APOCALYPTIC THOUGHT IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND, *C.* 1350 TO *C.* 1425

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Abstract

This thesis examines how apocalyptic thought was understood, interpreted and portrayed in late-medieval England. Apocalypticism in this area and time has been underexplored compared to on the continent, where responses to anxieties regarding the end of time resulted in violence. In addressing this historiographical gap, this thesis draws on a multitude of source materials, including biblical commentaries, prophecies, illuminations, wall paintings, stonework, and stained glass. The thesis considers a series of case studies which reveal a variety of experiences and engagements with apocalyptic thought.

The first chapter examines the Westminster Apocalypse to see how the apocalypse was portrayed within the Latin commentary tradition and how it may have been understood by its aristocratic audience. The second chapter discusses three prophetic texts to examine how prophecy intersected with apocalyptic thought, particularly among the clergy. The third chapter traces the circulation of the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius throughout late-medieval England, assessing how it was adapted for new and varying audiences. The final chapter considers a range of visual material about the end of the world, providing a glimpse into how communities, particularly poorer, uneducated and illiterate ones, engaged with apocalyptic thought.

This research shows that apocalyptic thought involved both the reshaping of older texts for new audiences and the creation of new materials. Such creations often provided a means for people to examine the world around them, as well as a way of improving their chance of reaching salvation. This thesis also demonstrates that the end of the world often intersected with how people viewed contemporary politics, religion and societal issues. In turn, it provided a basis in which individuals could understand their place in the history of both England and Christianity.

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Introduction

The late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries in England saw rapid change religiously, politically, socially and culturally. The Black Death ravaged much of the population in 1348-50, and the continuation of bouts of plague throughout the late-fourteenth century did much to destabilise the lives of the English. Politically, England underwent the reigns of four kings (Edward III, Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V), including the deposition of one of these kings, and upheaval in the form of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, as well as the Hundred Years War with France. Further abroad, the Western Schism of 1378-1417 saw England take the side first of the Roman Popes, and later the Pisan Popes from 1409. Despite these many influential and divisive events affecting the lives of the people of England, traditional orthodox religious life continued to flourish throughout the later Middle Ages until the eve of the Reformation.[1] It is within this flourishing religiosity that apocalyptic thought in examined.

Apocalypticism, the study of eschatology and the end of the world, has been an intrinsic part of Christian theology from its inception in the first century AD. Coming from the Greek word *apokalypsis,* meaning 'a revelation' or 'unveiling of truths', by the Middle Ages, it was considered, more specifically, to refer to 'literary compositions which resemble the book of Revelation; i.e. secret divine disclosures about the end of the world and the heavenly state.'[2] Early apocalypticism was to be found in many of the biblical books but was especially important in Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel and parts of the Synoptic Gospels, which discussed Jesus' vision of the end days.[3] However, by the later Middle Ages, many more beliefs and explanations had arisen which inspired a sense of apocalypticism, such as through the Apocrypha, the Sibylline prophecies, Augustine's *Six World Ages* theory, the influence of Byzantine thought, and the writings of Joachim of Fiore, which posited the imminency of the last days in the form of the oncoming Antichrist. The multi-faceted nature of apocalyptic thought by the later Middle Ages is the subject of this thesis. Specifically, it aims to highlight

[1] E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (2nd ed., Yale and London, 2005), p. 35; G. W. Bernard, *The Late Medieval Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome* (New Haven and London, 2012), pp. 117-8; N. Tanner, *The Ages of Faith: Popular Religion in Late Medieval England and Western Europe* (London and New York, 2009), p. 139.

[2] J. J. Collins, 'Introduction: Towards a Morphology of a Genre' in J. J. Collins (ed.), *Apocalypse: A Morphology of a Genre* (Evaston, 1979), p. 2.

[3] V. P. Zimbaro, *Encyclopaedia of Apocalyptic Literature* (California, 1996), p. 20.

how those living in late-medieval England understood and thought about the end of the world through this tumultuous time.

Context

The thesis rests on the central premise that apocalyptic thought is an important aspect to consider when studying late-medieval England. Christians saw history as being on a defined and preordained historical path as stated in the Bible, starting with the creation of the world as described in Genesis and moving along this trajectory to culminate at the end of the world and the Last Judgment, as prophesied in Revelation. As such, apocalypticism looked not only to the future but also to the past, showing how the two were perceived as inextricably linked. Consequently, it became incredibly influential in the popular understanding of how history developed, and how it would culminate.[4] This thesis argues that in writing about history, politics, society and prophecy, the apocalypse provided the parameters through which to understand the present and helped to explain how contemporary events could be folded into the greater narrative of salvation and judgment. Thus, to study apocalyptic source material is to understand how the people of late-medieval England saw themselves, how they conceptualised themselves in relation to others, and to the wider history of humankind.

The thesis focuses on late-medieval England in particular, between *c*. 1350 and *c*. 1425. Late-medieval England has been comparatively neglected within apocalyptic scholarship. Much of the focus on England's understanding of apocalypticism has centred on the early medieval period, with particular attention given to Bede and the Viking age. Bede's interpretation of time led to a redating of the apocalyptic calendar, moving the imminent apocalypse further away from his period, and allowing for its continued presence in the later Middle Ages.[5] By contrast, the Viking raids on England and subsequent settlement there can be seen to predicate the sort of apocalyptic attitude that developed towards the 'other', which

[4] B. E. Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge and London, 2009), p. 174.

[5] J. T. Palmer, 'The Ends and Futures of Bede's *De temporum ratione',* in P. Darby and F. Wallis (eds.), *Bede and the Future* (Abingdon, 2014), pp.139-140. See also: P. Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham, 2012); C. Chazelle, 'Debating the End Times at Bede's Wearmouth-Jarrow', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 80 (2015), pp. 212-32; R.A. Markus, 'Gregory and Bede: The Making of the Western Apocalyptic Tradition', *Gregorio Magno nel XIV Centenario della morte, Atti dei convegni Lincei,* 209 (2004), pp. 247-56.

continued to present itself in the material discussed throughout this thesis.[6] Interactions with foreigners became an important point of contention which could be illustrated within an apocalyptic framework, by casting the 'other' in the role of beasts, demons or the 'Ishmaelites.' Moreover, scholarship has also emphasised the uniqueness of the year 1000 as an avenue for understanding apocalyptic expectation, with analysis of sermons written by Ælfric and Wulfstan, as well as examinations of the Blickling and Vercelli homily cycles. These sermons can be seen as being intrinsically apocalyptic in their fearmongering and their focus on the imminent approaching end, and consequently it has attracted particular attention from scholars.[7] While some scholars such as Peter Klein and Edward Peters have rejected the idea that people genuinely believed and feared the end of the world would occur in the year 1000, the tendency to emphasise individual momentous events or years as the key to understanding the apocalypse has led to a dearth of longer-range studies of English apocalypticism.[8]

Studies focusing on apocalypticism in late-medieval England tend either to point forward to the Protestant Reformation and give this as the reason for the interest in apocalypticism in the later Middle Ages, or to look backwards to the Black Death as the reason for the continued existence of apocalypticism.[9] Still, this relies on seeing apocalypticism as a means to an end, rather than a topic worthy of discussion in its own right. The need to explain its continued existence, or to view it as the cause or result of events, does

[6] M. Godden, 'Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in D. Gray, M. Godden and T. F. Hoad (eds.), *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies Presented to E.G. Stanley* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 130-1. See also: M. Godden, 'The Millennium, Time and History for the Anglo-Saxons', in R. Landes, A. Gow and D. C. van Meter (eds.), *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectations and Social Change 950-1050* (Oxford, 2003), pp.155-180; C. Cubitt, 'Apocalyptic and Eschatological Thought in England around the Year 1000', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6/25 (2015), pp. 27-52.

[7] T. Stepanov, *Waiting for the End of the World: European Dimensions, 950-1200* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 160-163. See also: A. Lemke, 'Fearmongering, Political Shrewdness or Setting the Stage for a "Holy Society"? — Wulfstan's Sermo Lupi ad Anglos', *English Studies* 95 (2014), pp. 758–76; L. Roach, 'Apocalypse and Atonement in the Politics of Æthelredian England', *English Studies 95* (2014), pp. 733-57.

[8] P. Klein, 'Medieval Apocalypse Cycles and Eschatological Expectations: The So-Called "Terrors" of the Year 1000' in R. E. Guglielmetti (ed.), *L'apocalisse nel medioevo* (Florence, 2009), pp. 267-301; E. Peters, 'Mutation, Adjustments, Terrors, Historians, and the Year 1000', in M. Frassetto (ed.), *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium* (New York, 2002), p. 9-28.

[9] C. V. Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Leiden, 1998), p. 195; R. Horrox, *The Black Death* (Manchester and New York, 1994), p. 3.

a disservice to this complex topic, one which medieval people were distinctly concerned about. The end of the world would have occupied the minds of many to different degrees in medieval England, and accordingly, it should be treated as its own topic of discussion by historians. As such, we should aim to see apocalypticism as a part of the continuation of a strong and vigorous religious life in England throughout the later Middle Ages, in that it provided an interesting way of discussing ideas about salvation and repentance, as well as more earthly problems such as politics and society. Some headway has been made in discussing apocalypticism in late-medieval English literature, as can be seen in Justin Byron-Davies's work. His approach of treating the sources within their context and on their own merit, rather than projecting them onto the great events of history, allows them to breathe.[10]

While some efforts have been made to discuss apocalypticism in a late-medieval English context as and when it arises, little headway has been made in terms of scholarship that deals directly with apocalyptic thought within late-medieval England. While there are books that directly examine apocalypticism in the Early Middle Ages, or on the continent, there are few, if any, that deal with apocalypticism within a late-medieval English context.[11] Leslie Coote's *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* provides a framework for viewing the relationship between prophecy and politics, and a lens through which to understand the prophecies assessed in my second chapter.[12] However, given the remit of the book, apocalyptic literature and sources, in general, are not discussed. Similarly, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton's *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* discusses some of the interactions between revelatory material (in which apocalyptic thought was often used) and responses to this material by Church officials.[13] However, a substantial amount of revelatory and religious texts containing apocalyptic thought was not inherently radical, and so circulated without much scrutiny from Church officials. While uses of it could be subversive or heretical in tone, as seen abroad by the Spiritual Franciscans to justify their rallying against the Church, uses of this material for the purpose of disseminating dissenting ideas appear very rarely, if at all, within a late

[10] J. M. Byron-Davies, *Revelation and the Apocalypse in Late Medieval Literature* (Cardiff, 2020).

[11] See, for example: J. T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2014), R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1997) and M. A. Ryan (ed.), *A Companion to the Premodern Apocalypse* (Leiden, 2016).

[12] L. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (York, 2000).

[13] K. Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance in Later Medieval England* (Notre Dame, 2008).

medieval English context.[14] Nevertheless, the examination of this material still proves both interesting and important, as it provides contrast between countries, and gives insight into its interpretation within a late-medieval English context. Further, a more general study of the multiplicity of apocalyptic thought on offer to those living in late medieval England has not been attempted. While one could point to Curtis V. Bostick's *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England* as an authority on apocalyptic thought in late-medieval England, its central concern is the apocalypticism of the Lollards, rather than an examination more generally of how apocalyptic thought was understood and interacted with by a variety of people in late medieval England.[15] Therefore, it is important to bring together a range of apocalyptic sources to explore the diversity and significance of apocalyptic thought at all levels of English society.

Research Aims and Methodology

This research seeks to investigate how the apocalypse was understood and used in late-medieval England. A wealth of material on the end of the world can be found in the years following the Black Death, most of which has been unexplored in terms of how people viewed the apocalypse. Bringing these apocalyptic sources together is important to gain a deeper understanding of late-medieval English life, and to begin to bridge the gap between studies of early medieval apocalyptic thought and the early modern period. With this in mind, this thesis asks what apocalyptic sources meant to the people who produced and consumed them. Many of the apocalyptic sources are also interested in discussions about community, identity, politics and religion, and these discussions are often interrelated with beliefs and thoughts regarding the end of the world. They reflect a sense of how people understood their contemporary world, and it should be asked of them, 'How were apocalyptic sources used to understand late-medieval England?'. As such, examining these sources can bring us greater depth regarding the lived realities of people in late-medieval England. The apocalypse was also linked to sin and salvation, as well as salvation history more generally, raising questions concerning how apocalyptic thought fitted into the greater narrative of history, and how it was used to portray the hopes and fears of Christians living in England in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries. Finally, the thesis asks whether apocalypticism continued into

[14] D. Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century after Saint Francis* (Philadelphia, 2001) p. 209.

[15] Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards,* pp. 51-75. Chapters 1-2 are spent introducing the topic and the period, with chapter 3 onwards discussing Lollard apocalypticism specifically.

the late medieval period, and if so how and in what form? This thesis aims to answer these questions and get us closer to the thoughts and views of those living in late-medieval England, and to aid understanding of how apocalypticism fitted into medieval life.

A case study approach was chosen due to the vast amount of available textual and pictorial material. This methodology allows for an examination of the abundance of different materials, in which each case study highlights different themes and ideas related to apocalyptic thought. A range of different sources from a variety of different regions, authors and audiences was chosen, to examine the sorts of arguments and thoughts that were present. Each source is thoroughly analysed so that the author, audience, and context may be used to guide how and what can be read from the sources. This entails providing as much information as possible regarding the author, scribe, their backgrounds, and the location of the source's production, as well as any similarities to other sources. This makes sure that every source is as close as possible to its original context, to provide a lens through which to view each source in turn. As such, the approach taken is similar to that in Christopher de Hamel's *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts,* in which he starts with the source, locating it within the context of its time, and then moves outwards to extrapolate what it may tell us about the people who produced and consumed it.[16] Consideration is given also to the secondary audiences of the texts and images, beyond the original intended audiences. This is because of the inherent intertextual transfer of sources, in which old texts were copied, altered and situated into new texts. This allowed for the continued circulation of ideas throughout the medieval world, which by its very nature, produced new meanings and feelings within different audiences.[17]

Further examination of the sources has also been undertaken through the comparison of apocalyptic texts and images. This is accomplished on two levels. The first is to compare different copies of the same text to see where there are parallels or discrepancies and what they might indicate about how people perceived the end of the world. For example, in chapter 2, multiple versions of the *Columbinus Prophecy* are examined, while in chapter 3, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* is tracked through its various iterations that circulated in late-medieval England. The second involves comparing different texts and material sources more broadly in order to spot commonalities or contrasts between them as well as any

[16] C. de Hamel, *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts* (London, 2016), pp. 1-3, 5-8.

[17] M. Fischer, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus, 2012), pp. 1-2.

overarching views or interests that they share. Suggestions as to why this may be the case have been offered based on the appropriate evidence available. Bringing the sources together in the conclusion means that an assessment can be made about how different people conceptualised, understood, and portrayed the apocalypse in late-medieval England.

A rationale for selecting sources was developed. The material presented in the thesis had to be diverse in terms of genre, author, audience, geography and language. This ensured that the thesis depicted the ideas and beliefs of a wide array of people in late-medieval England, making it as representative as possible of its various communities and people. The changing nature of the apocalypse was often dependent on both the author/scribe and the audience of each particular source since this often changed the central focus and themes to convey certain messages. Subsequently, an exploration of the types of people who would have come into contact with apocalyptic material is important, and the variations between different social, political and religious groups should be highlighted. In particular, more recent apocalyptic scholarship is beginning to tackle the question of audience, which in the past has been often overlooked in favour of a top-down approach to apocalyptic material which favoured ideas and their authors. This criterion also highlights the breadth of forms that apocalypticism could take and the sorts of different apocalyptic material that was circulating in late-medieval England. An author and audience approach will bring out the multifaceted nature of the sources, providing ample exploration of what apocalyptic thought meant to different people.

