische Wissenstransfer zum Islam (8.-13. Jahrhundert)*, in A. Speer, P. Steinkrüger (Hrsgg.), *Knotenpunkt Byzanz: Wissensformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen*, Berlin-New York 2012, pp. 167-198; C. Gantner, *Hoffnung in der Apokalypse? Die «Ismaeliten» in den älteren lateinischen Fassungen der «Revelationen» des Pseudo-Methodius*, in V. Weiser et al. (Hrsgg.), *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie der Endzeit*, Berlin 2013, pp. 521-546; and J. T. Palmer, *Apocalyptic Outsiders and Their Uses in the Early Medieval West*, in W. Brandes et al. (eds.), *Peoples of the Apocalypse: Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios*, Berlin 2016, pp. 307-320.

³² B. Garstad (ed. and trans.), *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. An Alexandrine World Chronicle*, Cambridge, MA-London 2012 (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 14), pp. xxxix + 420 [ISBN 9780674053076].

mentions the «numerous Middle English versions» (p. x) of the *Apocalypse* (an overstatement). But one would not know from his introduction that the Greek and Latin texts served as a basis for the translation of the text into many other languages. Similarly, the eschatological expectations of the *Apocalypse* are discussed almost as an afterthought. The lack of detail is particularly palpable when compared to the lavish introduction to the *Chronicle*.³³

G. presents the facing-page texts and translations in two sections, Greek (pp. 1-71) and Latin (pp. 73-139). As mentioned above, Latin Recension I is a close rendition of Greek Recension I.³⁴ Yet their differences are frequent and numerous enough to preclude a single English translation. As a result, readers who wish to compare the Greek and Latin texts are compelled to flip back and forth between them.

The English translations themselves are precise and fluid. One may quibble with minor things, such as rendering the same word differently in two places (cfr. «Eoa» in Latin 3.2 and 3.4). Yet in the end a translation's success must be judged in the light of the whole and in view of the tenor of the work translated. Both the Greek and the Latin of the *Apocalypse* are written in a quasi-biblical register, which G. modernises without sacrificing the tone. He has a fine ear for the right word and the euphonious turn of phrase. The result is excellent and eminently readable. Scholars can confidently reproduce G.'s translations in studies that do not require their own.

The chief utility of G.'s book with respect to the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius is that it provides editions and English translations of the Greek Recension I and the Latin Recension I texts. In this function it succeeds magnificently. The older editions of Istrin, Sackur, and even Lolos are not easy to locate, even in many university libraries.³⁵ The more recent critical editions of Aerts and Kortekaas are designed for specialists. Many times I have wished for a handy volume containing the Greek and Latin texts of the *Apocalypse* and a reliable translation, and here it is.

The other part of G.'s volume is devoted to the *Alexandrian World Chronicle*, better known as the *Excerpta latini barbari*.³⁶ It survives in a unique Merovingian Latin manuscript copy, Paris, BnF, lat. 4884, ff. 1^r-63^r. It is the sole item in the codex, which was copied at the famous Corbie Abbey of mediaeval Gaul and dates from the second half of the eighth century.³⁷

³³ The discrepancy in the degree of detail is evident also in the notes to the translations: eleven pages (pp. 337-347) for the Greek and Latin *Apocalypse* combined, and forty-one pages (pp. 347-387) for the *Chronicle* alone.

³⁴ One of the major differences is 13.7-12, which appears in some of the Greek texts but not the Syriac (or the Latin), and must represent a later addition to the text. See Brandes, *Die Belagerung Konstantinopels*, cit.

³⁵ The volumes of Istrin and Sackur are now available as digitalised copies in open-access format.

³⁶ The humanistic scholar Joseph Justus Scaliger published the first critical edition of the text in 1606 under this title.

³⁷ R. W. Burgess, *The Date, Purpose, and Historical Context of the Original Greek and the Latin*

The Latin is a translation of a lost Greek exemplar. G. proposes a two-stage history of its composition. The original document, he contends, was written in Alexandria in the early fifth century. It consisted of a biblical chronology plus a collection of king-lists extending from Adam to Cleopatra VII (the famous Cleopatra of history and legend). Around the years 536 and 539, the chronicle was re-copied and its contents augmented, again in Alexandria. This Greek text, G. argues, was sent as a gift from the Emperor Justinian to Theudebert I in an attempt to induce the Frankish king's support for Byzantine religious and military policies.³⁸ The manuscript would have been lavishly illustrated, since the pages of its Latin translation (*i.e.*, BnF 4884) exhibit numerous *lacunae* for the illustrations that were meant to be added but never were.

G.'s introduction to the *Chronicle* surpasses his introduction to the *Apocalypse* in every way. It discusses the origins and nature of the text with full reference to the events of the era. It situates the *Chronicle* within its broader literary setting, particularly the rich tradition of early Byzantine chronicles and chronographs. It is also in dialogue with the key scholarship, beginning with the pioneering 1892 edition by Carolus Frick.³⁹ However, G. overlooks the 2001 monograph of Pier Franco Beatrice, who controversially argues that the *Chronicle* should be considered part of the *Tübingen Theosophy*.⁴⁰

On the basis of several samples, G.'s transcription of the Latin text of the *Chronicle* (pp. 141-311) reads true. Readers may verify this for themselves, since digital images of the manuscript's pages are available on the BnF's website, and the script is easy to read.⁴¹ The chronographic tenor of the *Chronicle* naturally restricts the range of the registers in which it may be translated. But here again Garstad's ear for the cadence of the Latin text serves him well. The notes to the text (pp. 321-335) are copious and informative.

