Introduction

The three major monotheistic world religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, incorporate the idea that God created the world and, at the end of time, will destroy it. Then the Messiah, the returning Christ or the Mahdi will save the righteous while sinners will, together with their evil, be condemned to eternal perdition. In the pre-modern epochs studied here (the fourth-to-seventeenth centuries of the Common Era), these framing predictions were commonly known, accepted as natural conditions of human existence and, consequently, were taken very seriously. Given their shared claim as revealed religions, they possess fairly detailed divine indications about the End, their adherents were, therefore, ever inspired to read holy texts in search of new interpretations of divine visions. As a result of such quests, prophets urged people to change their course, often with a moral message, and instructed them to fulfill more or less specific actions in preparation for the world’s imminent End.

Thus, these monotheistic religions, including their internal variants (e.g. Sephardic and Ashkenazic Judaism; Latin, Byzantine and Armenian Christianity; Shiite and Sunnite Islam), established its own end-time scenario, each with a well-known order of basic events and embellished in numerous regional or local story lines. These scenarios did not emerge independently within a given religious culture; rather, their development resulted from vivid exchanges and reactions among them. Whether directly or by reputation, members of these religious communities knew each other, despised or feared one another, and envisioned their counterparts as eschatological enemies or, less commonly, as eschatological allies. Knowledge of another religion’s teachings often prompted an opposing position in the form of a counter-eschatology, a pre-modern type of entangled history that has received little scholarly attention to date.

This volume emerges from the third in a series of conferences that have each addressed one shared element in Christian, Jewish and Muslim texts on events that would anticipate the end time and the close of history. At each gathering, while considering sources that span late Antiquity to the early modern period, the participating scholars examined distinctive aspects represented by each religion’s approach as well as interlaced concepts. The first of these conferences compared tangible notions of the end time in the three monotheistic religions;¹ the next examined the central antagonist depicted in each religion’s end-time predictions, who would oppose its savior, namely: the Antichrist in Christianity, Armilos in Judaism and the Dajjāl in Islam.²

---

The most recent gathering focused on end-time peoples, which is to say, the future vision for each religious society and its respective allies and antagonists. The biblical forces of Gog and Magog, first mentioned by Ezekiel in the Hebrew Bible and later in the canonical Apocalypse of John (Ch. 20) of the New Testament, are destructive end-time peoples familiar to all three of these religions. Extensive lists of murderous groups, whether for good or evil, and those who merit salvation hold variably defined roles in end-time scenarios. Jews traditionally hoped – in a highly significant example – for the return of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, displaced as a result of the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel (8th century BCE). According to the legend, since that dispersal, they have been living in an unknown locale beyond the undulating Sambatyon River, impatiently awaiting the Messiah’s arrival, when they will assume their crucial military role in the eschatological re-establishment of an independent Jewish kingdom.

Christians and Muslims also envisioned roles that Jewish people would fulfill during the end time. The former identified Gog and Magog with the Ten Lost Tribes. In German speaking lands, those tribes were feared as “Red Jews” who would arrive with the Antichrist to assail Christians. For Christians and Jews, this fabled people was ascribed with inverse meanings: while Jews looked toward the Ten Tribes as saviors, Christians associated their arrival with fear and gnashing teeth. On the inter-religious apocalyptic map, proximate to the Ten Tribes, we also find the dwelling of the mythic Prester John, for whom Christians longed, as well as the Levites, whom the Bible describes as weeping beside the rivers of Babylon and Arabic sources identify as Banu Musa (the sons of Moses) who had allegedly been visited by the prophet Muhammad himself.

Much as the Antichrist, Gog and Magog, the Ten Tribes, the Red Jews, the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (of the Dead Sea Scrolls), and the Ishmaelites (from Pseudo-Methodius’s apocalypse) – to name the most prominent examples – were associated with historically attested peoples at various times, human end-time groups were even more readily identified with these mythic figure. In the thirteenth century, Mongol invaders from the East were widely identified in Europe and the Middle East as the fearsome Gog and Magog, much as the Goths and Huns had been identified with them in late Antiquity and, subsequently, in Koran; and, much later, Native Americans would analogously be viewed by Europeans as the Ten Lost Tribes. Even modern travelers report encounters with descendants of the Ten Tribes.

---


in China, Ethiopia and Yemen. Recent political rhetoric has coined terms like *Schurkenstaaten* (rogue states) and “the axis of evil” to evoke eschatological scenarios being perpetrated by outside forces.

Such associations arise in milieux that are characterized by reflections on the end time: individuals, distinct groups and whole societies (to the extent that we can chronicle them) seem to have broached them in relation to concerns regarding the world’s demise as an imminent threat. Eschatological thinking especially appears to have influenced perspectives on the present and future during crises, whether instigated by economic or political mechanisms or by natural catastrophes, with such events having fueled latent apocalyptic fears. Chronological calculations served as similar catalysts, as evidenced near the turn of the sixth and ninth centuries, the approach of the first millennium, and 1453 CE.⁵

In his analysis of a brief, late twelfth-century prophetic interpretation of a passage from Leviticus, Alexander Patschovsky has shown that fateful prophecies and the ideas that radiate from them could be traced to widely varying origins.⁶ Paradoxically, peaceful times could provide particularly fertile ground for apocalyptic suspicions. This very point is conveyed in a passage from Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians that has become a lynchpin for considerations of the end time:

> For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, peace and security; then sudden destruction come upon them, as the pains upon her that is with child; and they shall not escape. (1 Thess. 5:2–3).⁷

While the resonance of this message was heightened at times of tribulation, insecurity and conflict, prophecy’s efficacy as a coping mechanism is also pertinent in less dramatic circumstances. If prophecy weren’t operational at all times, it would not have been understood at times of peril: the regular usage of prophetic language guaranteed its availability when danger arose, periods that were often separated by generations.