Examining author and audience highlights the importance of imported and altered material in late-medieval England. Some of the material presented in this thesis was circulating in previous centuries but saw renewed prominence in the fourteenth and early-fifteenth. In assessing this material, it will be seen how it was understood by its ‘new’ audiences, rather than its original audience living in the early Middle Ages or from outside England. Many of these imported works had new relevance for their audience, and they should be analysed in this state while also acknowledging their original intentions and understandings. Additionally, the dissemination of Joachite literature, frequently from the continent, and the visual representation of apocalypticism all indicate the diverse nature of apocalyptic thought in late-medieval England. The examination of possible audiences for the apocalyptic material chosen, all with their own unique perspectives and beliefs on the end of the world, provides a distinct dimension to the thesis. For example, while the *Westminster Apocalypse* allows for an examination into aristocratic circles, the chapter on Henry of

Kirkstede's *Prophetiae* provides an exploration of both apocalyptic thought within monastic circles. As will be shown, some of these sources, such as the Norwich cloister bosses and the *Great East Window*, often straddled the line between different communities, curating a variety of interactions and interpretations. By considering a variety of sources, it can be seen how apocalypticism was shaped by the ideas, convictions, and perceptions of the people who engaged with it. This also enables us to begin to uncover the voices of more underrepresented people whose beliefs and thoughts are often lost in discussions of medieval life, such as semi-literate or non-literate men and women along with children. This is particularly why the last chapter is dedicated to visual sources, such as the *Pricke of Conscience* window and the *Signs of Doomsday* alabasters, as many of these sources had little to no writing and yet could still be comprehensible and meaningful to different audiences.

The apocalyptic material has also been chosen to survey a wide range of source types, forms and genres. As a result, the chapters covered here include one on the commentary tradition (the *Westminster Apocalypse)*, one on prophecies (the *Columbinus Prophecy* and the Latin pope prophecies), one on a revelatory apocalypse that had circulated at a much earlier time (the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*), and one that discusses apocalyptic visual culture (including visual material such as stained glass, wall paintings, and stonework). For example, many apocalyptic prophecies tend to have a political focus, given that prophecy was widely understood to be a historical and socio-political discourse within the public sphere.[18] Consequently, the selected sources are broadly illustrative of the forms that apocalypticism took in late-medieval England. Building on this approach, the thesis has been structured by source type rather than by theme or audience, providing a framework in which the work can sit. Many of the sources examined include a wide range of themes that frequently overlapped. Consequently, structuring the thesis by theme or audience would undermine the many uses of the sources, and be contrary to the reality of apocalypticism in late-medieval England.

Moreover, the textual sources which were picked are underrepresented in current scholarship on apocalypticism, or neglected in the historiography of late-medieval England. For instance, Pseudo-Methodius' Middle English translations have been overlooked in studies of late-medieval England under the assumption that they merely reproduced the Syriac and Latin originals. This thesis attempts to address these concerns by examining these Middle

[18] V. Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place in Medieval England: From Geoffrey on Monmouth to Thomas of Erceldoune* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 2.

English translations. As such, the textual sources selected include the *Westminster Apocalypse*, three copies of the *Columbinus Prophecy,* the *Genus nequam,* the *Ascende calve*, and three copies of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.* These sources were written in either Latin or Middle English. Except for the Latin *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* none of the texts picked are available in a modern English translation.[19] The texts also vary in the availability of a Latin or Middle English edition.[20] Because of this, it was important to produce my own transcriptions and translations of the texts. This was advantageous because the thesis focuses on particular copies of texts, and the creation of my own translations helps appreciate the nuances of each unique copy. As such, any translations of the texts within this thesis are my own, unless otherwise indicated, and have been included in the main body of the text, with the source material in its original language transcribed in the footnotes.

In order to gain a better understanding of the textual material, this thesis looks into the composition, condition, and material characteristics of the manuscripts. Examining these features offers an insight into the production of the manuscripts. This lets us see how the illuminator and scribe were involved in this process of communicating the information to their audience. Any changes that may have taken place over the manuscript's life can also be

[19] A modern English translation of the Latin *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* can be found in Garstad, B., *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius & An Alexandrian World Chronicle* (Cambridge and London, 2012), pp. 74-139. This version is based on a mixture of several different Latin copies, rather than being based on one particular recension or manuscript copy. A transcription of the Latin Recension 2 is in Prinz, O., 'Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung der lateinischen Übersetzung des Pseudo-Methodios', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters,* 41/1 (1985), pp. 1-23, but it is not accompanied by an English translation.

[20] The Westminster Apocalypse does not have a modern English translation or Latin transcription available. Several Latin transcriptions of the Columbinus Prophecy have been made which can be found in Kerby-Fulton, K., and Randolph Daniel, E., 'English Joachimism, 1300-1500: The Columbinus Prophecy', in G. Potestá (ed.), *Il Profetismo Gioachimita tra Quattrocentro e Cinquećento* (1990), pp. 333-350 and in Brown, E, and Lerner, R. E., 'On the Origins and Import of the Columbinus Prophecy', *Traditio,* 45 (1989-90), pp. 248-252, but there is no modern English translation. There is a Latin transcription of the *Genus nequam* available in Fleming, M., *The Late Medieval Pope Prophecies: The Genus nequam Group* (Tempe, 1999), pp. 148-188 but no modern English translation is available. A transcription of the *Ascende calve* does exist in Schwartz, O. and Lerner R. E., 'Illuminated Propaganda: the origins of the 'Ascende calve' pope prophecies', *Journal of Medieval History*, 20 (1994), pp. 187-191 but is based on Sankt Gallen, Kantonsbibliothek, MS G Vadiana 342, which is not the manuscript copy discussed within this thesis, and there is no modern English translation available. With regards to the Middle English copies of Pseudo-Methodius no transcription exists of either of Harley MS 1900 or Add. MS 37049, and no modern English translation exists of any of these versions.

seen.[21] Particular note was taken of any changes made to the manuscripts, such as notes added to margins, changes made to the script, or any erasures made by later handlers. These show the lifecycles of the manuscripts as they continued to change hands, highlighting their continued use throughout the years, and their changing audiences. Chapter 2 especially attends to the many erasures and changes made to the *Columbinus Prophecy* and the *Genus nequam*, illustrating the fluidity of these texts as constantly evolving works.[22] It also signifies the complexities of interacting with apocalyptic material and the curation of an environment where beliefs and thoughts about the end of the world were constantly changing among their different audiences. Tracking these changes through close examination of manuscripts is an important aspect of this thesis, as it allows closer access to the contexts in which they were used and shared by their audiences.

Chapter 4 deals specifically with visual sources. The rationale for including visual objects in the thesis alongside textual sources was to access a wider base of material. People's engagement with religious thoughts and ideas did not simply occur through reading, but also through seeing the world around them. Religious art played a significant role in depicting the apocalypse because it was adept at conveying symbolic meanings and, at times, was emotionally charged.[23] Its inclusion in the thesis thereby enables a new view of apocalypticism which cannot be reached by viewing textual material alone. The thesis aims to present the apocalypticism of late-medieval England as concisely as possible, with an emphasis on capturing as many social groups as possible. Further, the question of how apocalypticism was used and understood cannot be truly answered without reference to the many visual objects that dotted the landscape of late-medieval England. Not all visual sources of apocalypticism could be covered here, so a series of case studies have been chosen. An in-depth rationale as to how these were selected is detailed in Chapter 4, but the material includes stained glass windows, wall paintings and carved stonework.

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[21] J. Crick and D. Wakelin, 'Reading and Understanding Scripts', in O. Da Rold and E. Treharne (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval British Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 2020), p. 52. To understand more of the uses and lifecycle of manuscripts, see: M. Johnston and M. Van Dussen (eds.), *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches,* (Cambridge, 2015).

[22] H. Ryley, *Re-Using Manuscripts in Late Medieval England: Repairing, Recycling, Sharing* (York, 2022), p. 10-11.

[23] C. Hourihane, *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture* (Vol. 1, Oxford, 2012), p. 116.

The influence of the apocalypticism of the early Middle Ages must also be acknowledged in terms of shaping thoughts and beliefs about the end of the world in the later Middle Ages. It saw a greater focus on the imminence of the coming apocalypse and the establishment of a tradition for how Revelation should be understood. St. Augustine was pivotal to the development of apocalyptic thought in the West, establishing a division of history into a *Six World Ages* theory, the role of the Antichrist, and the imminent but unknowable end.[24] Other authors then developed this tradition and included the use of apocalyptic motifs and concepts which often came to relay deeper societal concerns and anxieties, rather than an actual fear of an imminent apocalypse occurring. Additions to this also included Adso of Montier-en-Der's *Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist,* which developed the life of the Antichrist, and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* which built on the role of Gog and Magog within the End Times.[25] There was increased production of apocalypse commentaries towards the year 1000, including popular circulations from Berengaudus and Haimo of Auxerre, some of which were continually produced throughout the later Middle Ages.[26] Finally, the late twelfth century saw the production of a more radicalised thought on the continent by Joachim of Fiore. Joachim's ideas revolved around the synchronicity of the Old and New Testaments ('concordance'), as well as the prediction of a series of antichrists corresponding with the seven-headed dragon of Revelation.[27] While Joachim's work was never especially popular within English circles, his thought continued to proliferate through apocalypticism more widely and became particularly important to understand how one might interpret Revelation.[28] These ideas continued to be filtered down and became the bedrock by which those living in late-medieval England were able to

[24] J. Kevin Coyle, 'Augustine and Apocalyptic: Thoughts on the fall of Rome, the book of Revelation and the end of the world', *Florilegium* 9 (1987), pp. 1-34. See also: P. Frederickson, 'Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse', in R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1982), pp. 20-37.

[25] D. Verhelst. 'Adso of Montier-En-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000', in R. Landes, A. C. Gow and D. C. Van Meter (eds.), *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 81-92. For the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* see chapter 3.

[26] E. Ann Matter, 'Latin Reception of the Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages', in C. McAllister (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Apocalyptic Literature* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 120-136.

[27] R. E. Lerner, 'Antichrists and Antichrist in Joachim of Fiore', *Speculum* 60/3 (1985), pp. 555-6, 563-4. See also: M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London, 1976); J. E. Wannenmacher (ed.), *Joachim of Fiore and the Influence of Inspiration: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Reeves* (Farnham, 2013).

[28] K. Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 22.

conceptualise and share their views about religion, history, politics and social relationships. Many of the sources examined within this thesis either reimagine or build on many of the ideas and thoughts developed by the theorists and theologians before them and so must be understood within a strong continued tradition of apocalyptic thought within England and further abroad.

Overall, the methodology outlined above is not without its challenges. As will be shown in the first three chapters, the nature of textual sources is such that when they are copied, they constantly alter and change, meaning that they are very rarely identical. This instability, called *mouvance* by Paul Zumthor, is said to be particularly present in vernacular texts when authors and scribes struggled to grasp what was important within the text.[29] While it is true that textual transmission was often fraught with problems, we should also consider that some of the changes we see in texts were purposeful to alter or clarify meanings. Since the act of transmitting texts often involved both interpretation and translation, texts could be altered to suit the needs and desires of all parties involved in their creation and distribution. This is because authorship was not a fixed constant but rather a collaborative effort made by scribes and readers.[30] As such, each instance of a text can be understood as a representation of the 'author', scribe and audience and thus can be examined to understand how these people may have thought and understood the end of the world. In some cases, such as in the *Columbinus Prophecy*, in chapter 2, multiple copies of the 'same' text have been examined to see what the textual changes can tell us about varying views regarding contemporary society and the end of the world. The areas of similarity are also examined, where the agreement between texts may suggest a sense of coherence in what medieval people may have believed and thought.

Some texts were altered for a much later audience than their initial inception, such as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* leading to the question of why these texts circulated in late-medieval England. As such, the understanding that the alteration of texts reflects changes by a scribe, 'author' or audience is important to conceptualising why texts underwent continuous circulation among different and unintended groups. The fact that older

[29] P. Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris, 1972), p.92; S. Morrison, 'Mouvance, or the fortunes of a late fifteenth-century sermon cycle', *Études Anglaises*, 66/3 (2013), pp. 358.

[30] A. Dlabačová, 'Reaching Readers, Influencing Ideas: The Dynamics of the Distribution of Vernacular Texts in the Later Middle Ages', in C. Griffin and E. Purcell (ed.), *Text, Transmission and Transformation in the European Middle Ages, 1000-1500* (Turnhout, 2018), p. 205.

apocalyptic texts were circulated again highlights the development of apocalyptic thought in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries as an important concept in expressing people's fears, anxieties, and beliefs about history and the world they lived in. Additionally, it spread apocalyptic concepts more widely by making these works accessible to a wider segment of society and incorporating them into late-medieval worldviews. In many of the visual sources, we find that there is an incorporation of textual elements, such as the use of the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* in the apocalyptic alabasters. Understanding the origin of these texts is also important to understand the interconnectedness of many of the apocalyptic objects discussed, where religious texts often entered into popular spheres and became integral to the understanding of the apocalypse. For example, the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* had biblical origins, but soon became integrated into texts such as the *Pricke of Conscience* and would then be placed into the communal life of the Church as an object of devotion and meditation. Discussing the origins of apocalyptic objects thus enables us to identify what other texts and thoughts the audience may have interacted with.

It should also be noted that many of the sources would have contained an element of orality, where the text would have been read aloud, either to oneself or to an audience.[31] This influences the use and reception of the source and has been discussed, as appropriate, in the chapters below. As such, certain apocalyptic manuscripts and objects enabled discussion and collaboration through being read aloud, and through this, a sense of a shared community over shared values and beliefs related to the end of the world. Some of the objects, such as the *Pricke of Conscience* window, were gifted to parish churches, and so could be made into an object for the community at large. Many of the sources were made by a variety of people in collaboration. Further, the sources discussed were worked upon by scribes, illuminators, glaziers, painters, masons and others – coming from both clerical (including monastic) and lay backgrounds. Acknowledgement of all these people in the creation of apocalyptic objects and text can give us a greater understanding of how thoughts and beliefs were shaped by those who both produced and consumed these objects. This is also particularly important in terms of images, which relied on layers of meaning through symbols, positioning and colours which were often decided by those who produce the images, in collaboration with the patron

[31] G. Camiciotti, 'Metanarrative frame and evaluation in late medieval saints' lives', in A. Betten and M. Dannerer (eds.), *Dialogue Analysis IX: Dialogue in Literature and Media, Part I: Literature* (Tübinger, 2005), p. 374.

or other artists.[32] As such, like many sources, this must be considered when dealing with apocalyptic sources, to truly understand the narratives and contexts that each sat within. It is believed that through this methodology, the gap in our understanding of how the apocalypse was understood and used in late-medieval England can begin to be closed.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1 examines the commentary tradition, specifically Latin illuminated commentaries based on the earlier commentary by Berengaudus, a Benedictine monk from the twelfth century. This chapter centres around Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Manuscript B.10.2, with particular emphasis on its apocalypse (titled the *Westminster Apocalypse* in this thesis), which was produced at the Benedictine house of Westminster. [33] The types of audiences that the commentary tradition attracted, as well as their beliefs and thoughts about the end of the world and contemporary society, will be examined. The examination of this text reveals a specific focus on the social roles of speech, chivalry, and hierarchy, particularly with regard to maintaining everyone in their proper place within God's pre-ordained social strata. As such, the *Apocalypse* highlights how, for some portions of medieval society, the anxieties about the contemporary world could be reflected in the possible future world ruled over by the Antichrist.