The *Alexandrian World Chronicle* is of cardinal importance to specialists of early Byzantine and Frankish history. For everyone else, however, its genealogies, chronologies, ethnographies, and regnal and consular lists might make for dry reading. The only exceptions are the places where the text includes little narrative packets of descriptive information. Thus we learn that Hermes Trismegistus is really the old Roman deity Faunus (1.6.2), and that the soldier who guarded the cross of the crucifixion was named Jeremiah (2.9.3). More often than not, G.'s superb notes to the translation (pp. 347-387) are more engaging than the contents of the *Chronicle* itself.

The tedious literary quality of the *Chronicle* brings us to a final issue: G.'s book

Translation of the So-Called «Excerpta Latini Barbari», «Traditio» 38, 2013, pp. 1-56, dates the manuscript to the late seventh or early eighth century.

³⁸ Burgess, *The Date*, cit. presents serious objections to G.'s reconstruction of the composition history of the Greek *Chronicle*.

³⁹ C. Frick, *Chronica minora* 1, Leipzig 1892.

⁴⁰ P. F. Beatrice, *Anonymi Monophysitae Theosophia: An Attempt at Reconstruction*, Leiden 2001.

⁴¹ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84790083.r=4884> (accessed 17 April 2017).

as a whole. What does the *Alexandrian World Chronicle* have to do with the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius? Does their pairing in this book work well?

At first blush, the answer is “no”. The *Chronicle* survives in one manuscript only, and this a translation. It remained unknown for the better part of its existence, and even since its “discovery” it has been virtually ignored by scholars.⁴² Its contents are monotonously dull, without the vivid narrative and eschatological events of the *Apocalypse*. The *Apocalypse*, by contrast, is a seminal apocalyptic text. It was translated into many languages and survives in over 300 manuscripts that were produced over a span of a thousand years and in a host of different cultures. Its contents shaped the contours of eschatological expectations in both the Byzantine East and the Mediaeval West. From this perspective, the *Apocalypse* should have been paired with another apocalyptic text of the same vintage and transmission history, such as the *Sibylla Tiburtina*. Or, if the classics of the western apocalyptic tradition were the focus, the *Apocalypse* could have been accompanied by a few Antichrist texts or a selection of the works of Joachim of Fiore.

From another perspective, however, the *Apocalypse*'s chronologic material, which occupies over half its text, makes it a natural fit with the *Chronicle*. Sylvain Piron has shown that one of every three manuscript codices that contain the Latin text of the *Apocalypse* also contains chronologic material, as compared to one in four codices that also include other prophetic/eschatological writings.⁴³ These data, which are reinforced by studies on the *Apocalypse*'s influence on Latin and vernacular literary cultures, suggest that the *Apocalypse* was appreciated by its early readers as much for its chronological and genealogical material as its eschatological predictions.⁴⁴

This is not as surprising as one might think. Since the late nineteenth century, scholars have read the *Apocalypse* more for its eschatology than its ethnography, but this does not mean that those who actually copied, read, and used the text did so too.⁴⁵ We also should recall how apocalyptic historiography links the past, present, and future in an integral whole. In writings such as Daniel and the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, salvation or damnation in the end-time is defined by group identity in the present. But the present is determined by the past. Lineages and eth-

⁴² Burgess, *The Date*, cit.

⁴³ S. Piron, *Anciennes Sibylles et nouveaux oracles. Remarques sur la diffusion des textes prophétiques en occident, VII^e-XIV^e siècles*, in S. Gioanni, B. Grévin (éd.), *L'Antiquité tardive dans les collections médiévales. Textes et représentations, VI^e-XIV^e siècle*, Roma 2008, pp. 261-304: 302-304. Piron's sample includes copies of the *Apocalypse* from the eighth through the thirteen centuries. Significantly, most of the manuscripts that contain a copy of the *Apocalypse* and other prophetic/eschatological material were compiled after the eleventh century.

⁴⁴ Twomey, *The «Revelationes» of Pseudo-Methodius*, cit., pp. 378-379.

⁴⁵ I hardly want to suggest, however, that it was ignored as an apocalyptic text; far from it. In many dozens of cases the *Apocalypse* appears in manuscript codices alongside or bound with other eschatological material. Consider, for example, Cambridge, Peterhouse College 45 (xiii^{1/2} c.), where the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius immediately follows the *Biblia sacra*, which is to say, the *Apocalypse* of John.

nicities illuminate the current circumstances, attitudes, or policies of one group, and justify the denigration of other groups.

In conclusion, Benjamin Garstad's book admirably fulfils its primary function of bringing two early mediaeval texts to the general reader. Specialists will have many issues with the details. But its basic utility as a handy and reliable set of texts and translations overrules all the objections.

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