Given that eschatological ideas, by definition, apply to the future, specifically the time remaining as the end approached, they could offer explanations and solutions

---


not evident in the present. Common knowledge about the end time provided a foundation for societal agreement about the future and an eschatological delay would offer an opportunity to plan and enact change before that end.⁸ Prophetic language – especially, though not exclusively, with eschatological overtones – could thus inform political language.⁹ Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to reduce prophecy to a single dimension, as an instrument of political propaganda or a language of revolution (though it certainly has been and can be either of these). Whereas prophecy, even in its eschatological form, need not be political in a literal sense, it is never solely political. Prophecy necessarily refers to a religiously grounded ethical-moral framework and, furthermore, prophecy requires a social dimension. Whether it claims to address humanity with a universal message or all members of a specific religion, it inevitably has a regional character and is concerned with a particular social order.

Thus eschatological prophecy shapes a defined communicative space where references need not be made explicit but for which allusions suffice because of their ubiquity. These eschatological images and meanings enter the vocabulary of a political language that can often be as cryptic as it is direct, especially when the prophecy that copyists must or wish to deliver entails their own interpretation or when orality is a strong factor (on some level, these are always considerations for historians since wording which seems cryptic to us would have been accessible to its intended audience). Adequate familiarity with the references and codes – plus (often) some level of scholarly background – are essential keys to understanding communications from any such framework, for contemporaneous and modern audiences alike. However, it is fair to assume a broad knowledge of teachings about the last days from preaching and images (such as illustrations in books and sites visible to the public, for example: depictions of the Last Judgment on tympana over church entrances and the facades of town halls; and, the apocalyptic Antichrist window of St. Mary’s church in Frankfurt an der Oder, which includes Jewish characters). Prophetic language, there-

---


⁹ A conceptual and quite general sense of politics is evoked here, which is therefore, adaptable to pre-modern conditions, defined as “active participation in the formation and regulation of human communities” whose influence effected certain demands and goals, irrespective of their outcome; “Die aktive Teilnahme an der Gestaltung und Regelung menschlicher Gemeinwesen”: Klaus Schubert, Martina Klein: Das Politiklexikon. Begriffe – Fakten – Zusammenhänge, Bonn ²2011, S. 227 s. v. “Politik”.
fore, was not limited to the educated elite or members of a discrete cohort; rather, its message would have been widely comprehensible despite being directed to particular groups.

Another aspect of this theme becomes evident: peoples of end time and the end time itself are not automatically bound with warnings against the impending destruction of this world. At historical moments when fear of such a trajectory is palpable, biblical and other prophecies are read anew or written accordantly, and corresponding actions are prompted and likely initiated. However, other circumstances are catalysts for less literal, and thereby less eschatological, interpretations of biblical prophecies. Exegetical hermeneutics provide ample tools for such readings because the art of interpreting according to the Four Senses of Scripture (sensus scripturae), not only allowed but demanded the application of literal (or “historical”), moral, allegorical and typological perspectives. This tradition affirmed that an anagogical (and therefore eschatological) reading was possible for any end-time composition, irrespective of its timeframe. Allegory enabled references to a universal history without explicitly asserting that the world would soon end. In principle, the four readings that correspond to each of the four senses are coexistent and equally valid despite what we may view as contradictory aspects. Medieval exegesis neither expected nor required unambiguous interpretations. To the contrary, understandings of a given text need not be ranked or favored relative to one another; exegesis could operate on multiple levels without a need for comparison. An allegorical perspective could effectively “de-eschatologize” without directly stating that aim. However, when being positioned against explicit eschatological interpretations, a non-eschatological allegorical approach could be emphasized.

The Hebrew Bible, the Christian New Testament and the Koran are replete with prophetic texts that include clear references to the end of the world, as well as others that highlight the consequential implications of certain actions in time, which all aim to alter current reality or life in the near future. If we assume that the populations discussed in this volume all accepted that God had created the world and would someday destroy it, then it is doubtful that they would have differentiated between concrete and metaphorical (moral, allegorical) end-time expectations vis-à-vis planning for the future materially or ethically. Prophetic language would therefore have been the normative idiom for looking forward. Only the fervor of debate would have led one exegete or another to argue for a singular truth. Then alone would apocalyptic thinkers in the literal sense of the world (i.e. those with true interest in the end) have sought to present themselves and their followers in a more favorable light. Such times set the stage for different discursive strategies: some employed this terminology as an exhortation; others harnessed prophecy to better recognize the exigencies of their own time and use it as a backdrop that could bolster their own convictions; still others maintained a general message whose appeals became contextualized before a well-known background. Finally, we cannot discount the occasional intellectual whose interest focused on the development of sophisticated exegesis.
In the contributions to this volume, Gog and Magog symbolize foreign peoples or internal enemies who fulfill a variety of roles, ranging from eschatological harbingers to admonishers and purifiers and even tools of a punitive God. They could be, but were not necessarily, read anagogically and their role in the world could, even when seen as eschatological, still be interpreted in a literal-anagogical or a moral-anagogical way. Even the clearly eschatological apocalypse by Pseudo-Methodius explains the victory of the Ishmaelites (Muslim antagonists of that late seventh-century author, whose triumph was foretold as a preliminary step toward peaceful Christian domination) as a purification (castigatio) of the sins of Christianity: The Ishmaelites are the destined victors, not because God loves them but as a result of the sins of those whom they vanquish.¹

Even though the organizing theme of this volume is synonymous with the subject of our conference, determining the structure of a volume on peoples of the end time was challenging indeed. As editors, we contemplated numerous options for ordering this collection, each with its own merits: chronological sequencing of the subject matter; clustering according to the religion of the material or movement being studied; dedicating one section for each motif; or, interweaving this combination of elements together in the presentation of articles. We ultimately decided to draw on each of these priorities; thus, rather than offering a brief synopsis of each paper, we also highlight some of the narratives, imagery and argumentation that connect the content presented here.