Chapter 2 covers three of the prophecies within Henry of Kirkstede's *Prophetiae*, these being the *Columbinus Prophecy*, the *Ascende calve* and the *Genus nequam,* to examine how prophecies intersected with apocalyptic thought, especially among the clergy.[34] What is particularly interesting about these prophecies is that they were inspired by the thought of Joachim of Fiore. Joachite apocalypticism posited the role of apostolic poverty in renewing the world into a new age of spiritual enlightenment.[35] It often brought a more reformist element to apocalypticism, criticising the Church for its excess wealth and assorted sins, and expecting the complete transformation of the Church back to something resembling its early roots as part of this spiritual renewal.[36] Circulation of pseudo-Joachite tracts and prophecies,

[32] J. R. Benton, *Materials, Methods and Masterpieces of Medieval Art* (Santa Barbara, 2009), p. 3; E. Kwakkel, 'Decoding the Material Book: Cultural Residue in Medieval Manuscripts', in M. Johnston and M. van Dussen (eds.), *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 60-68.

[33] The Westminister Apocalypse, MS B.10.2, Trinity College, Cambridge, ff. 3r-38v.

[34] MS 404, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, ff. 7v-8v, f. 41r and ff. 88r-95r.

[35] Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism,* p. 5.

[36] Whalen, *Dominion of God,* p. 174.

influenced by his work, became the dominant form in which England engaged with his ideas.[37] This may help explain why Joachite thought proved to be less radical in England and elicited less of a response from Church authorities, with these texts being accessible within clerical communities. This chapter examines the influence that these ideas may have had on readers in England and their more limited impact outside of very specific audiences and communities. It also investigates the intersection between the apocalyptic and other religious beliefs, to see where they intertwined. It shows that apocalypticism influenced how some saw the Church's role in wider English society, as well as the place of Joachimism within apocalyptic thought in late-medieval England.

Similarly, chapter 3 examines how apocalyptic texts from abroad made their way into late-medieval England, and how they were understood and re-examined by this new audience. This is shown through the Byzantine text, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.*[38] Coming originally from Mesopotamia in the seventh century, it provides evidence for the external influences on late-medieval apocalyptic thought. It also highlights the continual growth of apocalyptic thought, through the production and circulation of three different Middle English translations which will be discussed here.[39] This apocalypse reads much like a revelation from God, written down in much the same way as the book of Revelation, and aimed to depict both past events and the coming apocalypse. As such, this chapter explores the adaption of an older apocalypse for a new audience, uncovering how apocalyptic thought provided a multitude of ways of exploring both contemporary society and the end of the world. It also shows how the translation process allowed for new developments and changes to take place within apocalyptic thought as new ideas were expressed, as well as its shifting audiences depending on style and language. Moreover, the portrayal of the Ishmaelites in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* offered a forum for discussing concepts of 'Englishness' and the 'other,' as well as how these may have been conceptualised within the apocalyptic thought of late-medieval England.

[37] Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism,* p. 22.

[38] The Latin manuscript text that I use can be found: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 59, ff. 141r-146r. The English versions of the text I use can be found in: London, British Library, Harley MS 1900, ff. 21v-23v; London, British Library, Add. MS 37049, ff. 11r-16v.

[39] Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 112-3.

Finally, the last chapter is dedicated to visual sources created in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries which depicted the apocalypse.[40] The breadth of the chapter, investigating a variety of stained glass, wall paintings and stonework, aims to capture as many audiences as possible, to see how apocalyptic thought was portrayed to all levels of society. This allows for examination of how those such as poorer laypeople and illiterates engaged with apocalyptic thought, to understand how and where they may have interacted with it, and how this may have influenced ideas of sin, salvation and history. A comparison between objects, such as between the *Great East Window* in York Minster and the *Pricke of Conscience* window in All Saints' Church, York, provides contrast to how different audiences interacted with and understood the apocalypse, and how they viewed the coming end. It shows that in contrast to many of the textual sources, the visual sources did provide a sense of belonging and community among those that engaged with them, either through their depictions of the end of the world or by being objects which members of the community could use for teaching or communal discussion.

[40] A full list of objects can be found in my bibliography.

1. The Westminster Apocalypse

Biblical commentaries were one of the main ways in which people engaged with the sacred text, as they provided a way of educating clergy and laity alike[1] Revelation commentaries became particularly popular, because of their ability to elucidate the symbolic and allegorical nature of Revelation.[2] By the thirteenth century, illuminated apocalypses became the standard commentary format for those who could afford these luxury books.[3] These brought together the Revelation text, various medieval commentaries in either Latin, French, Anglo-Norman or Middle English, and illuminations. While these books were not accessible to everyone (those who could not read or could not afford to buy them are not represented here), they give an insight into how certain groups interacted with and understood the *Apocalypse*. Still, these illuminated apocalypses can provide information on how the apocalypse was engaged with, by whom, and for what reasons. Further, they provide an exciting and unique insight into thoughts and beliefs about the end of the world, and how this related to late medieval England.

1. 1. Berengaudus

One of the many apocalyptic commentaries available in the fourteenth century was the commentary of Berengaudus, entitled *Expositio super septem visiones libri Apocalypsis.* Written by a Benedictine monk, the commentary became popular in the later Middle Ages for understanding the Revelation.[4] Despite this popularity, especially the use of his commentary in illuminated Gothic manuscripts, very little is known about Berengaudus and his life. We have sparse evidence regarding who Berengaudus may have been, and arguments continue over when Berengaudus may have lived, and from this, what influences may have shaped his commentary.

[1] F. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 141.

[2] K. Poole, 'The Western Apocalypse Commentary Tradition of the Early Middle Ages', in M. A. Ryan (ed.), *A Companion to the Premodern Apocalypse* (Leiden, 2016), p. 103. An overview of the Revelation commentary tradition can be found in D. Burr, *The Bible in Medieval Tradition: The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, 2019).

[3] L. Slater, *Art and Political Thought in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2018), p. 132.

[4] N. Ross, 'Apocalyptic Time and Anti-Semitism in Thirteenth Century England', in M. Foster (ed.), *Spiritual Temporalities in Late-Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 78.

The first argument, put forward by Guy Lobrichon, states that Berengaudus lived and produced his work in the twelfth century.[5] A number of reasons are given for this, but chiefly, the first extant manuscripts appear in the twelfth century, with no existing manuscripts appearing before this date. Resemblances have also been found between Berengaudus' work and Rupert of Deutz, with Berengaudus' commentary offering a 'conservative allegorical reading' of Revelation in much the same way as his contemporaries.[6] Berengaudus cannot be connected to any particular individual, and the name Berengaudus itself was popular and widespread, especially in areas of France.[7] In fact, Berengaudus hid his name within his commentary using an acrostic, providing him with pseudonymity, and suggesting that it was the information that he was imparting, rather than who he was as a person, that was the most important aspect of his thought.

The contrary argument proposed most vehemently by Derk Visser, states that Berengaudus lived in the ninth century.[8] Principally, Visser argues that Berengaudus' works fit closely with exegeses written by Carolingian scholars, and internal evidence suggests that Berengaudus was very familiar with Haimo of Auxerre's apocalypse commentary. This could suggest that he was using the same sources as Haimo, rather than using ninth-century sources at a later date. Further, Visser argues that Berengaudus was *the* Berengaudus mentioned in Lupus of Ferrières' letter to Auxerre, which mentions a Berengaudus who would benefit from the teachings of learned men.[9] This directly ties Berengaudus to the school at Saint-Germain of Auxerre, meaning that Berengaudus would have had direct access to the same sources as Haimo, and that they may have come into contact. This also could explain the closeness between the commentaries of Berengaudus and Haimo, situating Berengaudus in the ninth-

[5] S. Lewis, 'Exegesis and Illustration in Thirteenth-Century English Apocalypses', in R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1992), p. 261. See: G. Lobrichon, 'L'ordre de ce temps et les désordres de la fin: apocalypse et société, du IX à la fin du XI siècle', in W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and Welkenhuysen (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Leuven, 1988), pp. 221-241.

[6] Lewis, 'Exegesis and Illustration', p. 261.

[7] F. G. Vigouroux, *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Vol. 1 Pt. 2* (Paris, 1912), p. 1610.

[8] D. Visser, *Apocalypse as Utopian Expectation 800-1500: The Apocalypse Commentary of Berengaudus of Ferrières and the Relationship between Exegesis, Liturgy and Iconography* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 3-4.

[9] Lupus of Ferrières, *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières*, ed. and trans. Graydon W. Regenos (The Hague, 1966), p. 132.

century tradition. Finally, Visser argues that the twelfth century copies were based on earlier ninth-century copies that no longer exist.[10]

Multiple problems arise from these arguments. Firstly, Visser is arguing from a lack of evidence, and while he does point out that the 'recycling' of old or worn out material did take place during this period, we cannot guarantee that these earlier manuscripts existed at all. Visser's suggestion relies on the fact that these ninth-century manuscripts would have been destroyed within a close time frame to when they were produced which, whilst not impossible, is unlikely. While we must always take into consideration that absence of evidence does not necessarily constitute evidence of absence, a hypothesis cannot be accepted principally on 'lost' evidence, especially as it cannot be guaranteed whether these manuscripts did in fact exist in the first place. As such, a twelfth century dating for Berengaudus' commentary should be accepted.

Berengaudus drew from a variety of orthodox and accepted theological writers who held interest in the apocalypse. Within his text, references to Augustine, Ambrose and Gregory the Great can be found.[11] Primarily, though, Berengaudus was influenced by Augustine and Tyconius, as he too distanced himself away from the idea of a predictable end date as well as presenting Revelation as an allegorical rather than literal text.[12] However, he was also influenced by Bede who divided his commentary into seven parts (*periochae*) which followed six chronological periods of Church history, and a final one to discuss the eternal state of the world to come.[13] Berengaudus similarly divided his commentary into seven periods which he referred to as 'visions.' These showed the life of the Church in seven distinct histories and would culminate in displaying the rational path for the Church to take in order to reach salvation. As discussed by Barbara Nolan, the visions unfolded as follows: the first vision of the seven Churches of Asia represented the life of the Church; the second vision of St. John rising represented the rising of the faithful; the third vision of the opening of the seven seals represented the foundation of the Old and New Testaments; the fourth vision of the seven angels with their seven trumpets represented the preaching of the

[10] Visser, *Apocalypse as Utopian Expectation,* pp. 13-4.

[11] E. Knibbs, 'Berengaudus on the Apocalypse', in E. Knibbs, J. A. Boon and E. Geiser (eds.), *The End of the World in Medieval Thought and Spirituality* (Cham, 2019), pp.1 37.

[12] Knibbs, 'Berengaudus on the Apocalypse', p.141.

[13] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation,* trans. Faith Wallis (Liverpool, 2013), pp. 101-4. For a more in depth view, see Faith Wallis's notes on *periochae* (pp. 59-67) in the same book.

testaments to the elect and reprobate; the fifth vision of the angels with the vials represented the preaching and writing of the scripture purely to the reprobate; and the final two visions detailed the resurrection at the end of the world, the damnation of the physical world and the blessed life of those in Holy Jerusalem.[14] For Berengaudus, keeping with allegorical traditions endorsed by other theologians allowed for his works to become accepted within its own time, and kept it in line with traditional orthodox thinking regarding the apocalypse.

The significance of Berengaudus' sources lies in their ability to show us what Berengaudus deemed important, and how he saw himself as continuing the apocalyptic tradition set out before him. The continuation of the orthodox tradition saw a more restrained and reflective attitude to the apocalypse, and its popularity throughout late medieval England highlights the importance of this tradition in how medieval English people approached and understood the apocalypse. There are a total of 13 surviving Latin Berengaudus Apocalypses from England dating to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as well as both French and (non-Berengaudus) Latin apocalypses also in existence.[15] These were often presented in Gothic illuminated apocalypses which used the *Expositio* as a commentary underneath the original Revelation text. However, its presence in late medieval England evidently shows that there was a distinct reason for its continued proliferation. In this case, it may be that its popularity came from its accessibility, with an educated lay audience, such as aristocracy, nobility, gentry and the wealthy mercantile elite, ready to read and comprehend larger and more complex theological texts.

1. 2. Audience

The original audience for the *Expositio* was a clerical one, due to the nature of the commentary as one long Latin text, which would be impenetrable to the non-Latinate. We find that by the thirteenth century, the commentary began to be cut into smaller segments that were easily digestible to lay readers and that made sense within their own context without their needing to have read either the rest of the commentary, or the commentaries that influenced it.[16] The notion of authorship did not hold the same value in the Middle Ages as in modern society, and it was expected that commentaries such as the *Expositio* would be

[14] B. Nolan, *The Gothic Visionary Perspective* (New Jersey, 1977), p. 11.

[15] R. K. Emmerson and S. Lewis, 'Census and Bibliography of Medieval Manuscripts containing Apocalypse Illustrations, ca. 800-1500: II', *Traditio* 41 (1985), pp. 367-409.

[16] Lewis, 'Exegesis and Illustration', p. 262.

altered and tailored to suit the needs of their audiences.[17] Indeed, Berengaudus wanted his work to be improved upon, praising the reader for having the skills to build on his exposition, making his work an indispensable intervention in discussions on the end of the world.[18] Because of this, it can be seen that the *Expositio* was constructed in a way that allowed for this type of alteration and participation by its readers, allowing for it to be digested by a variety of audiences outside its original clerical milieu. It was this textual mobility that in some ways made the *Expositio* a popular means of exploring the apocalypse, and its deconstruction into smaller segments allowed for a variety of interpretations that could all be considered orthodox. The *Expositio,* therefore, could act as a medley of apocalyptic knowledge for manuscript creators and audiences to highlight their own views of what was considered important when exploring the end of the world narrative, and it was this that contributed to its popularity as a text.

The division of text into smaller segments also provided space for images to be attached. These images could perform a number of functions, including demystifying the text, illustrating the points or arguments made in the text, or expanding on areas of interest within the text. Doing so may have improved intellectual understanding for some, but in others may have aided devotion in providing a visual interpretation of the text.[19] The argument of images as being 'books of the illiterate', in essence as teaching aids for non-literate persons, is discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.[20] For the sake of argument here, it should be considered that the use of images was multifaceted, providing medieval people with points of thought and reflection. Moreover, given the popularity of images alongside Revelation texts,

[17] H. Blatt, *Participatory Reading in Late-Medieval England* (Manchester, 2018), pp. 9-10. See also the chapter on 'Authorial Roles in the 'Literal Sense' in A. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (2nd ed, Philadelphia, 2010).

[18] Knibbs, 'Berengaudus on the Apocalypse', p. 140; PL 17:970b-970c.

[19] M. Harrison Caviness, 'Reception of Images by Medieval Viewers', in C. Rudolph (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe* (Malden, 2006), p. 75.

[20] See: L. G. Duggan, 'Was Art Really the "Book of the Illiterate?"', in M. Hageman and M. Mostert (eds.), *Reading Images and Texts: Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communication* (Turnhout, 2005), p. 63-65, 94-107; L. G. Duggan, 'Reflections on "Was Art Really the Book of the Illiterate?"', in M. Hageman and M. Mostert (eds.), *Images and Texts: Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communication* (Turnout, 2005), pp. 109-119.

it is clear that it was felt that images enhanced the audience's understandings or reflections on the apocalypse.[21]

The attachment of images to apocalypses, which became common from the thirteenth century onwards, saw its orientation towards aristocratic and urban elites, who were often the ones purchasing these books.[22] Nigel Morgan has stressed that the apocalypses became a 'luxury book', and so can be seen to have been particularly popular among the more wealthy orders of society.[23] Book ownership and circulation throughout England increased dramatically from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, with devotional texts becoming a popular option for these wealthy elites.[24] Jennifer Bryan has argued that devotional literature was popular because of its ability to allow individuals to reflect on themselves and offered a guide to self-improvement, especially allowing one to actively improve one's spiritual relationship with God.[25] In a similar way, apocalypses also allowed a level of introspection and anticipation about the end of the world, and one could reflect both individually about one's own position, while also seeing one's own life as part of a greater collective in the life and development of the Church. This, along with highly decorative illuminated images, would provide an effective tool in private reading and devotion, at a time when this was becoming an increasingly prominent phenomenon. Further, for the Latin Berengaudus, the mixture of Latin text, a language of the elites, with more accessible images provided contrast and made the book accessible while still retaining its prestigious status. We find that by the late-fourteenth century, commentaries on Revelation were increasingly being produced in either Middle English or Old French, but by retaining the original Latin for some of the Berengaudus commentaries, it would allow aristocratic audience to use these manuscripts with their clerical advisors in order to discuss ideas about the end of the world.