Warring Peoples

The three papers in the first section are linked by the theme “Warring Peoples.” These studies discuss the earliest material in this volume and are presented chronologically; each considers a crisis that relates to one of three consecutive turns of the century – 400, 500 and 600 CE – which involves a people that threatened the borders of a specific in-group.

In “Rome’s wild peoples: Crossing borders and anticipating doom during the Roman Empire’s final century,” Veronika Wieser focuses on the turn of the fifth century CE, when Christians as well as polytheists grappled with the empire’s decline and the fall of Rome (410 CE) while foreign peoples poised themselves for invasion at all borders. The formation of ethnic identity on the basis of antique ethnography and Roman-Christian discourse was a contributing factor in this atmosphere of anticipation and concern. This sentiment was compounded by the widespread belief

(attested by historians such as Sulpicius Severus) that 500 CE was an eschatologically auspicious year, which could witness the end of the world. Thus the migrations of different peoples toward Rome were interpreted apocalyptically and their appearance (which often reflected apocalyptic traits) was viewed through an eschatological lens. The pervasive presence of foreigners (“barbarians”) within the Roman Empire (in the military, civilian society, etc.) was not only considered an external threat but many saw it as a signal of Rome’s quickly approaching demise.

Near the turn of sixth century, the Persian Sasanians, viewed as a rising power, extended their settlements to the eastern borders of the Roman Empire, thereby meriting a place in an end-time scenario. In “The Persian wars of Anastasios (502–506 CE) as an end-time event,” Katharina Enderle studies historical events that incidentally occurred close to a time when the end of the world had been predicted and the inevitable eschatological interpretations held by those who witnessed them. Scholarship has consistently overlooked the fact that the year 6000 since the creation of the world, which was popularly considered portentous, fell during this period. As a corrective, in this paper, Enderle warns against underestimating the general influence of eschatological perspectives on world history that were widespread in the fifth and sixth centuries CE. Her discussion concentrates on the contemporaneous “Oracle of Baalbek,” in which the Sasanian Persians appear as people of end time. She contextualizes this eschatological text within the historiographical works of that time that make similar assertions, especially the chronicles of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite and Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor, who each document these claims quite clearly (although, admittedly, any analysis of these sources must take the complexity of their transmission into account).

Lutz Greisiger traces eschatological portrayals of Gog and Magog breaking through the northern gates, from their biblical origins (Ez. 38–39; Jer. 1:13–15) through the early seventh-century Byzantine promulgation of anti-Persian rhetoric in “Opening the Gates of the North in 627: War, Anti-Byzantine Sentiment and Apocalyptic Expectancy in the Near East prior to the Arab Invasion.” Spanning from the Hebrew Bible via Josephus Flavius to the Byzantine integration of breaching these gates with the Romance of Alexander the Great, Greisiger discusses three elements that characterize the depiction of Gog and Magog: their association with a specific historical people (e.g. the Huns in the fifth century); their identification with peoples that were blocked from the known world by Alexander’s famous wall; and, their eschatological role (e.g. allied with the Antichrist, according to an exegesis on Ch. 20 of the Apocalypse of John). Not until the seventh century were these three aspects integrated within Syriac Greek-Aramaic culture: circa 630, the Syriac legend and song of Alexander combined these motifs and introduced the image of these gates into the vast literature on this historical figure. This literary shift is explained in a detailed analysis of the events of this epoch, with particular emphasis on the roles of Jews and non-chalcedonian Christians. An interpretation of the biblical Daniel that identified the Sasanian Persians’ mortal threat to the Roman Empire as the fourth world empire, led broad stretches of the empire’s population to read their ad-
vances as apocalyptic signs. By defeating the Persians in 628, Rome had proven itself as the *katechon* (the power that could forestall the end, as per the second letter to the Thessalonians). Imperial propaganda could then reject an apocalyptic view of the present. Nevertheless, the Gök Turks, who marched with their ally Emperor Heraclios through the Caucasus against the Persians, were still perceived as echoes of the Huns, the nations blocked off by Alexander, and Gog and Magog.

Another thematically related paper from our conference deserves mention here, “Gog, Magog and the Huns: remarks on the eschatological ‘ethnography’ of the migration period” by Wolfram Brandes, which was published in advance of this volume. Starting from the fifth-century identification of the Huns with these two end-time peoples, Brandes considers descriptions of the Huns’ appearance and brutality in the “Song of Alexander” and an apocalypse ascribed to Ephrem (both seventh-century Syriac compositions), among other sources. Gog and Magog’s savagery became a topos of apocalyptic literature, subsequently adopted by other genres (such as the *Chronography* of Theophanes, which uses similar language when describing the Muslim Arab conquest of Pergamon in 716).

**Unknown Peoples**

Time and again, previously unknown peoples appeared on the horizons of pre-modern societies: either as an extension of the original culture or as foreigners who were considered intruders (as discussed in the first section of this collection). If the balance of power became unfavorable for the recipient group and the life styles clashed (especially in the case of a settled versus nomadic dichotomy), an eschatological explanation could readily emerge. Each of the three major monotheistic religions responded with this trope to the Mongols’ territorial expansion. The three articles in this section each examine Latin-Christian sources from various periods, demonstrating how the encounter with the Mongols was processed over time. David Cook’s treatment of Muslim perspectives on the Mongols was included in an earlier conference (and volume);² herein, his paper on Muslim depictions of Turks, with its many parallels, appears below (in Section IV).

In “Traveling toward the peoples of End Time: C. de Bridia as a religious reinterpretation of Carpini” Gregor Werner investigates reports sent by the first Franciscans who were dispatched as papal envoys (in the 1240s) to the Mongols, who had taken control of vast sections of Asia and also entered Europe. Werner assesses

---


one report – previously categorized as a version of the account written by another member of the party (John of Plano Carpini, Benedict of Poland) or as a modern fabrication – as an independent, contemporaneous recasting of the delegation’s experiences with the Mongols. Whereas John of Plano Carpini, author of the longest, most systematic and widely circulated report, concentrated on relating factual data that could school Latin Europeans for further dealings with the Mongols, this source, attributed to C. de Bridia, was authored for another purpose entirely. Werner reads this record as an alternative presentation of this journey, composed in an eschatological tenor that situates this encounter within a divine plan. Thus C. de Bridia evaluates Mongol warfare according to the books of Maccabees, whereas Plano Carpini describes actual Mongol military techniques in great detail. As in several contributions to this volume, here we encounter a text that, rather than confronting its audience with a discussion of the approaching end time, emphasizes that the Mongols’ impressive capacities represent heavenly punishment for the sins committed by Christians; interestingly, in this source, the Mongols speak of their own impending destruction to their Christian visitors.

The encyclopedic Livre de Sidrac (likely ca. 1260s), whose text claims authorship before the Common Era, is the subject of Petra Waffner’s “The peoples of end time in the French Livre de Sidrac (13th century).” Originally written in Old French and of undetermined provenance (hypotheses have pointed to France and the Middle East), this source is found in varied manuscripts and versions in several European vernaculars, all dated from the late Middle Ages. The specifics of its transmission and reception remain unclear. The Livre is an extensive catalogue of questions; distinct portions of this text bear unmistakable eschatological traits: most notably, it recounts the history of the world, with a focus on events rather than the peoples responsible for them, all in an encrypted language of ex eventu prophecies. Although some standard topics from contemporary Western prophetic sources are incorporated, the Livre includes little stock content. It foretells an apocalypse that will be instigated by Greek actions; Muhammad later appears as a counter-Christ (as distinct from the Antichrist); and, Mongols are responsible for a broad spectrum of roles during an extensive period of end-time events until the final battles in world history are waged around the “dry tree.”

The previous two papers demonstrate a clear trajectory in Western eschatological interpretations of the Mongols, from a relatively early stage in C. de Bridia (written in the wake of the Mongol defeat of Christian knights in 1241) to the later Livre de Sidrac (where the Mongols are envisioned as apocalyptic allies); that is to say, the imagery moves from singularly dire to far more differentiated. While the Mongols were in Europeans’ sights, their initial onslaught was vividly remembered until the fifteenth century (when the last remains of their empire disappeared and the Ottomans finally became a far more prominent enemy advancing from the East); nonetheless, the Mongols became increasingly familiar to the Latin West as Europeans approached them as travelers, merchants and missionaries, and, in the Middle East, they even were considered allies against the Mamluks. This shift would logically
have anticipated relinquishing their association with Gog and Magog, but that spec-
ter was never completely forgotten. Instead, as Felicitas Schmieder argues in “The ‘natural meekness’ of Gog and Magog? The Mongols as an end-time people in the context of changing knowledge and desires,” rather than ceasing to link the Mongols with Gog and Magog, many sources attributed additional qualities to them. The resil-
ience of imagery relating to Gog and Magog and burgeoning interpretations of the Mongols were likely rooted in the broader significance that Europeans ascribed to this Asian nation: a people as prominent as the Mongols must have a significant place God’s plan. This perspective led to a relativizing position with respect to the existence of an enemy that represented absolute evil; such a modification might be attributed the aforementioned sensus scripturae, which allowed for exegetical inter-
pretations that represented a range of readings that need not be harmonious with one another (for further discussion of such hermeneutical issues, see the paper by Pavlína Cermanová in this volume).

Jewish Peoples of the Apocalypse

From the twelfth century onward, especially in Christian readings, Gog and Magog became increasingly identified with the biblical Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. This ascrip-
tion had negative overtones among Christians (and Muslims) whereas Jews associat-
ed end-time hopes with these tribes.¹³ In this context, the images of Jews and end-
time peoples were closely linked, leading to interesting results with regard to both content and function. Alexandra Cuffel, in “Jewish Tribes and Women in the Genesis and Battle of the Dajjāl: Nuʿayim ibn Ḥammād al-Khuzāʾī al-Marwzī’s Kitāb al-Fitan,” hones in on the multiple and, at times, contradictory roles assigned to Jews in medi-
eval Muslim apocalyptic literature. On the one hand, Jews are depicted as Muslim allies and followers of the Messiah and, on the other, as enemies who appear in the army of the Dajjāl, the opponent of the savior in Muslim apocalypticism. Al-
though scholars commonly ascribe this dissonance to Jewish and Christian influen-
ces on Muslims thought, Cuffel emphasizes – based on her analysis of the Kitāb al-
Fitan des Nuʿayim ibn Ḥammād (al-Khuzāʾī al-Marwzī, ninth century) – the polemical
dialogue that took place in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages between Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions, which were closely intertwined long before they were adopted by Muslims. Nuʿayim’s presentation of a Jewish Dajjāl seems to stem from Christian sources that ascribe Jewish origins to Antichrist (some say from the lost tribe of Dan) and, analogously, claim that the army of the Dajjāl (like that of Ant-
ichrist) would be recruited from Jews. By contrast, Jewish apocalyptic writings,
such as Sefer Zerubavel and similar traditions which mock the virgin birth by tracing Armilos’s maternal lineage to a virgin statue made of stone, seem to provide source material for Nuʿayim’s story of the Dajjāl being born with a statue enclosed within his

¹³ Cf. n. 3.
body. The mother and other female protagonists as well as the improper sexual behavior in the drama of Dajjāl originate with characterizations of Miriam/Maria, mother of Jesus, in Hebrew counter-narratives to the gospels.

As with other papers in this volume, Cuffel’s contribution highlights a hermeneutic entanglement between an eschatological future that informs a moral-political interpretation of the non-apocalyptic present: On the one hand, Jews become the ultimate enemy of Islam who can’t be trusted. On the other hand, Nu‘ayim’s teaching of Jewish tribes who are destined – again influenced by Jewish and Christian sources on the end-time tribes – to join forces with Muslims in their battle against the Dajjāl and his Jewish army point to positive perceptions of actual Jews during the ninth century. Nu‘ayim’s presentation of women conveys similarly ambivalent messages, underscoring a sinister side that is emphasized in tenth to sixteenth century sources, where women, too, will help a false Messiah to mislead believers. Cuffel reads this as a mirror on the changing status of women between the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, when they became ever more restricted to the domestic sphere.