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[21] M. Gill, 'Monastic Murals and *Lectio* in the Later Middle Ages' in J. G. Clark (ed.), *The Culture of Medieval English Monasticism* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 66-7.

[22] M. Camille, 'Visionary Perceptions and Images of the Apocalypse in the Later Middle Ages' in R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1997), pp. 276-7.

[23] N. Morgan, *The Lambeth Apocalypse, Manuscript 209 in the Lambeth Palace Library: A Critical Study* (London, 1990), p. 38.

[24] J. Kolpacoff Deane, 'Pious Domesticities', in J. Bennett and R. Karras (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2013), p. 274.

[25] J. Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 2008), pp. 3-4.

Finally, it should be noted that the images in many of the illuminated apocalypses often varied dramatically, so that different interpretations of the same text could be offered. Many of these images are brightly coloured, and are situated in different places on the page. This would have added a sense of individuality to an apocalypse manuscript, and allowed each manuscript to become in some ways personalised to its user. The most popular format, however, was to have a layout where the image took up the top half of the page, and therefore would dominate the apocalypse, directing how one read the text and took in its meaning.

Apocalyptic images often depicted St. John at the front of the scene given that it shares stylistic similarities, acting as a mediator between the apocalypse and the reader. Through his stance and facial expressions, the audience could reflect on the apocalypse.[26] This provided a link between each reader and their own spiritual journey to the greater timeless narrative of the apocalypse. The popularity of apocalypses in the fourteenth century, then, may in some part have rested on their variability and the ease within which information within them could be altered to suit particular groups and interests. Their accessibility through the shortened text of Berengaudus and colourful images would have heightened this.

The focus for this chapter shall be Trinity B.10.2, an example of a Latin Berengaudus commentary and illuminated apocalypse. An examination will show how literate laypeople, such as aristocrats and merchants, interpreted and understood the coming end of the world, and see what they deemed important and impactful. In particular, an analysis of the Apocalyptic beasts within this manuscript will be carried out to see how they were represented and what they represented to those living in fourteenth-century England. Finally, the role of sin and heresy within the narratives of the manuscript will be discussed. Trinity B.10.2 has been underutilised by historians up until this time, in part because the manuscript is not as decorative as others, and therefore it will provide a fresh insight into illuminated apocalypses.

1. 3. Trinity B.10.2

B.10.2 consists of a Life of St. John (ff. 1r-2v), an apocalypse, sometimes referred to as the *Westminster Apocalypse* (ff. 3r-38v), and a Life of St. Edward the Confessor (ff. 39r-44v).[27]

[26] S. Lewis, *Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth Century Illuminated Apocalypse* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 3, 20-25.

[27] Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.10.2. Catalogue entries include: M. R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge* (Vol. 1, Cambridge, 1900), no. 213; L. F. Sandler, *Gothic*

The apocalypse is written in Latin, and contains a Latin commentary of Berengaudus which is accompanied by illuminations.[28] There are a total of seventy-eight illuminations in the apocalypse (not including four illuminations which make up the Life of St. John that prefaces the apocalypse), each of which is situated at the top half of the folios. These are subsequently followed by passages from Revelation, which are written in a single hand in black ink (which has now faded brown) and a passage from Berengaudus' *Expositio super septem visiones libri apocalypsis,* written in the same hand, in red ink. This is then followed by a Life of St. Edward the Confessor containing twenty-four images, telling the life of Edward the Confessor and the dedication of Westminster Abbey.

Establishing an approximate date and location of the manuscript's production is important if we are to understand who used it and why. Current work on its dating has tended to centre around the *Life of St. Edward the Confessor,* due to its uniqueness of being only one of two illuminated lives of Edward in late medieval England. This has been dated by Kathleen Scott to the early fifteenth century, being the earliest existing version of its kind.[29] However, these may have been additions to the manuscript at a later date, as there is no guarantee that the apocalypse was produced in conjunction with the *Life of St. Edward.* So, an assessment of the dating based on this alone cannot be accepted, and other avenues must be examined in order to conclude as to when and where the apocalypse was produced.

Manuscripts 1285-1385, II: Catalogue (Oxford, 1986), no. 153; K. L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390-1490* (London, 1997), no. 41; P. Binski and J. Alexander, *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200-1400* (London, 1987), no. 40.

[28] B. Boler Hunter, 'The Westminster Production and Reception of the Late Fourteenth-Century Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.10.2 Apocalypse', *Medieval Perspectives,* 33 (2018), pp. 59. It should be noted that in this article the Add. MS 35166 is referred to as the *Westminster Apocalypse,* given that it was produced in the general vicinity of Westminster. However, given the provable demonstrations below that B.10.2 is directly linked with the Westminster Apocalypse wall paintings, it will here be referred to as the Westminster Apocalypse.

[29] K. L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, no. 41.

Figure 1.1: Wall paintings depicting John adoring Christ (left) and Christ in majesty (right). Chapter House, Westminster Abbey, London. Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster.[30]

Figure 1.2: John adoring Christ (left) and Christ in majesty (right), Westminster Apocalypse. Trinity College, Cambridge, B.10.2, ff. 4r-v. Copyright: Trinity College, Cambridge.[31]

The most important piece of evidence that we have about the manuscript comes from a series of wall paintings in the chapter house in Westminster Abbey. J. G. Noppen has argued that these wall paintings appear to be based on the illuminated images in the *Westminster*

[30] https://www.westminster-abbey.org/about-the-abbey/history/wall-paintings

[31] https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/B.10.2/UV#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=12&r=0&xywh=-5536%2C-2%2C17464%2C9188

Apocalypse.[32] An example of this can be seen in Fig. 1.1, which shares many traits akin to those presented in the *Westminster Apocalypse* (see Fig. 1.2). Particularly, similarities can be seen in the positioning of many of the figures in both the images, especially in the left side of the painting where Christ sits on his throne, surrounded by four candlesticks to his left, three to his right and John bent down, at the left of the image, his head reaching Christ's feet in the centre. Further, interestingly, many of the elders shown in both the wall painting and the apocalypse hold musical instruments, especially in the top rights of Fig. 1.1 and Fig. 1.2. in which one of the elders holds a harp, and in the bottom left of both images where the elder holding a flute, which is positioned in the same place and at the same angle in both images.

Some discrepancies can be seen between the manuscript and the wall paintings. For example, there is an angel next to John (Fig. 1.1), while this is not there in the manuscript. However, the similarities are still present to a significant degree when examining the images of Christ in Majesty. In this wall painting, the 24 elders are peculiarly holding instruments while surrounding Christ, and are in the exact same positions as their counterparts within the manuscript. This wall painting seems specific to Westminster, especially when it is considered that the Chapter House was also decorated with painted angels holding musical instruments.[33] Further connection can also be made when examining the text of both the manuscript and the wall paintings. Each image of the wall painting has a scroll underneath, on which black and red text is written – in much the same style of hand as the Revelation quotes and Berengaudus commentary in the *Westminster Apocalypse.* While much of the writing on the wall paintings is faded, it is possible to see that the writing in the wall painting of John adoring Christ (Fig. 1.3) and that in its companion in the *Westminster Apocalypse* (Fig. 1.4) both start with a large red 'E' in 'et' and begin 'et conv[er]sus vidi septem candelab[ra] aurea et in medio', suggesting that the same text is transcribed in both cases.

[32] J. G. Noppen, 'The Westminster Apocalypse and Its Source', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs,* 61/355 (1932), p. 154.

[33] J. Montagu, 'The restored Chapter House wall paintings in Westminster Abbey', *Early Music* 16/2 (1988), pp. 239-244.

Figure 1.3: A small fragment from the wall painting section on John adoring Christ (some of the text has been nipped from the photo). Chapter House, Westminster Abbey, London. Taken by myself.

Figure 1.4: The beginning of the text on the folio of John adoring Christ, Westminster Apocalypse. Trinity College, Cambridge, B.10.2, f. 4r. Copyright: Trinity College, Cambridge.[34]

The apocalypse wall paintings were a gift from John of Northampton sometime between 1372 and 1404, although Jeremy Montagu has suggested that this most likely took place in the 10-14 year period after 1390, because this was when the House of Commons ceased to meet in the Chapter House.[35] Noppen has similarly agreed that these paintings can be dated to after 1390, but this does not necessarily suggest that the *Westminster Apocalypse* pre-dates the wall paintings.[36] Abbey records from 1372 to 1404 show that John of Northampton, a monk of Westminster, commissioned and paid for these paintings, and that these were under construction by the time of John's death in 1404.[37] Unfortunately, these documents do not mention the purchase or acquisition of an apocalypse manuscript in order to carry out the work, suggesting that there was a possibility that the manuscript was produced afterwards. However, works such as these were likely produced from a manuscript copy, as has been suspected in the case of the Great East Window at York and the *Angers Apocalypse* tapestry in France.[38] This would place the *Westminster Apocalypse* before the

[34] https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/B.10.2/UV#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=14&r=0&xywh=-6647%2C-1%2C19685%2C9188

[35] Montagu, 'The restored Chapter House', p. 239.

[36] Noppen, 'The Westminster Apocalypse and Its Source', p. 159.

[37] B. Turner, 'The Patronage of John of Northampton', *Journal of the British Archaeological Society* 138/1 (1985), p. 89, 95.

[38] R. K. Emmerson, 'Visualising the Apocalypse in Late Medieval England: The York Minster Great East Window', in D. J. B. Trim and P. J. Balderstone (eds.), *Cross, Crown and Community: Religion, Government*

wall paintings, meaning that the manuscript was either produced or, at the very least, acquired by Westminster Abbey before *c.* 1400.

Further evidence for the dating of the manuscript can be found when examining the art historical 'group' that the manuscript belongs to. To do this, art historians have looked for similarities between manuscripts which are believed to have been produced within the same period. Lucy Freeman Sandler has identified what can be considered the 'Litlyngton group' of manuscripts; these are manuscripts which share similar stylistic features in terms of their illuminations, even if the contents of the manuscripts were very different. Connections here lie particularly between the *Litlyngton Missal* and the *Westminster Apocalypse* in terms of their illuminations.[39] Jayne Wackett has identified that the 'Temporale Artist', that is the artist credited with the first half of the Missal, from the first page of the calendar (f. 3r) through to the last page of the benedictions (f. 205r), with the exception of the Crucifixion folio (f. 157v), and has suggested that it is likely the same artist that produced the *Westminster Apocalypse* and its *Life of St. John*.[40]

Figure 1.5: Depiction of the Trinity, The Litlyngton Missal. London, Westminster Abbey 37, f. 120r. Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

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and Culture in Early Modern England, 1400-1800 (Bern, 2004), p. 50; G. Henderson, 'The Manuscript Model of the Angers "Apocalypse" Tapestries', *The Burlington Magazine* 127/985 (1985), p. 218.

[39] London, Westminster Abbey, MS 37; Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts I*, pp. 36-7.

[40] J. Wackett, 'The Litlyngton Missal: Its Patron, Iconography and Messages', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kent, 2014), p. 101.

Figure 1.6: Christ in Majesty and Angels given the Seven Trumpets, The Westminster Apocalypse. Trinity College, Cambridge, B.10.2, f. 11r. Copyright: Trinity College, Cambridge.[41]

Examples of these similarities can be seen chiefly through the humanoid figures in both the *Litlyngton Missal* and the *Westminster Apocalypse* (see Fig. 1.5 and Fig. 1.6.) As we can see in both images, the figures are tall with long and thin oval faces, with their eyes often presiding almost halfway down the face, heavy-lidded and half-closed in appearance. Similarly, the hands of all the figures in both images are long and elongated, with their clothes draped and styled in the same fashion.[42] In particular, the Christ figure in the middle of f. 11r of the *Westminster Apocalypse* and on the left f. 120r, the Christ figure in the *Litlyngton Missal* can be seen to be similar in appearance. Both are shown to have their beard styled into two separate 'bunches', both wear similar gowns draped at the shoulders, although in the *Litlyngton Missal* this falls only over one shoulder, and the gowns tie in at the waist. Both are shown with halos around their heads, and in these halos, we can see four separate circles. Further, sitting under both of the Christ figures are globes of the Earth, representing Christ's dominion over this.

The similarities of the two images do suggest that there is a possible link between these manuscripts. With regards to the colouring on both these images, it can be seen that similar colours in some areas are used, for example, in the use of the orange and blue. However, when cross-examining the images, it can be seen that the *Litlyngton Missal* is more

[41] https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/B.10.2/UV#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=28&r=0&xywh=-6647%2C-1%2C19685%2C9188

[42] Wackett, 'The Litlyngton Missal', p. 111.

colourful, both in terms of the brightness of the colours and the use of gold found only in the *Litlyngton Missal.* This may be for a variety of reasons, from a difference in the amount of money spent to produce the manuscripts, their purpose, the ability of the artist to use colour, and perhaps even a loss of pigmentation over time. In the *Litlyngton Missal*, the artist was only able to illuminate within the borders and the lettering, while the *Westminster Apocalypse* has half-page images, allowing for a greater use of space and in turn, the artist was able to express action and movement more clearly.

These art-historical arguments do not necessarily suggest that the manuscripts were produced by the same artist. Many artists often trained and worked in the same workshops, and therefore were likely to have been trained in a similar style with access to similar materials. [43] This, then, goes against the idea that we can directly state that these two manuscripts were illuminated by the same artist, especially if all artists from the same workshop were taught in the same way, or by the same people. Here, Wackett has been too presumptuous to suggest that the *Westminster Apocalypse* and the *Litlyngton Missal* were illuminated by the same person. In all likelihood, then, the two manuscripts were possibly produced within the same workshop, given their shared traits in terms of stylistics and colour.

The *Litlyngton Missal* has been dated to 1383-4 because of the survival of accounts relating to its creation. In the Abbot's Treasurer's Roll of 1383-4 we find accounts of the expenses of the Missal as commissioned by Nicholas Litlyngton, spending a total of £34 14s 7d on its construction.[44] This is the only documentary evidence we have for any of the material pertaining to the 'Litlyngton group' outside of the existence of the manuscripts themselves, and therefore can provide a marker for when this artistic style was popular, and when this workshop may have been active, perhaps indicating that the *Westminster Apocalypse* can be dated around the same time. Similarly, another manuscript within the 'Litlyngton group', *The English Statutes,* as identified by Amanda Simpson due to its pictorial similarities, can be firmly dated to after 1386, placing it after the *Litlyngton Missal*.[45]

[43] G. Siebert, 'Glass Painters and Manuscript Illuminators', in M. E. Müller (ed.), *The Use of Models in Medieval Book Painting* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 81.

[44] Wackett, 'The Litlyngton Missal', pp. 91-2.

[45] London, British Library MS. Cotton Nero D. VI; A. Simpson, *The Connections between English and Bohemian Painting during the Second Half of the Fourteenth Century* (New York and London, 1984), p. 141.