Let us now turn to Armenian perspectives on the eschatological role of Jews. In “Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic Traditions of the 12th Century: a Fictional Community or New Encounters?” Zarouri Pogossian starts on a basic level since her article represents scholarship on the Christian Orient rarely appears in Western languages; it is the sole contribution in this volume dedicated to the lesser studied, yet no less rich, eschatological tradition of a non-orthodox, pre-chalzedonian church (though these traditions are noted by Cuffel in her study of early Islamic texts). This tradition originates in twelfth-century Cilicia (“little Armenia” on Mediterranean coastline, between modern Turkey and Syria), when Armenians were deeply connected not only with eastern Mediterranean religious currents but also with two newcomers, one from Central Asia, one from the Latin West: the Turkic Selčuks and the Crusader movement, respectively. This exposure was the primary catalyst for striking growth in Armenian eschatological literature in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (as in the Latin West but in addition to a general feeling of crisis, prompted by distinctive causalities).

The texts that Pogossian analyzes – the visions of Saint Nerses, the Sermo de Antichristo, the prophecies of Agaton and the Counsel of Vardan Aygek’i – have unified messages of prophetic expectations that call for penitence on the basis of apocalyptic interpretations of present circumstances. The significance of this material extends far beyond the denominational and regional inflections of this prophetic and apocalyptic genre: three of these four texts seem to have remained in circulation for centuries, with evidence of having been adapted according to particular events (including the Armenian encounter with the First Crusade), proven by unambiguous documents and, to some degree, the contradictory positions preserved in their twelfth-century version. Moreover, Armenian texts from the Cilician period do not indicate simple transfer but rather a complex textual production that borrows and adapts motifs, and also relies on oral traditions and versions, thus mirroring Armenians’ dynamic political alliances during turbulent times.
Pogossian illustrates the Armenian view on peoples considered outsiders by discussing their projections of Jews’ roles in the apocalypse, as presented in “historical apocalypses” that engage past and present events that are interpreted in light of a prophesied future. In their presentation of apocalyptic enemies (and alliances), these sources include not only (Byzantine) Christians but certain Muslim groups as well as tribes that were physically barred by Alexander the Great, along with Gog and Magog. The role of Jews here tends to be consistent with other sources (as outlined in Cuffel’s article, improper sexual behavior by the Antichrist’s Jewish mother is mentioned here); however, Armenian texts also convey elements that are without parallel in other apocalyptic literature, especially with respect to the ultimate Jewish conversion to Christianity and their martyrdom by the Antichrist. In these narratives, the portrait of Jews goes well beyond the biblical foundation, where it is subject to political trends and Jews are accused of cooperating with a Muslim enemy. While the eschatological meaning of Byzantines and, moreover, of Muslims for Cilician Armenians (who were predominantly refugees that had been driven out by Selçuks) are easily explained, the significance of Jews in this scenario is far less clear. An in-depth study of the sources – seeking local and foreign traditions in Armenian texts and translations from other languages – and a contextual examination of the political, religious and intellectual climate of twelfth-century Cilicia, leads to the justifiable query whether a real encounter between Armenians and Jews took place in Cilicia.

Jewish interest in eschatological narratives and the fate of the Ten Lost Tribes prompted a favorable interweaving of these themes into yet another messianic context. The third article in this section examines how Jews viewed themselves as an eschatological people: In “Back to the Future: The Ten Tribes and Messianic Hopes in Jewish Society during the Early Modern Age,” Moti Benmelech looks through the prism of correspondence between Jews in Italy and the land of Israel (circa 1430 to 1530) during a proliferation of reported rediscoveries of the Ten Tribes. Due to their aforementioned role as an end-time army for the liberation of Jerusalem, the rumored reappearance of the Ten Lost Tribes held messianic and thus political significance. While waves of preoccupation with the Ten Tribes had surfaced in the past – e.g. the ninth century, when Eldad ha-Dani (of the tribe of Dan) purportedly appeared – Benmelech explains how fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Jewish responses to such accounts differed from earlier patterns. Whereas the Eldad episode was deemed to have halakhic significance, other “sightings” of the Ten Tribes had been discussed in theological and exegetical contexts. Benmelech contextualizes the absence of an eschatological response in these earlier instances by citing contemporaneous discourses that exploited reports on the reappearance of the Ten Tribes without messianic implications. For Jews in the diaspora, he claims, the Ten Tribes were unreachable and void of political meaning until the late Middle Ages.

Benmelech explains that the imminent messianic import the Ten Tribes and, especially, their alleged military successes in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries were outcomes of particular historical constellation: the strengthened diplomatic ties between Italians and Ethiopia – which had been identified since the early fourteenth
century as the realm of Prester John which was long envisioned in close vicinity to the Jewish lost tribes – raised hopes for the discovery of the Ten Tribes; however, Jewish adaptations of the fearsome qualities ascribed to the Red Jews in Christian eschatological traditions from German-speaking regions – that had reached northern Italy via Jewish migrations – were also influential. This article concludes by observing that rumors about the Ten Tribes not only spurred messianic activity among Jews but, at the opposite end of the spectrum, these same portents were used to justify and reinforce a passive stance for, even as expectations of salvation intensified, the mighty forces beyond the Sambatyon River would surely prevail without reinforcements from diasporic Jewry.

**Muslim Perspectives**

Anna Akasoy’s “Al-Andalus and the Andalusis in the Islamic Apocalyptic Tradition” is situated in a western Islamic region that had long been separated from the Caliphate in Bagdad. Once more we find evidence of the entanglement of diverse traditions within the Islamic world noted in Cuffel’s work (above; and, below, we will encounter a Christian perspective on the Iberian Peninsula from an early-modern English vantage point). Andalusians might have been viewed as a shining hope for Umayyad Sunnis who longed for an eschatological conquest over Shiite Egypt; however, considering their geographic position in the Islamic sphere, they were more commonly seen as a marginal and, at times, a heretical presence. Rarely were Andalusians posited as an end-time people. The source for the study is the *Kitab al-Fitan (Book of Burdens)* by Abū ’abdallāh Nu‘aym (d. 844 CE), one of Islam’s earliest apocalyptic eschatological texts. Its author seems to have learned about al-Andalus in Egypt, which was considered the “motherland of Andalusian historiography.” One prophetic tradition announces that a group of Andalusians (sometimes identified as Muslims, sometimes as non-Muslims) would cross the sea to fight the Egyptians who, in some versions, are supported by Syrians. In a parallel version, these Andalusians become allied with Turks, Byzantines and Ethiopians. For this example – which could be located historically but need not be – we could pose the core questions that pertain to similar apocalyptic narratives: First, could such a prophecy, focusing on a specific people, have been spurred by historical circumstances and thus anticipated events that would have been recognizable for a contemporary audience? Alternatively, could this narrative have been compelling precisely because of its unexpected teachings? Or, rather, by the potency of literary traditions related to the people being named and, therefore, recalled? In Islamic literature, al-Andalus is a region for jihad where Muslims become either fighters or martyrs; Muslims must defend their religion despite perilous conditions, much as the prophet once did. The special role of al-Andalus has been kept alive in the Islamic world precisely because of its tenuous position.
In Muslim apocalyptic literature, both Andalusians and Turks, whose end-time roles have been touched on above, are specified as enemies during the end time given their roles as internal and external challenges to the Islamic world. For Turks, who were accepted as Muslims by Muslim observers who wrote in Arabic, ethnicity is the distinctive element; whereas, for Andalusians, cultural distinctiveness is at issue. In this corpus, Andalusians can thus be designated as unbelievers as well as Muslims.

Given the speed with which Turks embraced Islam, much like those earlier Arab and Persian observers, David Cook’s “The Image of the Turk in Classical and Modern Muslim Apocalyptic Literature” shows how the oscillation between their depictions as end-time enemies versus defenders of Islam are parallel to fluctuating political realities. Cook traces tendencies in Muslim apocalypticism from its nascent stages to the present. Classic texts that refer to Turkish military strength generally denigrate this people as progeny of Japhet (Noah’s third son) or as Gog and Magog. Contrary to reality, in such sources, Turks are usually painted as non-Muslims who are allied with the Byzantines, mortal enemies of Islam, and, together with Jews, as followers of the Dajjāl. The occasional positive, messianic role of Turks was fortified in the thirteenth century, when another fearsome people emerged from the steppes: the Mongols, who were more readily identified as Gog and Magog. This was but one of the defining changes in the political landscape; another was the clash between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which prompted re-interpretations, rejections and renewals of longstanding suspicions. Within living memory, the independence of Arabic states from the Ottoman Empire ultimately fueled anti-Turkish sentiments in Muslim apocalyptic literature, which was reinforced in the 1990s and 2000s, as modern Turkey approached the West and brokered peace with Israel.

Protestant Variations

In this section we move to the late Middle Ages; it is noteworthy that our use of the term “protestant” is not limited to movements that resulted from the Reformation. The four articles presented here discuss: Hussites vis-à-vis their precursors and opponents; the Anabaptists of Münster; the struggle between the English High Church and Protestants; and, fifteenth-century anti-clerical laity who raised their voices against the religious establishment. Time and again, identification of certain actors with Gog and Magog or comparable, negative eschatological players is only one part of the equation; the assertion of one’s own group as an affirming force in the end time is at least as significant. Latin Christian prophecy became far more complex in the late Middle Ages but its study is confounded by the meager number of critical editions. We are fortunate to have promising young scholars in the field whose work is featured here.
In “Gog and Magog: Using Concepts of Apocalyptic Enemies in the Hussite era,” Pavlína Cermanová opens her study of Hussite Bohemia with an overview of the factors that typified contemporaneous apocalyptic interpretation, with particular attention to their sources and regional familiarity with them. In Hussite eschatology, Gog and Magog are none other than Jews and personae identified with the key problems of their time: hypocrites and heretics, false prophets and schismatics, Beghards and Beguines. Insecurity bred a desire for screens on which societal anguish could be projected and for a bright line to demarcate right from wrong, within communal structures and as a barrier to outsiders. As is well known, Latin European tradition has transmitted a large reservoir of possible interpretations for Gog and Magog; in an effort to define the possible associations in this milieu, Cermanova gathered translations of the works that were available in Bohemia to Hussites and their adversaries, including major works, such as Pseudo-Methodius’s apocalypse or Peter Comestor’s Historia Scholastica and extant versions of the Alexander Romance, and less prominent texts that were instrumental in spreading tangible expectations for Gog and Magog, such as Jacques de Vitry’s Historia Orientalis, Pseudo-Joachim of Fiore’s Super Isaiam, works by a Joachite, John of Rupeiscissa (crucial for the study of Bohemia), and the Alexander Minorita’s commentary on the Apocalypse. Special attention is placed on texts that do not place Gog and Magog within a Jewish framework, thereby opening the possibility of association with the end-time peoples as a means for denigrating any opponent, especially in times of crisis like the pre-Hussite and Hussite periods. It is particularly striking how rarely Gog and Magog were actually mentioned, especially by comparison to the frequency with which the Antichrist was referred to during that same era. Gog and Magog are discussed in three cases: their meaning for church history, symbols of evil in the Church and society of that time and place, and, as a necessary evil in the process of reaching redemption. Cermanova documents this pattern in the works of four authors whose lifetimes span nearly a century: Milic of Kremsier (d. 1374), Mathias of Janov (d. 1393), Jacobo of Mies (d. 1429), and Nikolaus Biskupec of Pilgrim (d. 1460).