Further, another manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS 581, containing the *Libellus Geomancie,* a treatise on astrology and geomancy compiled from Petro de Abano and other sources, has also been identified as part of the 'Litlyngton group' because of artistic similarities, in the depiction of the philosophers throughout this treatise.[46] It is therefore possible that the images in this treatise were also produced by the same workshop, or in collaboration with the illuminator from a shared school. The manuscript has been confirmed by Otto Pächt and Jonathan Alexander to have been produced for King Richard II after 1391, with the manuscript's author naming himself as 'minimus servientum regis.' The workshop, then, remained active into the 1390s, although this is the latest manuscript concretely dated within the 'Litlyngton group.'[47] Therefore, a dating between 1380-1400 appears appropriate for the *Westminster Apocalypse,* given that it shares stylistic similarities with other manuscripts in the 'Litlyngton group.'

With this in mind, the location of the manuscript now needs to be assessed. Based on the above information, it can be seen that the *Westminster Apocalypse* was likely produced within the same workshop as its similar counterparts, with the Litlyngton Missal and Bodl. MS 581 having connections to Westminster Abbey more generally. It has also been shown that the manuscript became the possible exemplar for the apocalyptic wall paintings, given their similarities. This suggests that, either, the manuscript was housed in the Westminster Abbey library, or that it was owned by someone with close connections to Westminster Abbey, who was happy to share it with the monks to provide an exemplar for the wall paintings.

Further evidence for this Westminster Abbey connection can be found in examining the *Life of St. Edward the Confessor* that was attached subsequently to the manuscript. The *Life of Edward* and the *Westminster Apocalypse* are conjoined; the first four folios of the *Life of Edward* shares leaves with the last four folios of the *Apocalypse,* as M. R. James spotted in his description of the manuscript.[48] This demonstrates that it may have been unbound when the scenes of the *Life of Edward* were added, and that they were integral to each other. The *Life of Edward* is made up of rather crudely drawn shaded pen images, with a total of twenty-four coloured images, based on the illustrated French translation of Ailred's *Life* dating from

[46] Bodl. MS 581, Bodleian Library, Oxford; Wackett, 'The Litlyngton Missal', pp. 124-5.

[47] O. Pächt and J. J. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford, Vol. 3: British, Irish and Icelandic Schools* (Oxford, 1973), p. 252.

[48] James, *The Western Manuscripts of Trinity College,* p. 283.

1240-50.[49] Scott has argued that the *Life of Edward* was most likely produced early in the fifteenth century, as while the costume, bowed posture of some of the characters, and the regnal position of the king is reminiscent of the late fourteenth century, the style of execution suggests later.[50] This places the *Life of Edward* as being produced after the *Apocalypse*, and suggests that the *Apocalypse* remained in Westminster during this time.

Figure 1.7: Edward gives his ring to a disguised John the Evangelist, The Life of St. Edward the Confessor. Trinity College, Cambridge, B.10.2, f.42r. Copyright: Trinity College, Cambridge

Cynthia Turner Camp has suggested that the *Life of Edward* in B.10.2 is dissimilar from Ailred's *Life,* and that it is simplistic in its retelling.[51] Both she and Otto Pächt highlight that each episode from Edward's life is often simplified into a single image which misses much of the nuance and overarching story in Ailred's *Life*.[52] While the images are simplified for a different medium, they often do translate aspects of the story of Edward's *Life* in a structured and comprehensible way (if one knows the story). In Ailred's *Life,* the author details the story of Edward's dedication of a church to John the Evangelist, his giving the ring to John disguised as a pilgrim, John returning the ring to the pilgrims, and then the pilgrims' returning to deliver the ring to Edward and profess his death. In MS B.10.2, this is shown over two images, one in which Edward gives his ring to the disguised John (Fig. 1.7), and a

[49] L. E. Tanner, 'Some Representations of St. Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey and Elsewhere', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 15/1 (1952), p. 8.

[50] Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390-1490*, no. 41.

[51] C. Turner Camp, *Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives as Historical Writing in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 158.

[52] O. Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford, 1962), p. 21.

second where the pilgrims arrive at the banquet and return the ring to Edward (Fig. 1.8). The two images allow the reader to understand the life of Edward the Confessor and draw inspiration from his pious acts. Moreover, the images are also representative of Ailred's *Life.* In contrast to Fig. 1.7, Ailred's *Life* states,

> 'It happened that a church was built in honour of this apostle [John] was consecrated to God in his name. The blessed king took the lead at the dedication and, happy at the honour shown the evangelist, attended the divine offices. As he was following the procession, surrounded by many knights, suddenly someone in the garb of a pilgrim cried out to him, asking to be given alms for the love of Saint John. Immediately, the king put his hand into his purse, but he had already used up in similar acts all that had been put in it. The pilgrim pressed him, increasing his entreaties. The king called his treasurer, but, with the crowd blocking the way, he was not at hand. The saint was vexed in spirit and did not know what to do. At length remembering the ring that encircled his finger, he hastily pulled it off and handed it to the pilgrim. He, giving thanks for such generosity, either withdrew or disappeared.'[53]

When comparing the image set out in the *Life of Edward* against the text from Ailred's *Life*, the similarities are very clear. While there is some contrast, most notably in the fact that Edward is swamped by people in the written description but is very clearly able to reach John in the image, this does not take away from the clear message and underlying piety that underscores both of the episodes. Other aspects of the text, such as the dedication of the church to John the Evangelist through the image of the priest and church, as well as the figures to the left that could be considered Edward's treasurer or stewards, meant that the story had been placed narratively into an image that encapsulates the key moment from the story. As such, it is unfair to call 'detached from Ailred's vita.'[54]

Moreover, given the simplicity of the style chosen for this *Life of Edward* alongside the constraints of a static image in comparison to the flow of written text, it is understandable that the story cannot be told narratively. The handover of the ring from Edward to John can be seen to be central narrative point of the text and has been highlighted clearly in the image through the pops of colour of the ring and Edward's sleeve. While other stories within Ailred's *Life* are more static than the two of John and the ring, the key to the images is that they provide a great sense of Edward as a pious figure, in much the same way as Ailred's

[53] Ailred, 'Life of Edward the Confessor', in *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Historical Works,* trans. Jane Patricia Freeland (Kalamazoo, 2005), pp. 197-8.

[54] Turner Camp, *Anglo Saxon Saints' Lives*, p. 158.

Life. While the narrative at times may be minimised or lost, the themes and sense of Edward as a holy and pious person are not. For example, Ailred's states that Edward,

> 'loved his friend of Jesus more keenly, after the prince of the apostles, gladly devoting himself to his service, frequently speaking of his excellence, and frequently meditating on his virginity.'[55]

As such, by focusing on Edward's acts of piety and presenting them in a manner that is representative of Ailred's *Life*, of Edward as a loving and pious figure, this is brought out to the audience who could reflect and meditate on the pious and loving acts carried out by Edward in God's name. For example, other images in the *Life of Edward* depict him cleaning the hands of his stewards and receiving visions of Christ as a child. Consequently, the *Life of Edward* can be argued to be a good representation of Ailred's *Life*, even if they do not complement each other as narratively well as other textual-image exchanges may have. Moreover, Ailred's *Life* contributed to Edward's the understanding of the king as a pious ruler, having preached at Westminster Abbey in 1163 when Edward's relics were moved to a new shrine.[56] The connection of the *Life of Edward* to the *Apocalypse* highlights the importance of the manuscript to Westminster Abbey, as well as the use of the manuscript for reflection and learning.

Figure 1.8: Banquet scene at which two pilgrims return the ring given to St. John, The Life of St. Edward the Confessor. Trinity College, Cambridge, B.10.2, f.42v. Copyright: Trinity College, Cambridge.[57]

[55] Ailred, 'Life of Edward the Confessor', in *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Historical Works*, trans. Jane Patricia Freeland (Kalamazoo, 2005), p. 197.

[56] J. Truax, *Aelred the Peacemaker: The Public Life of a Cistercian Abbot* (Collegeville, 2017), p. 92.

[57] https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/B.10.2/UV#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=91&r=0&xywh=-6647%2C-1%2C19685%2C9188

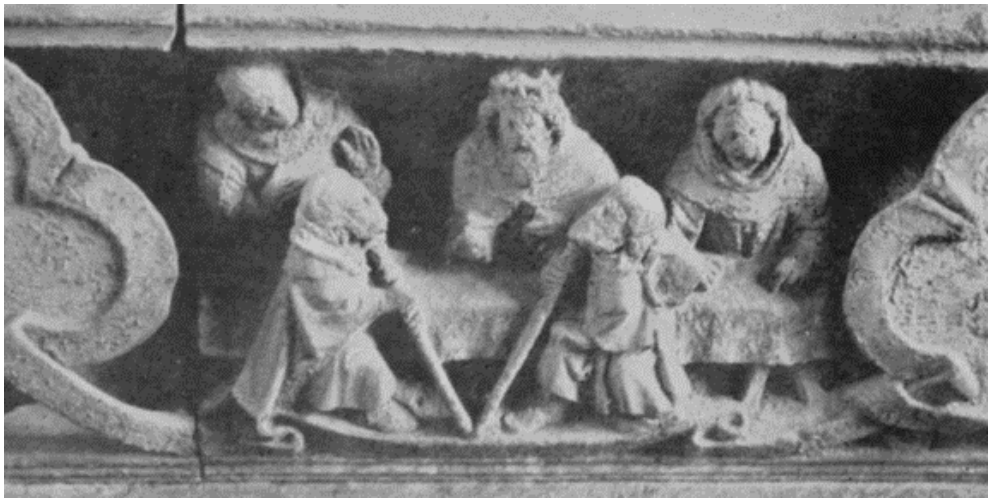

Figure 1.9: The restoration of the ring to the king, Presbytery and the Chapel of St. Edward the Confessor. Stone Screen, E. Side, Westminster Abbey. Originally published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1924.[58]

Connections have also been made between the screen that divides the presbytery from the Confessor's chapel in Westminster Abbey with the scenes depicted in the illustrated Ailred, and by extension, those depicted in B.10.2.[59] Scott has argued that of the 11 identifiable sculptures on the stone screen, nine of these are either similar or 'roughly similar' to those which can be seen in the *Life of St Edward.*[60] As shown in an example below (Fig. 1.8 and Fig. 1.9), some similarities can be found between the stone screen and the images, and it is clear that they both project roughly the same story. This is particularly the case with the images and sculptures portraying the 'story of the ring', where both follow the same narrative and use the same imagery. As can be seen in Fig. 1.8 and 1.9, the return of the ring is shown as a momentous occasion with the figures gathered around a table. St. Edward is shown centrally in the image, with one's eyes being drawn to him. The pilgrims are shown kneeling in both images, giving homage to their king (although there is a discrepancy between the number of pilgrims.) It is clear when examining the images side by side that either the screen was modelled on the *Life of Edward* or that they shared an origin.

In this case, neither the presbytery screen nor the manuscript images particularly reflect Ailred's *Life*. Of the same scene, Ailred's *Life* states:

> 'Immediately the men found themselves in the place they desired. Returning to their homeland with the greatest alacrity, they presented the ring to the king and explained the

[58] https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/london/vol1/plate-43

[59] Tanner, 'Some Representations of St. Edward', pp.8-9.

[60] Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390-1490*, no. 41.

> prophecy. Apart from the others they also related the words about the king's death. As soon as he heard John's name the king burst into tears.'[61]

While the scene of Edward receiving the ring is presented in both scenes and the *Life of Edward* presents the events of Ailred's *Life* and highlights Edward's piety through the event as told, some of the nuance is lost. Most notably, Edward's expression in the *Life of Edward* does not portray the weight of the pilgrims' words. Meanwhile, the presbytery screen does portray a shocked expression, but is missing the ring or the weeping. As such, it is possible that the presbytery screen and the *Life of Edward* may have been based on Ailred's *Life* in that they present the same events. However, it is just as likely that the myth of Edward the Confessor was known well enough that these events could be cast in pen or stone with ease without reference to a particular literary source.

Further, many of the scenes on the screen do not match those within the *Life of Edward*. An example of this is the scene depicting the curing of the blind. In the manuscript (f. 42v), Edward is sat at the side with his attendants' holding bowls of holy water, and the blind approach from the right. On the screen Edward is stood among the blind as they are healed. In Ailred's *Life,* the text states that Edward,

> 'As the king attended the sacred solemnity of the Mass, the blind man was summoned by the servants. They poured the water on the pupils of his eyes and washed his face, and they besought that divine power be present through the merits of the holy king. A miracle!'[62]

As can be seen, Ailred's *Life* are represented in part in both the manuscript and the presbytery screen through the blind man approaching the king and being healed by the servants under the watchful eye of the king. In contrast, there is stark differences between the two depictions of the same events which highlights that these two images are unlikely to be linked, but rather are retellings of the same story. Lawrence Tanner has argued that the *Life of Edward* provided a model for the screen, but it is hard to accept, and rather it is more likely that the myth of St. Edward, either through Ailred's *Life* or through other stories of Edward the Confessor, were the precursor for both the manuscript and the presbytery screen.[63]

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[61] Ailred, 'Life of Edward the Confessor', in *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Historical Works,* trans. Jane Patricia Freeland (Kalamazoo, 2005), p. 200.

[62] Ailred, 'Life of Edward the Confessor', in *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Historical Works,* trans. Jane Patricia Freeland (Kalamazoo, 2005), p. 182.

[63] Tanner, 'Some Representations of St. Edward', p. 9.

Edward's connection with Westminster Abbey is most important, as he founded the abbey.[64] Given that a *Life of Edward* was bound up with the *Westminster Apocalypse*, this suggests an effort to incorporate the *Apocalypse* within the greater life of the abbey, and the importance that the text play for these people. As demonstrated above, then, the *Westminster Apocalypse* was likely produced between 1380 to 1400, by a group of artists linked with Westminster, and stayed either within, or in the vicinity of Westminster Abbey throughout the late Middle Ages.

1. 4. Reconstructing an Audience for the *Westminster Apocalypse*

Establishing the audience of B.10.2 is important in order to understand why this manuscript was created, and how it was understood. While we do not have a definitive answer as to who the possible patron may have been, by analysing the manuscript's context and contents, particularly regarding the images in the *Apocalypse*, a possible audience may be suggested.

Firstly, as discussed in the previous section, the manuscript was likely used to produce the wall paintings and therefore may have been in possession, whether directly or indirectly, by the Benedictine monks of the abbey. Westminster Abbey possessed a library in which it could have kept the manuscript, and it is possible that the monks may have used the manuscript within their teaching.[65] This is likely given that the *Rule of St. Benedict* states that on the Sunday celebration of Lauds, a chapter from Revelation should be spoken by heart.[66] In order to be able to speak Revelation from memory, the monks would need to be able to access passages from Revelation many times for memorisation. It is possible that the *Westminster Apocalypse* became part of this memorisation. But it should also be noted that Westminster Abbey was accessible to the surrounding non-monastic community of London, and played an important role in the life of the city.[67] This means that laypeople may have had access to the manuscripts, but these were likely wealthy and elite people whose connections to the abbey would have allowed them to access the library. There is, however, no guarantee

[64] E. Mason, *Westminster Abbey and Its People, c.1050-1216* (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 17.

[65] R. Sharpe, *English Benedictine Libraries: the shorter catalogues* (London, 1996), p. 609.

[66] M. Gill, 'The Chapter House Apocalypse Panels', in M. Rylatt and P. Mason (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Medieval Cathedral and Priory of St. Mary, Coventry* (Coventry, 2003), p.88. For a modern English translation of the *Rule*, see: St. Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, trans. Timothy Fry (Collegeville, 1980), p. 41.

[67] E. Biggs, *St Stephen's College, Westminster: A Royal Chapel and English Kingship, 1348-1548* (Woodbridge, 2020), pp. 5-8

that the library itself was in possession of the manuscripts' and, instead, it may have been in possession of someone close to Westminster Abbey.