Further west, but in close proximity to Hussite Bohemia, clerics and a growing segment of the laity were contemplating the signs of the times and the end of time. The brothers Wirsberger, discussed by Frances Courtney Kneupper in “The Wirsberger Brothers: Contesting Spiritual Authority through Prophecy,” exemplify such lay thinkers. In 1467, Livin Wirsberger, a noble from the land of Eger (in the vicinity of Hussite country), was accused and convicted of heresy in Regensburg after he had been distributing prophetic letters for years to members of the high nobility, ranking personages in imperial cities, the Franciscan provincial of Saxony and the theological faculties of Erfurt, Leipzig and Vienna. The contents of this correspondence verged on a personal interpretation of the gospels, which he probed in hopes of solving the ardent problems of the time – reform of Church and society – by announcing the end of the world.

Admittedly, the two letters to Nuremberg provided as exemplars raise questions regarding their author’s psychological stability; nevertheless, they articulate “a per-
ceptible, articulated eschatological program [stating that the end will come in 1471], as well as a conscious campaign to spread this program and to obtain the ear and approval of the people of the Reich.”¹⁴ These are not compositions from the learned (clerical) elite but samples of lay popular prophecy (defined as accessible to all literate circles of society, both clerical and lay, and therefore mostly in the vernacular). Namely, these letters represent a source which is rarely preserved. Here we can grasp the eschatological ideas of people who were outside of the official church, beyond the bounds of spiritual and political identity in the fifteenth-century Empire, which were taking hold in the contested space of end-time prophecy that clerics had to increasingly share with the general public. In this atmosphere, the factors that secured a clerical monopoly on interpreting God’s word were being undermined: language was controversial, clerical authority was scrutinized and control over knowledge of the future was disputed. The brothers Wirsberger were fully aware of their precarious situation: they were boldly anti-Latin and, thus, anti-clerical, they nursed fantasies of violence, and they cultivated biblical interpretations that countered false clerical teachings, while hinting that the clergy were aligned with the Antichrist. Nevertheless, they could also appear submissive, for they approached religious and secular leaders, requesting that these authorities assess their interpretations so they might ascertain whether their visions were from God or the devil. Paradoxically, their use of the vernacular enlarged their audience in some respects while limiting it in others. These texts are unreservedly pro-German, expressing a German-centered eschatology. Therein lies the critical role of the imperial cities, explaining why Nuremberg, Regensburg, Erfurt, Eger are asked for approval despite their lack of clerical authority: they represented the Empire, the Zion of prophecy, Germans and their prescribed end-time roles.

The eschatology of the Anabaptists of Münster is rooted in the Reformation era, as Anselm Schubert presents in “Nova israhelis republica: The realm of the Anabaptists at Münster 1534 – 35 as the true Israel.” This group of reformers acted with expectations of a literal and imminent end since they understood themselves as the holy, chosen people who would become the surviving remnant. This community organized their lives according to a hierarchy that followed the biblical model and incorporated aspects of rabbinic tradition. After presenting a critical overview of the latest scholarship, Schubert studies how and under which conditions the establishment and legitimization of this rule of Zion was successful, that is, how the Anabaptist realm of Münster was organized and how its residents made their town the “heavenly Jerusalem.” In Westfalia the teachings of an Anabaptist leader, Melchior Hofmann, was implemented: the Anabaptists would survive as “spiritual Jerusalem” (in the sense of verus Israel, the true Israel) in a terrestrial town identified as eschatological Jerusalem, defy the evil powers of end time until the second coming of Christ. Once the expected date of the end time – Easter 1534 – had elapsed and fol-

¹⁴ Kneupper in this volume, p. 258.
ollowing the death of Jan Mathijs, Jan van Leiden, the new head of Anabaptist Münster, returned to the theme of New Jerusalem, reinterpreting it as a means to explain the failed prophecy: the end of the world would only come once all of Münster became completely holy, as the exemplar that would inspire reversals throughout the world. The model for such a holy community was, naturally, Old Israel: its Old Testament institutions, its judiciary, then its monarchical constitution were emulated. This interpretive paradigm was maintained during the siege of Münster, with reference to the redemption of Israel who had been enslaved in Egypt when God turned away from His people.

As king of New Israel, Jan van Leiden was celebrated as David redivivus, as David restored, but without the usual eschatological identification with the Messiah. This new David was interpreted as the Hauptmann (captain) who would be the harbinger of Christ’s second coming. Schubert speculates that this teaching may have been adapted from the post-biblical Jewish messianic topos of a warlike Messiah ben Josef who will pave the way for the true Messiah ben David. This position makes affirms that the Anabaptists of Münster, rather than claiming to represent the thousand years of Christ’s rule on earth, actually understood themselves as the “true Israel” who would ready the world for the millennium, thereby fulfilling Old-Testament prophecies of salvation for (Old) Israel typologically, an unusual interpretation within the Radical Reformation.

Such positive self-identification as an end-time people was exceptional; in the early modern period, focusing on enemies was the norm, as the remaining articles in this section underscore. We next turn our focus to the New Israel of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. As Andreas Pečar explains in “England’s salvation and God’s enemies Gog and Magog: England’s threatened political identity as a “protestant nation” (1588–1640),” in this scenario, the peoples of the end time are yet again portrayed as a looming external force. When England reads itself as New Israel, it does so in a spiritual sense, where the Church has replaced Jews as the people of the Covenant. As Pečar shows, in the sixteenth century, Gog and Magog became constitutive for England’s political-religious self-concept as a Protestant nation and the paradigm for determining allies and foes. Here too, the reference to the Apocalypse of John cannot only be understood eschatologically, but as a justification of England’s mission in the world and its religious policy. The standard reformation position saw the pope as the Antichrist or, together with the Turks, as Gog and Magog. In the end time, which was considered imminent, England would participate in the battle against the powers of evil. The Spaniards, when their Armada attacked England in 1588, could thus become an apocalyptic people (see Akasoy’s article) which was destined for defeat by the chosen England with the help of God.