Many of the manuscripts in the 'Litlyngton group' had direct royal connections and this could conceivably include B.10.2. This relationship is illustrated through a connection between Edward the Confessor, depicted in the *Life of Edward,* and Richard II, the current reigning monarch. The cult of Edward the Confessor was given particular emphasis throughout Richard II's reign, who stressed his union with the saint through impaling his arms with Edward's and depicting Edward alongside Richard in the Wilton Diptych, thereby tying Edward with the monarchy.[68] Paul Binski states that Edward was a saint emblematic of 'Westminster and its political elite'.[69] As such, this may suggest that the manuscript as a whole belonged to members of either the royal family or the aristocratic elites.

As for the *Westminster Apocalypse* itself, it contains images that directly depict Revelation, often highlighting key images such as the apocalyptic beasts, the seven angels with the trumpets, the seven angels pouring the vials and the final battle between Heaven and Hell. It was up to the artist and illuminator, often in discussions with the patron, what images would be depicted within each apocalypse, and therefore the images picked, and what is depicted in them, can often tell us about who the patron and audience may have been.[70]

What jumps out when viewing the manuscript is the emphasis on the military and warlike aspects of the *Apocalypse*. There are a total of 15 images depicting figures in combat, holding weapons, or on horses in a style reminiscent of cavalry. Two of the images in which St. Michael fights the Seven-Headed Dragon show St. George's crosses on his shields, and one on his spear (f. 22r and f. 22v), indicating that victory over evil is directly tied with English domination and victory. Here, the English directly play a role as protectors from evil, and it also positions the English as God's chosen people. If we place the manuscript at Westminster in the years 1380-1400, we can identify that it perhaps belonged to someone within royal, aristocratic or knightly circles. In the late fourteenth century, the cult of St. George was starting to become more widespread but had not yet become as popular among all levels of society as it was to do later in the fifteenth century, and was mainly used by the

[68] P. Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: Kingship and the Representation of Power 1200-1400* (New Haven and London, 1995), pp. 52-3.

[69] Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets,* p. 53.

[70] Kwakkel, 'Decoding the Material Book: Cultural Residue in Medieval Manuscripts', p. 66.

aristocratic elite to symbolise military might and chivalry.[71] In particular, St. George gained popularity through the Order of the Garter in the mid-fourteenth century where he became its patron saint, and the Order would meet annually on his feast day, thereby anchoring St. George to courtly life and the values of chivalry.[72] This is important as chivalry was a key virtue of the nobility, and therefore imagery exemplifying chivalric values within manuscripts owned by the nobility would help reinforce their courtly honour and values.[73]

Other elements in this *Apocalypse* also suggest that there was an interest in war and chivalry. In the image of St. Michael fighting the Seven-Headed Dragon (f. 22r), we find that the only clothing he is wearing is a 'knightly girdle', that is, a broad belt of metal plaques worn at the waist which was popular in courtly circles from 1360 onwards, thereby emphasising the connections between the nobility, chivalry and the manuscript.[74] In some of the images, the soldiers hold spears with flags depicting coats-of-arms on them (f. 15r and f. 35r), a tradition that established somebody as a knight, and thus wedded to chivalric ideals.[75] These coats-of-arms were important as they allowed aristocratic families to mark themselves out and establish their own authority within aristocratic circles. Sadly, the coats-of-arms depicted within the Apocalypse cannot be identified as any particular families or groups within English society in the late fourteenth century, and its generic nature means that they are likely invented armorials. This suggests that it was not made for any specific family, but instead produced for a wider audience, such as the aristocratic or noble elites more generally. Moreover, it may also show that the importance of these symbols lay not so much in their identification but rather in the idea that these symbols signified certain ideals important to medieval English society.[76]

Similarly, much of the clothing worn in this manuscript appears to reflect courtly life. The civilian clothing worn by men, such as on f. 35v which depicts two men in short tunics

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[71] A. Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 306.

[72] Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture*, pp. 290-291; P. Coss, *The Aristocracy in England and Tuscany, 1000-1250* (Oxford, 2020), p.425. For use of the negative portrayal of heraldry in apocalypse manuscripts, see: A. Ailes, 'Heraldry in Medieval England: Politics and Propaganda', in P. Coss and M. Keen (ed.), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 84-5.

[73] N. Saul, *For Honour and Fame: Chivalry in England, 1066-1500* (London, 2011), p. 159.

[74] F. M. Kelly and R. Schwabe, *A Short History of Costume and Armour* (Trowbridge, 1931), p. 21.

[75] S. Crane, *The Performance of the Self: Ritual, Clothing and Identity during the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia, 2002), p. 110.

[76] Crane, *The Performance of the Self,* p. 111.

and tight hose (stocking-like leggings), has often been linked with what was fashionable in the courts throughout the High Middle Ages.[77] The women within the Apocalypse, for example in f. 26r, are shown to wear close-fitting, tight-sleeved gowns with a column of buttons down the front, similar to that shown on King Edward III's tomb in Westminster Abbey.[78] However, their hair does not appear to match courtly fashion, although this could be due to the talent of the artist, or a lack of knowledge in terms of female dress. One of the most important images, however, that indicates the Apocalypse's connection to aristocratic circles is the final image, on f. 38v, which depicts John kneeling at the side of Christ who is sat above him on a hill while an angel delivers a crown on white cloth. What is striking about this image is its resemblance to the act of homage that a king may accept. Christ, being given the crown by an angel is reminiscent of the coronation of the English kings, and in turn is able to accept homage from his vassals, here, symbolised by John offering both his hands. For those aristocratic elites in the fourteenth century, this image would have reflected their own experiences and relationship with their king.[79] It is unlikely that this image would have had the same impact among the lower orders of society, and therefore is likely to represent the aristocratic elite's relationship with their king, as well as modelling the sort of relationship that they were expected to have with God.

Other apocalypses also appear to have been overwhelmingly owned by members of the aristocratic elite throughout the fourteenth century.[80] For example, the *Apocalypse of Jean de Berry*, appears to have come into the possession of Jean de France sometime after 1415, with Richard Emmerson arguing that he was the likely patron of the apocalypse.[81] Similarly, the Welles Apocalypse has been argued to have been created with a female aristocratic

[77] J. Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Munich, 1991), p. 146; Kelly and Schwabe, *A Short History of Costume and Armour,* p. 17, 19.

[78] See Plate XII in Kelly and Schwabe, *A Short History of Costume and Armour,* p. 23.

[79] G. Garnett, 'Conquered England, 1066-1215', in N. Saul (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1997), p. 69.

[80] P. Szittya, 'Domesday Bokes: The Apocalypse in Medieval English Literary Culture', in R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1992), p. 381.

[81] R. K. Emmerson, 'On the Threshold of the Last Days: Negotiating Image and Word in the Apocalypse of Jean de Berry', in E. Gertsman and J. Stevenson (eds.), *Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 11, 39-42.

audience in mind, exemplified by its depiction of female busts throughout the apocalypse.[82] By the fourteenth century, ownership of apocalypses was becoming more fashionable, and it appears that many were commissioned for the laity, especially for the upper echelons of society who were able to afford lavish books that others could not.[83] This adds weight to the belief that the *Westminster Apocalypse* was created with an aristocratic patron, and audience, in mind.

The popularity of apocalypse commentaries among lay elites may be reflective of the literary culture of English aristocrats in the fourteenth century. We find that many of the apocalypses, including the *Westminster Apocalypse*, share traits with medieval romance, a genre known for its moralising teachings, chivalrous conduct of the hero character and a triumph of good over evil.[84] Emma O'Loughlin Berat has argued that both romances and apocalypse texts often had overlapping readerships and that they frequently intersected with each other, as can be seen through writers such as Chrétien de Troyes and Thomas Chestre.[85] With regards to the *Westminster Apocalypse*, romantic themes are often reflected in the manuscript itself through the courtly images which emphasise the chivalric values and the nature of fourteenth-century society. By including these courtly and romantic connections in the *Westminster Apocalypse*, the artist is able to provide a foundation for 'modernising' the apocalypse for its contemporary readers. Further, the fusion of romantic traits in the *Westminster Apocalypse* allows for the moral teachings of Revelation to come through, and emphasise its value as a devotional text outside of its normally ecclesiastical roots, thereby attracting a courtly audience.

Through an examination of the pictorial evidence of the *Westminster Apocalypse,* it can be seen that the manuscript was likely produced with a noble and courtly audience in mind. The manuscript often reflects a 'living reality' of aristocratic circles in fourteenth-

[82] A. Sand, *Vision, Devotion and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 251-252. The Trinity Apocalypse also similarly portrayed a woman as the visual avatar for the reader, see: L. J. Whatley, 'Crusading for (Heavenly) Jerusalem: A Noble Woman, Devotion and the Trinity Apocalypse (Cambridge, Trinity College, R.16.2)', in E. A. Foster, J. Perratore and S. Rozenski (eds.), *Devotional Interaction in Medieval England and its Afterlives* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 49-79, esp. 50-51.

[83] M. Gay, 'Monumental Apocalypse Cycles of the Fourteenth Century', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 1999), p. 64.

[84] Saul, *For Honour and Fame,* p. 322.

[85] E. O'Loughlin Berat, 'Romance and Revelation', in K. C. Little and N. McDonald (eds.), *Thinking Medieval Romance* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 134-136.

century English society. It mirrors both the practical and the idealised aspects of courtly life, right down to the clothing and beliefs of the day. By placing these contemporary elements onto the traditional apocalypse, and by using the popular Berengaudus commentary, the mystical and unknown Revelation is modernised and re-evaluated for a fourteenth century audience. Overall, the *Westminster Apocalypse* places the events of Revelation into a contemporary fourteenth-century timeframe, spotlighting the concerns and anxieties of its English audience. Further, it highlights how the apocalypse fitted into greater understandings of society in the late fourteenth century.

1. 5. Representations of the Apocalyptic Beasts

In some medieval writings, the beasts were often represented as particular figures in history, the authors interpreting the apocalypse *vaticinium ex eventu* (after the event) in order to make claims about the order of history and the place of current society in the overarching timeline of Christian salvation.[86] An example of this can be seen in the more radical thought of Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202), in which the heads of the red seven-headed dragon of the Apocalypse are shown to represent seven different antichrists (eight if you include the tail that was labelled, 'Gog, the final Antichrist'), each of these a different character from history.[87] For Joachim, the heads represented the figures of Herod and Nero through to Saladin, who was thought to be the sixth Antichrist at the time in which Joachim was living.[88] In contrast, traditional orthodox writers such as Gregory the Great interpreted Antichrist as 'the head of all hypocrites…who feign holiness to lead to sinfulness', an example of a more conservative attitude which sought to conflate the Antichrist, or sometimes antichrists, with sinful characteristics rather than living or long-dead individuals.[89]

Berengaudus follows this traditional position when it comes to approaching the apocalyptic beasts and the antichrist, and this tradition is continued in the *Westminster*

[86] K. Fonzo, *Retrospective Prophecy and Medieval English Authorship* (Toronto, 2022), p. 15.

[87] F. Andrews, 'The Influence of Joachim in the 13th Century', in M. Riedl (ed.), *A Companion to Joachim of Fiore* (Leiden, 2017), p. 245.

[88] R. Lerner, 'Frederick II: Alive, Aloft and Allayed, in Franciscan-Joachite Eschatology', in W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Leuven, 1988), p. 374.

[89] PL 76:343B. Translation from B. McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York, 1994), p. 81.

Apocalypse. This can be seen most clearly through Berengaudus' approach to the number of the beast (666), and is copied by the compiler into the *Westminster Apocalypse.* It states that,

> 'Many have said many things about the number, and found rather many names, in the letters of which this number is found. Yet if the Antichrist should possess any of these names, they have not been able to foresee [it]: but I dare not define a thing so uncertain.'[90]

By leaving this up to the audience, it distanced the *Apocalypse* from the contemporary time, as the reader would be unable to recognise known living figures within its narrative, providing some movement away from belief in an immediate end. This suggests that the compiler too held a conservative view, as to use Berengaudus, as opposed to other Apocalyptic commentators, was to not make any specific speculations about their own time.

Following on from this, Berengaudus also chose to only emphasise one Antichrist figure in his commentary, rather than the many antichrists that are present in a work such as Joachim of Fiore's. This leads to a rather hazy interpretation as to which apocalyptic beast drawn in the *Westminster Apocalypse* is supposed to represent the Antichrist. For example, in f. 24r, the blue horned figure is a representation of 'the image of the Beast' (Rev. 13:15), but in f. 24v, the figure is now shown in the text as a representation of the Antichrist.[91] The apocalyptic beasts are shown to represent any number of characters, from themselves, to the devil, to the Antichrist, with apparently little interest in the lore of the Antichrist legend or the history of the devil. Instead, what is paramount to these apocalyptic beasts is their portrayal as evil beings, and as being either 'in league' with the devil, or, in some folios, the beasts are interpreted as the devil themselves. The apocalyptic beasts can in some ways represent 'different' aspects of the Antichrist, but they in themselves do not represent multiple antichrists. What we find instead is that the emphasis is placed on the intense sense of evil, where this group, and their ability to manipulate others to their belief system, would feel actively threatening to the reader.[92] This 'threatening evil' is then heightened by the commentary, in which the hazy narrative on the representations of the beasts offers an interpretation that the devil can and will possess many forms.

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[90] Cambridge, Trinity College, B.10.2, f. 24v. 'De hoc numero multi multa dixerunt, pluraque nomina repererunt, in quorum litteris hic numerus invenitur. Tamen si aliquod ex iis nominibus Antichristus possideat, previdere non potuerunt: sed de re tam incerta nihil audio definire.'

[91] B.10.2, f. 24r and f. 24v.

[92] D. Strickland Higgs, *Saracens, Demons and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Woodstock, 2003), p. 61.

Figure 1.10: The apocalyptic beasts spit out toads, Westminster Apocalypse. Trinity College, Cambridge, B.10.2, f. 34v. Copyright: Trinity College, Cambridge.[93]

Despite this confusing representation of the beasts, what is clear from the *Westminster Apocalypse* is a sense of hierarchy among the apocalyptic beasts. This, for one, can be found on f. 34v, where the beasts are lined up, each one raised a little higher than the other in order to show their significance (see Fig. 1.10). In the top right hand corner is a seven-headed lion beast, which is most likely here a representation the Antichrist and/or the devil. The dragon is shown below him, and then the blue beastly figure, probably a representation of the pseudo-prophet, is shown below him. This denotes an order, or hierarchy, to the beasts. In the commentary below, the compiler has chosen a passage which too denotes some sense of hierarchy. Berengaudus shows this through placing the dragon 'below' the Antichrist and pseudo-prophet, by not giving him the same powers as the two others, as he is not said to be able to 'teach'. While this passage does not directly line up with the image above it, both indicate some interest with hierarchy, and perhaps shows a reflection of medieval culture, where the maintenance of the social order was integral to both consolidation of power and of a well-balanced kingdom.[94]

[93] https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/B.10.2/UV#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=75&r=0&xywh=-6647%2C-1%2C19685%2C9188

[94] D. G. Shaw, *Necessary Conjunctions: The Social Self in Medieval England* (New York, 2005), p. 37.

Social mobility disrupted this 'correct' social order and so it was shamed; many believed it was unnatural for men to alter their hierarchical position in society.[95] It was believed the medieval order of society was ordained by God.[96] Hierarchy, then, became greatly emphasised by medieval thinkers in the late fourteenth-century, who had watched with dismay at the social upheaval caused by the Black Death. Attempts were made by authorities to stop working people from exploiting the rising economic crisis and the Sumptuary Laws were enacted throughout Edward III's reign in order to avoid the lower orders from adopting the customs of their social superiors.[97] Therefore, it is unsurprising that the *Westminster Apocalypse* highlights these anxieties held by some of the upper orders, who had most to lose if upward mobility was allowed on a grand scale. Hence, the compiler of the *Westminster Apocalypse* portrays the beasts' existence as the inverse of the God-ordained hierarchical society, in order to show their opposition to Christ and his Church.

Figure 1.11: The adoration of the beast, Westminster Apocalypse. Trinity College, Cambridge, B.10.2, f. 24r. Copyright: Trinity College, Cambridge.[98]

Further images express this sense of hierarchy, as can be seen in 24r, where the lion beast overviews the 'image of the beast' as he slaughters those who do not adore him. From

[95] P. C. Maddern, 'Social Mobility', in R. Horrox and W. M. Ormrod (eds.), *A Social History of England 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 115.

[96] A. Black, 'European and Middle Eastern Views of Hierarchy and Order in the Middle Ages: A Comparison' in J. Denton (ed.), *Orders and Hierarchies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Manchester, 1999), p .30.

[97] Maddern, 'Social Mobility', p. 117.

[98] https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/B.10.2/UV#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=54&r=0&xywh=-6647%2C-1%2C19685%2C9188

what is stated in the commentary, it is likely that this lion beast is yet again a representation of the Antichrist, and the raising of him on a platform, watching on, places the Antichrist as 'above' the image of the Beast, in a similar way to how a king may watch his subjects. By the fourteenth century, the subjects of history and apocalypse were often co-joined with apocalyptic texts drawing on current societal and historical structures in order to play out the future, and so, these images are a comment on the nature of kingship and justice.[99] The 'image of the beast' is shown as carrying out unlawful killing as watched and condoned by the Antichrist, where the Revelation passage makes it clear that those who 'will not adore the image of the beast shall be slain.'[100] This, therefore, suggests that the compiler is arguing for the existence of the freedom to speak out against the king, without the fear that people would be punished for their views. There was an expectation that the king meted out justice, but that this was done deservingly, and not for personal gain. As an inverse of orderly society as ordained by God, the apocalyptic beasts carry out actions which are contrary to this. This, alongside the visual clues that indicate the manuscript to be from the late fourteenth century, such as the clothes of the miniatures, would have heightened the apocalyptic intensity of the manuscript. This does not necessarily mean that the audience would have believed that the apocalypse was imminent, but rather that the audience likely had some awareness about the end times, and could react to this accordingly.

1. 6. Fear of Heresy

One of the main concerns in the *Westminster Apocalypse* is the power that the apocalyptic beasts possess, shown both in the images and in the accompanying text. Many of the images show the beasts as active participants in the narrative of the end time, in that they are able to persuade and coerce Christians into going against God's will. The *Westminster Apocalypse* highlights the ways that the beasts are able to do this, most notably through the use of speech and teaching.

This act of speech can clearly be seen in f. 34v (see Fig. 1.9). Rev. 16:13-17, details toads coming from the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, along with the gathering of the kings before their battle on the hill of Armageddon. In the image above,

[99] R. K. Emmerson, 'Apocalypse and/as History', in J. Jahner, E. Steiner and E. M. Tyler (eds.), *Medieval Historical Writing: Britain and Ireland, 500-1500* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 66.

[100] Douay-Rheims Bible, Rev. 13:15 – 'et datum est illi ut daret spiritum imagini bestiae ut et loquatur imago bestiae et faciat quicumque non adoraverint imaginem bestiae occidantur', < http://www.latinvulgate.com/> accessed 1/2/23.

however, we find that the focal point of the folio is the image of the toads emerging from the mouths of the three principal beasts, as John watches on, covering his face with one hand as if to deflect his attention away from them. The Berengaudus commentary beneath it states:

> Truly, the three unclean spirits appoint disciples of the Antichrist, who are about to proclaim him [the Antichrist] throughout the whole world: who, although they [the disciples] are going to be men, are called the unclean spirits and the spirits of the demons, because the demons will live in themselves and will speak through their mouths; that have been seen to come out of the mouth of the Antichrist and of the false prophet because the sons of the devil will be brought about through his teaching.[101]

The section on Berengaudus raises two points. One is the concern that the Antichrist and his beasts are able to speak and pass on 'unclean spirits' into the minds of Christian men, who would then turn from God and become disciples of the Antichrist. The other concern is the nature of speech in being able to transfer thoughts and knowledge from one person to another, and that this could foster dissent and heretical thought if the recipient does not have the knowledge or ability to distinguish between 'correct' and 'incorrect' thought.

Moreover, the use of the toads or frogs, coming out of the mouths of the three figures could be reflective of a greater concern with heresy. Often, toads and frogs were used to symbolise sin and heresy, or as used by Rabanus Maurus (c.780-856), they could be representations of heretics themselves.[102] A notable example of this can be seen in the Book of Hours, owned by Johann Siebenhirter, which contains an image of three priests administering communion to three lay people. In it, one of the priests is administering the communion in the form of a toad. Suggestions for this have ranged from heresy to unbelief, but what is clear is the representation of the toad as an 'evil belief' that can transfer from one to another.[103] As such, the *Westminster Apocalypse* may have used this representation and text to highlight the compiler's anxiety concerning the spread of incorrect or heretical beliefs, and the importance of its audience being vigilant against heretical and 'incorrect' beliefs.

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[101] B.10.2, f. 34v. 'Spiritus vero tres immundi discipulos designant Antichristi, qui eum per universum orbem predicaturi sunt: qui quamvis homines sint futuri, spiritus immundi, et spiritus demoniorum vocantur; quia demones in ipsis habitabunt, et per ora eorum loquentur: qui Antichristi et de ore pseudoprophete eius exiisse visi sunt; quia per eorum doctrinam filii diaboli effecientur: qui etiam de ore draconis exiisse visi sunt; quia per os Antichristi diabolus loquentur.'

[102] J. R. Benton, *The Medieval Menagerie: Animals in the Art of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1992), p. 111; S. Cohen, *Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art* (Leiden, 2008), p. 78.

[103] J. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (New York, 2005), pp. 216-7.

This may particularly be the case given the manuscript's production in London around the time of the Blackfriars Council in 1382. The council had condemned 24 conclusions or ideas advanced by a group of Wycliffite scholars at the University of Oxford, and alongside Gregory XI bull to Archbishop Sudbury in 1377 to warn him about the dangers of Wyclif had resulted in much anxiety and concern around the slanderous rumour and heresy during the late-fourteenth century.[104] Evidently, the manuscript may have been produced in a climate of fear regarding the increase in heretical beliefs that had proliferated in the south of England, and the concerns in both aristocratic and religious audiences surrounding a movement away from orthodox Church ideas. The representation of the beasts in being able to spread 'incorrect' beliefs through the use of their speech may have been reflective in the perceived ability of the Wycliffite scholars to spread their beliefs to others within their circles.

Moreover, one of the concerns of the council was that Wyclif and his followers wanted to, and did, preach to those outside of the university.[105] Depending on when exactly the *Westminster Apocalypse* was produced, there is a possibility that its compiler or patron saw the *Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards* nailed to the door of Westminster Abbey, an action which would have been very close to home.[106] The *Twelve Conclusions* challenge the authority of the Church and call for a return to a simpler religious faith. The language of the *Twelve Conclusions* is highly charged: the fifth conclusion states that exorcisms and hallowings conducted by the Church are 'fals beleve, be whiche is þe principal of þe develis craft' while in the fourth conclusion, transubstantiation is referred to as a 'fals miraclis' (false miracle).[107] By presenting the Church in this way, for some of its audience, it could conjure up ideas regarding the Antichrist at the end of the world. Here, the Church could be presented as the Antichrist who is seducing the laity away from the righteous path through their teachings.

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[104] A. Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge, 2008), p.3; 'J. Simpson, 'The Constraints of Satire in "Piers Plowman" and "Mum and the Sothsegger",' in H. Phillips (ed.), *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 17-8.

[105] A. K. McHardy, 'The Dissemination of Wyclif's Ideas', in A. Hudson and M. Wilks (eds.), *From Ockham to Wyclif* (Oxford, 1987), p. 361; M. Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350-1600* (London and Rio Grande, 1993), p. 37-8; Cole, *Literature and Heresy*, p. 6.

[106] A. Minnis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Chaucer* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 8-9.

[107] Anon, 'The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards', in *English Historical Review* 22/86, ed. H. S. Cronin (1907), pp. 297-8.

Given that the *Westminster Apocalypses* was possibly housed within Westminster Abbey itself, and that it was used by the aristocracy, as well as by the local Benedictine community, it can be seen as a reassertion of the orthodox teachings and supremacy of the Church over all heresy. The quote from the *Westminster Apocalypse* above highlights that the 'sons of the devil will be brought about through his teaching', highlighting the need to be able to separate good teachings from bad, and the ability of heresy to infest good Christians with incorrect teachings and beliefs. As such, the *Westminster Apocalypse* attempts to distinguish between the Church's teachings and heretical teachings, which are represented through the Antichrist and the apocalyptic beasts. In one of the folios (f. 23r), the Two Testaments are shown as direct sources of knowledge for the beliefs of the Church, with it stating:

> "The devil, seeing that he had lost the greatest number of the elect and that he had been confined within the narrow bounds of the hearts of the reprobates, persecuted the woman, who is the Church…Through the eagle, we can understand Christ: the two wings, they are the two Testaments. Therefore, the two wings are given to the woman, because they are the two Testaments accepted [by] the Church, so that by teaching them, [the Church] may both escape the devil and ascend every day to the heavenly fatherland."[108]

Here, the compiler aims to help his audience in distinguishing Church teachings, which are based on the testaments and so are irrefutable and true, from the teachings of the apocalyptic beasts, which are shown to be like poisonous frogs. This reaffirms Church doctrine as not being the 'develis craft' but coming directly from Christ, and it is this which invests them with authority over all spiritual matters. Thus, ecclesiastical teaching is considered sacred and true, and so above all heretical belief. Another example of this can be seen in f. 22r, in which the 'preaching of the apostles and of all the other saints' is deemed a miraculous act, with the ability to expel the devil from the 'hearts of the elect.'[109] Therefore, the right of the Church to teach is enshrined by their pastoral duty to the laity, and the importance of teaching in order for the laity to achieve salvation.

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[108] B.10.2., f. 23r. 'Videns dyabolus se maximam multitudinem electorum amisisse, et intra angustias cordium reproborum esse conclusum, persecutus est mulierem, id est Ecclesiam… Per aquilam Christum possumus intelligere: Due vero ale, duo sunt Testamenta. Due igitur ale date sunt mulieri; quia duo Testamenta Ecclesia accepit; ut eorum doctrina et dyabolum evadat, et ad celestem patriam cotidie conscendat.'

[109] B.10.2., f. 22r. 'Non valuerunt ergo neque locus inventus est eorum amplius in celo; quia per predicationem apostolorum ceterorumque sanctorum a cordibus electorum quia per celo designantur expulsi sunt.'

By contrast, in much the same tone as the *Twelve Conclusions,* it is the apocalyptic beasts who are shown to cast false miracles and lead the laity astray. In f. 24r, it states:

> We can understand this otherwise: the image has the appearance of man, but is not man; similarly, the Antichrist also, because of the operation of virtues and of miracles, will be thought to be God, but this will be very false. Truly, it cannot happen that a most wicked man would have something of the deity in him. Therefore, they [ministers of Antichrist] will make an image of Antichrist, those who will think him God. In particular, the ministers of the Antichrist will give life to the image of the beast, since they will compel those who believe in Antichrist to blaspheme Christ…For there will be a tribulation of such a kind just as the Lord said in the Gospel, such as there has not been from the beginning [of the world], nor will it be, in such a way that even the elect might be led into error.[110]

For the audience of the manuscript in the late fourteenth century, this section may have a number of meanings and highlights the climate of fear that was prevalent concerning heresy. For one, it explains why heretical teachings may be enticing, in which they can seem similar to Christ's teaching, but instead are an inversion of them, and they may be powerful enough that even 'the elect might be led into error.' Implicitly, this highlights to the audience why they, or the people they know, may be drawn into heretical beliefs, such as those espoused in the *Twelve Conclusions.* The fact that the Antichrist is able to 'compel those who believe in Antichrist to blaspheme Christ', provides a logical purpose for its audience of why they are seeing the spread of heretical thought, and why it has become a concern for those within the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Moreover, it provides a warning to its audience, that they should be wary of heretical or 'incorrect' beliefs pedalled by those that are not endorsed by the Church itself. The statute, *De heretico comburendo* (1401), restricted what could be preached and taught, aiming to remove the heresy of Lollardy and punish those going against church teachings with

[110] B.10.2., f. 24r. 'Possumus hoc aliter intellegere, imago speciem hominis habet, sed non est homo, similiter et Antichristus propter operationem virtutum atque signorum putabitur [esse] Deus: sed hoc falsissimum erit. Non enim potest fieri, ut homo impyssimus aliquid deitatis in se habeat. Imaginem ergo Antichristi facient, qui eum Deum existimabunt. Ministri vero Antichristi spiritum imagini bestie dabunt, cum eos qui crediderint Antichristum, Christum blasphemare compellent…Erit namque tribulatio talis, sicut dixit Dominus in Evangelio. Qualis non fuit ab initio, neque fiet, ita ut in errorem inducantur electi, si fieri potest.'

burning.[111] This can be seen as a reaction to Lollardy and heresy in much the same way as is presented in the *Westminster Apocalypse.* For Church officials, and those such as aristocratic elites, the concern is that heresy will lead the laity into error and that this could lead to disruptions in both the religious and social order, as well as stopping the laity from reaching salvation. Implicitly, the 'ministers of Antichrist' here can be read as the heretics present in London, who are pushing the agenda of the Antichrist, and turning people away from God. As such, the text becomes a warning for those reading to guard themselves from heresy and advocate for the continuation of the Church under the guidance of Christ.

Finally, the section reaffirms the supremacy of the Church and Christ over the Antichrist and his ministers [heretics]. For example, it is shown that, while the Antichrist is able to perform 'virtues and miracles' which look like those performed by Christ, and by extension the Church, through the power invested upon priests from God, his miracles are false in that they do not come from God. For the reader, it would be clear that they should follow the teachings of Christ and the Church and be wary of others who claim the same, as the Church was considered the only true path to salvation. As such, the accusation from the *Twelve Conclusions* that the Church was unable to conduct true miracles, such as transubstantiation, is dismissed. This, of course, feeds into the greater narrative regarding the Antichrist in apocalyptic thought, which saw the Antichrist as the direct opposite of Christ. In fact, the *Westminster Apocalypse* makes this clear when it states, 'Satan is understood as a contrary person' (f. 22r).[112] Richard Emmerson has suggested that this idea increased the Antichrist's effectiveness as an apocalyptic figure, as he acted as a complete denigration of Christ.[113] Consequently, in the *Westminster Apocalypse,* the Antichrist acts as a symbol of all which opposes Christ and the Church, as well as a warning to distrust alternative authorities that may pose as the religious truth.

As shown, speech was a powerful tool in late medieval English society by which to contest and affirm religious beliefs. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, authorities became increasingly anxious regarding the spread of religious beliefs outside the bounds of

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[111] K. A. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, 1997), p. 137. See more generally: A. K. McHardy, 'De Heretico Comburendo, 1401', in M. Aston and C. Richmond (eds.), *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, 1997), pp. 112-126.

[112] B.10.2., f. 22r. 'Satyanas autem interpretatur contrarius.'

[113] R. K. Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art and Literature* (Seattle, 1981), p. 20.

what was considered orthodox and accepted by the Church. The need to reaffirm ecclesiastical supremacy and dissuade the laity from engaging with heretical beliefs is presented throughout the *Westminster Apocalypse* through the use of the apocalyptic beasts and their Antichrist. It is this, alongside anxiety regarding slanderous and treasonous speech, that may have been principal concerns for the *Westminster Apocalypse*.