Interestingly, this interpretation continued to have currency after the peace treaty with Spain in 1603. For the Scottish King James VI who, after the death of Elizabeth I, was crowned James I of England, this narrative was a rhetorical tool that proved the strength of his Protestant convictions and his loyalty toward England. This was particularly important since James had been baptized a Catholic though he was raised
Calvinist, had promoted a trans-confessional Christian union against the Turks and had extended greater tolerance to English Catholics than his predecessors on the English throne. These tendencies caused many faithful Englishmen to worry that their country might deviate from the plan for salvation prescribed in the Apocalypse of John. In his article, Pečar emphasizes the consequences that rhetorical statements which invoked biblical end-time prophecies had for political debates and resultant decisions and actions: from the demand that the English Parliament grant Catholics permission to worship freely, to England’s position in the Thirty Years War.

**Non-Apocalyptic Peoples of the End Time**

In contrast to the preceding sections that, despite some consideration of earlier traditions, concentrated on the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the early modern period, the contributions here return to early-medieval Latin-Christian eschatology. In “Apocalyptic Outsiders and their Uses in the Early Medieval West,” James T. Palmer studies outsiders – in the guise of foreign tribes (in the classic apocalyptic sense of Gog and Magog) as well as individuals and groups (e.g. heretical persons or movements) – in early medieval Western Christendom. These outsiders have been typologically marked by four defining features: First, the notion of outsiders is related to the question of evil in the world, evidenced by the (real or literary) antagonistic dichotomies between the groups involved. Second, geographical positioning has considerable weight: North functions as the home of “evil tribes,” namely Gog and Magog, as derived from the Goths of late Antiquity and the medieval Normans; in contrast, the civilized South is threatened by apocalyptic outsiders. Third, the dynamics of conflict are expressed through dissonance, especially when one culture is endangered by an external foe within an apocalyptic scenario. Finally, the appearance of outsiders evokes passive reactions – i.e. when groups or individuals were identified with Gog and Magog – though there is potential for a more active response. That is to say, the populace and/or their ruler could take the initiative to thwart an apocalyptic menace. Palmer distinguishes between internal and external enemies; the latter category includes Jews, whose connection to Antichrist had been asserted since the early eighth century, especially by the apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. Apocalyptic outsiders could generate incentives for societal reform, especially in the moral sphere, by holding up a mirror so society might recognize its own shortcomings, thereby serving as a catalyst for improvement. Furthermore, the presence of admonishers, whose faith has been tried yet remains firm, could offer spiritual reinforcement for the status quo.

In the context of eleventh-century Church reform, Christian eschatology turned inward, thus joining the discourse on moral decline. In “Christian Moral Decline: A New Context for the Sibylla Tiburtina (Ms Escorial & I.3),” Anke Holdenried analyzes the example of the Sybilla Tiburtina – which must be viewed in the context of Cluny – in the scholarly dispute on whether prophetic eschatology can be isolated
from the impending end. This article concentrates on the period when the *Tiburtina*
begins to be physically transmitted (the Escorial manuscript at the heart of this study
is dated to 1047), irrespective of speculation regarding manuscripts that never exist-
ed or are no longer extant, e.g. in the context of *Reichseschatologie* (imperial apoc-
alypticism).

In its Iberian context – in which Muslims are present, if weakened – the Escorial
manuscript, with its far-reaching popularity (measured by the number of extant cop-
ies and their locations), seems anything but imperial. Rather, drawing on late anti-
que exhortations, suffering for moral lapses, punishment for sins, and potential bet-
terment are emphasized; this ethical component was not unusual, but it met a
special need in eleventh century societies that were craving reform. Holdenried con-
tends that such moral underpinnings should receive greater attention; awareness of
this component of these texts should complement (not compete with) their anagogi-
cal sense, as several articles in this volume likewise argue.

In the context of Church reform, Delia Kottmann investigates the famous murals
in the Abbey Church Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe, which primarily illustrate the Nar-
thex with selections from the Book of Revelation as representations of the struggle
against the Empire (“The Apocalyptic Cycle of the Romanesque Murals in the Nar-
thex of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe (Vienne): Do They Illustrate Political Ideas of Gre-
gorian Reform?”). These late eleventh-century Narthex paintings, which have many
gaps (only five of originally twelve scenes are well preserved), depict the Apocalypse
of John. Much as spiritual and especially allegorical approaches dominated readings
of this New Testament book between c. 400 and c. 1200, over and above historical or
visionary understandings, so too should the murals in Saint-Savin be viewed with
moral inflections, expressing a longing for better times. In this context, they commu-
nicate political ideas from the Gregorian reform that upheld the supremacy of Church
and Papacy. Kottmann studies one scene, which incorporates the ark of the cove-
nant, apocalyptic women (*mulier amicta sole*; the woman clothed with the sun)
and a dragon, as well as New Jerusalem as the bride of Christ. The woman in
Apoc. Ch. 12 is read with a lesser Marian emphasis and a stronger ecclesiological
one, highlighting the authority of the Church. The selection and presentation of
these scenes, their iconographic idiosyncrasies, their emphasis on persons and rela-
tionships, and, not least, the choice of colors (*hyacinthus, purpura, coccus, byssus* –
representing the four cardinal virtues and the four elements) all suggest that both art-
ist and sponsor had *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (written ca. 1080 – 1081) in mind,
through which its author, Bruno of Segni, enters political discourse.

As we have seen, the end time is obviously the common thread that links the pa-
ers collected here, but it should be noted that moral purification and, thus, divine
retribution frequently come to the fore as well. The political patterns of interpretation
discussed above permeate this scholarship, indicating that they may also have been
a priority for the prophetic thinkers studied here.