1. **7. Slanderous Speech and Treason**

The depiction of toads coming out of the mouth of the apocalyptic beasts can also be considered a reflection of anxiety surrounding other types of speech too. In particular, the late fourteenth century saw a rise in concerns with slanderous and treasonous speech. Given the *Westminster Apocalypse*'s ties with the aristocratic elites, the manuscript may also be read to consider the anxiety surrounding these other types of speech within the late fourteenth century.

There had been a specific discourse regarding 'sins of the tongue', originally a medieval theological idea that deviant religious speech was a capital sin that could impact on one's ability to attain salvation.[114] By late-fourteenth century England, however, it had spread to encompass all parts of life from law courts to literature, to daily interactions between lay people.[115] In particular, we find that a greater concern is placed on 'sins of the tongue' for men in terms of their ramifications for political dealings with authority.[116] In 1352, King Edward III promulgated his law on treason, which outlined what could and could not be constituted as treason in England. This included plotting against the king, violating female members of the king's household, giving aid to the king's enemies, counterfeiting the king's seals and coins, and killing the king's chief ministers and judiciaries.[117] While some have argued that this law stated that treason had to contain an 'overt action', Paul Strohm has argued that this is a misinterpretation, especially given the phrasing of one of the statutes which claimed that to 'compass or imagine' the king's death was treason, and therefore this classes seditious speech and words as treasonous in themselves, as they enacted the idea of

[114] R. G. Newhauser, 'Understanding Sin: Recent Scholarship and the Capital Vices', in R. G. Newhauser and S. J. Ridyard (eds.), *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins* (York, 2012), p. 10.

[115] Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues*, p. 26.

[116] E. D. Craun, *Ethics and Power in Medieval English Reformist Writings* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 131.

[117] D. Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England* (Oxford, 2010), p. 41.

'imagining' the king's death.[118] Evidently, words were considered a powerful instrument for treason in late fourteenth-century society. For example, several of the Lords Appellant renounced their homage to Richard II in 1388, leading to a new treason law in 1397 that made it treasonous to do just that.[119] While at its most basic level, homage was simply a promise made to one's lord, the words were significant as they held power and secured bonds between a king and his nobility. This ability to say or not say the correct words could lead to treasonous actions and plans, and even not enacted, could be seen as evidence of treasonous actions.

It is clear to see, then, that speech was often seen as a forerunner of treasonous activity, and it was often an indication of treasonous intentions even if the action was not carried out.[120] This view was to continue into the fifteenth century, even if some of the treason laws became more relaxed.[121] Applying this to the *Westminster Apocalypse*, we can see that the speech of the Antichrist and his apocalyptic beasts was important because of the tangible and real impact their speech may have on the lives and salvation of all God's people. This, tied with the belief that venomous speech spread, may have alarmed those living in the fourteenth century, and provides a possible reason as to why this power was conferred upon the apocalyptic beasts. After all, as a being contrary to Christ, it would make sense that the Antichrist would have such a powerful and dangerous tool at his disposal.

Further, if we consider that the *Westminster Apocalypse* was likely created for an aristocratic, or perhaps urban elite readership, it makes sense that the use of speech became a particularly important concern in this manuscript. The *Statute of Treason* 1352 more often targeted aristocratic and urban elites, with kings often being less concerned with the views of the lower orders, with the exception of 1381.[122] This meant that speech may well have been heavily moderated among the higher orders, especially those in a close proximity to the royal household, so that individuals would have been under more scrutiny and inspection. Strohm argues that the treason law's intent was to continue to impose and reinforce a hierarchical

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[118] P. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation 1399-1422* (New Haven and London, 1998), p. 26.

[119] J. G. Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1970), p.114.

[120] E. A. McVitty, *Treason and Masculinity in Medieval England: Gender, Law and Political Culture* (Woodbridge, 2020), pp. 112-3.

[121] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne,* pp. 25-26.

[122] Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues,* pp. 31-2.

structure on late fourteenth century society, as can be seen through the separation of treason into 'high' and 'petty' treason.[123] While these categories were not necessarily outlined and as clear-cut in medieval society as we make them out to be, a distinction can be found within the statute itself, especially within 'petty treason', where an action could be seen to be treasonous if it went against the supposed hierarchy that medieval England relied upon, such as a wife killing her husband (the head of the household.)[124] This maintained the hierarchy at all levels of society, including the separation of men and women, as well higher and lower men. Strohm has explained this document by referring to the Black Death; the social upheaval of the mid-fourteenth century plague meant that the lower orders were able to renegotiate their social and economic position, and this statute can be seen as one such response by the king and his supporters to quell social mobility.[125] As such, moderating speech became a tool by which the king imposed his will on all levels of society.

The *Westminster Apocalypse* was produced in the reign of King Richard II. Richard's style of kingship has been described chiefly by some as 'tyrannical', in part because of his concern with his own will rather than the needs and wishes of his subjects.[126] In fact, it was said that Richard's *obiter dicta* was that the 'laws of England were alone in his mouth or breast', highlighting Richard's need for absolutism in his monarchical power as well as his own self-evident interest in using speech to maintain power.[127] For historians studying the kingship of Richard II, the emphasis he placed on the rule of absolute monarchy has puzzled them, as this does not align with the developments in English kingship during the Middle Ages. However, as Nigel Saul has stressed, Richard's kingship can be situated within a European context, where monarchs attempted to consolidate and, in some ways, reverse the gains made by governments and representative assemblies in order to heighten their own sense of monarchy and attain a form of absolute power.[128] Richard, too, aimed at restoring structure and authority to his own sovereignty, often through the establishment of his own

[123] P. Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 124-5.

[124] R. Green Firth, *A Crisis of Truth: Language and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia, 1999), p. 215, 217.

[125] Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow,* p. 125.

[126] A. K. Gundy, *Richard II and the Rebel Earl* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 193.

[127] N. Saul, 'The Kingship of Richard II', in A. Goodman and J. L. Gillespie (eds.), *Richard II: The Art of Kingship* (Oxford, 1999), p. 44.

[128] Saul, 'The Kingship of Richard II', p. 37.

royal will and prowess. This was framed in such a way as to separate him from his peers, and remove intermediaries, such as various councils, from his God-given right to rule.[129] An example of this saw Richard placing prominence on formal and ceremonial behaviours in the 1390s as to highlight his person as being separate from government and politics.[130]

However, one of the more underexplored ways Richard attempted to achieve this absolute monarchy was through the control of speech. In his articles of deposition, Richard was said to have rebuked his justices and officials when they offered an opinion, so that they dared no longer state the truth.[131] Further to this, it is claimed that Richard extracted oaths from his sheriffs that any who 'spoke evil of him' would be thrown into prison.[132] While these claims do come from those opposed to his rule, and therefore in their own way construct a narrative with their speech, we do have evidence of Richard himself attempting to control speech. For instance, Richard sent a commission to Cheshire in 1396 in search of 'barrators and rioters', who often used, as described by Sandy Bardsley, 'verbal offense and riot' in order to attain change and aggravation in local communities.[133] More importantly than this, however, is the 1397 parliament, where Richard enacted a new statute explicitly stating that any speech regarding the deposition of the king or the withdrawal of homage would be charged with treason.[134] This highlights the scrutiny many aristocratic and urban elites were subjected to in the last decade of the fourteenth century, and the importance of both royal censorship, and more personally, self-censorship. The emphasis placed on treason within the royal circle, and its widening impact on the higher orders of society may have brought into question each individual's conduct, and by extension, their own use of speech. In order to stay on the right side of politics, therefore, the monitoring of one's own speech, and those around them, would have become paramount to those hoping to secure good favour in fourteenth-century society.

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[129] A. Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 185.

[130] Saul, 'The Kingship of Richard II', p. 40, 49.

[131] C. Fletcher, *Richard II: Manhood, Youth and Politics 1377-1399* (Oxford, 2008), p. 272; RP Vol. 3, Item. 40 (p. 420).

[132] Fletcher, *Richard II*, pp.271-2; RP, Vol. 3, Item. 38 (p. 420).

[133] Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues,* p. 30.

[134] E. A. McVitty, '"My name of a trewe man": Gender, Vernacularity and Treasonous Speech in Late Medieval England', *Australian and New Zealand Association of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 33/1 (2016), p. 93.

Further, the sheer increase in the number of cases of treason in the reign of Richard II as opposed to Edward III, because of the shifting definition of treason, highlights the anxiety surrounding treason and speech in late fourteenth century England.[135] Those speaking out against the king, especially those in support of the Merciless Parliament of 1388, such as earls of Arundel and Warwick, were particularly at risk.[136] Richard's volatile behaviour can be seen in his dealing with the Appellants, the chief lords following the Merciless Parliament; revoking their former pardons and either executing or exiling those against him; as well as enforcing laws that saw their actions as 'treasonous.'[137] This shifting from one interpretation of treason to another under Richard's reign, while short lived, would have perpetuated anxiety among the higher orders of society, muddying the waters as to what speech and actions may have been deemed acceptable in the eyes of their king. Even when there was a return to the former state of the statute in 1399, his influence still remained. Even King Henry IV, upon reaching the throne, continued to define treason as something that could be committed by speech alone.[138] While it is hard to monitor this type of treason without considering action and intention, seditious speech can be seen to have been a tool by which to control the aristocratic elite and consolidate power in the political sphere.

With such a high level of importance placed onto speech in this period, it is therefore unsurprising that the *Westminster Apocalypse* homed in on speech as a powerful tool accessible to both good Christians but also to the apocalyptic beasts. In reflecting on speech within late fourteenth century society, we must in turn recognise how this society shaped apocalyptic thought, especially in terms of how the apocalyptic beasts, alongside the Antichrist, became a form of reflection of the worst of fourteenth-century society. Taking the *Westminster Apocalypse's* claim that the devil was 'contrary to Christ', the hierarchical evil in the *Westminster Apocalypse* is shown as the inverse of how contemporary society should function, in that it was believed that Christian society was modelled on God's own.

1. 8. Jews and Sinners

Through both their speech and actions, the apocalyptic beasts are shown to be able to entice some people to Antichrist and encourage sinners. The *Westminster Apocalypse* makes clear

[135] Bellamy, *The Law of Treason*, pp. 108-9.

[136] Fletcher, *Richard II*, pp. 249-50.

[137] Bellamy, *The Law of Treason*, pp. 114-5.

[138] Bellamy, *The Law of Treason*, p. 116.

the distinction between those who actively work for Antichrist and those who are encouraged to sin. For example, those who work for the Antichrist are often referred to as 'disciples of Antichrist' or 'ministers of Antichrist', who take an active role in the end times, but are separated from the beasts as they are human.[139] These disciples can be seen in f. 24r, where they are shown praising the lion-headed beast; they are male, bearded and wearing a Phrygian cap, and so represent how medieval Christians saw Jews.[140] This distinction is important to the *Westminster Apocalypse* as it provides a divide between sinners, often described in the commentary as 'reprobates', or in the Latin as 'reprobi', as opposed to those, shown above, who were his 'disciples.' The reaction to each of these within the *Westminster Apocalypse*, and how they are portrayed in the narrative, can suggest that the compiler held certain views about the religious state of England in the late fourteenth century, and can be understood by framing this narrative within its historical context.

As discussed above, the disciples of Antichrist here have been depicted as Jews. They may be depicted in this way for two reasons. The first is that, historically, the Jews were seen as not only rejecting Christ, but being the reason for his murder.[141] To many Christians, this placed Judaism as being a direct enemy of Christianity, and thus it would be logical to see them as working for, or alongside, the evil Antichrist. Secondly was the belief that at the end times, the Jews would be converted to Christianity, and those who accepted would be allowed to enter the kingdom of God.[142] Several other apocalypses which feature the Berengaudus commentary, such as the Abingdon and Gulbenkian Apocalypses, specifically work within this narrative to show the Jewish faith being absorbed into the 'light' of Christianity.[143] The *Westminster Apocalypse*, surprisingly does not place the Jews in this eschatological conversion, even if other similar Berengaudus commentaries did. Instead, by making the Jews the disciples of Antichrist, the compiler emphasises their hostility to Jews generally, by placing them in the role of evil agents.[144] In the commentary for 24v, the text states that the disciples, 'shall be the praisers of vice, for they will teach that wine and the other riches have

[139] B.10.2, f. 24r, 24v, 34v. 'Ministri vero Antichristi', 'Discipuli Antichristi'.

[140] Strickland Higgs, *Saracens, Demons and Jews,* p. 105.

[141] J. Tolan, *England's Jews: Finance, Violence and the Crown in the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 2023), pp. 12-13.

[142] Strickland Higgs, *Saracens, Demons and Jews,* p. 100.

[143] Ross, 'Apocalyptic Time and Anti-Semitism in Thirteenth-Century England', pp.81-2; Strickland Higgs, *Saracens, Jews and Demons,* p. 100.

[144] Strickland Higgs, *Saracens, Jews and Demons,* p. 128.

been created for this reason, so men would use them abundantly and sufficiently.'[145] This builds on anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jews' role as moneylenders, especially regarding the belief that they took advantage of their Christian clients.[146] The compiler produces a picture of the Jews as being directly involved with the Devil, and not just under his influence, like the reprobates. This thus signifies to the audience that the Jews are not to be seen as misguided or worthy of salvation, but rather as active participants against Christ and the Church.

Further reference to traditional Jewish conversion narratives during the End Times are made on f. 22v. In fact, it appears that the compiler actively rejects this narrative, which is surprising given that Berengaudus had supported this narrative himself.[147] F. 22v states:

> 'The great voice from Heaven is the voice of the angels rejoicing for the salvation of the human race and praising God, just as the Lord says in the Gospel: there is joy in Heaven over the one sinner who repents, then there is over the 99 lawful people who do not want [to] repent. We are able to understand through the one sinner, the gentiles [non-Jews], and through the 99 lawful people, [we can understand] the Jews: who do not come up to the hundredth number, because the Law has led no one to perfection. In fact, by far a greater joy has been made in Heaven from the conversion of the gentiles, than from the observations of the Jews.'[148]

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[145] B.10.2, f. 24v. 'Discipuli Antichristi laudatores erunt vitiorum, docebunt enim ideo creatum vinum ceterasque divitias, ut homines iis abundanter, et sufficienter uterentur.'

[146] F. Felsentein, 'Jews and Devils: Antisemitic Stereotypes of Late Medieval and Renaissance England', *Literature and Theology* 4/1 (1990), p. 17; R. R. Mundil, *The King's Jews: Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England,* (London, 2010), p. 68.

[147] S. Lewis, 'Tractatus adversus Judaeos in the Gulbenkian Apocalypse', *The Art Bulletin,* 68/4 (1986), pp. 554-5.

[148] B.10.2., f. 22v. 'Vox magna de celo vox angelorum pro salute generis humani gaudentium, deumque laudantium, sicut dicit Dominus in Evangelio: Gaudium est in celo super uno peccatore penitentiam agente, quam super nonaginta novem justis, qui non indigent penitentia. Possumus per unum peccatorem populum gentilem, per nonaginta novem justos Judaeos intelligere: qui ad centenarium numerum non perventiunt [pervenerunt?], quia neminem ad perfectionem adduxit Lex. Multo enim magis gaudium factum est in celo de conversione gentium, quam de Judaeorum observationibus.' The quotation from the gospel is based on Luke 15:7, although it is not match exactly with the Latin text as presented in the Douay-Rheims. Also, justos could be translated in a number of way including just, righteous or lawful. Given that the text later makes a reference to the Jews as disciples of the Antichrist, I have decided to translate it as lawful, as in the context of the Jews as

In this passage, the compiler makes the case that it was better for individual sinners to commit to contrition and repentance in the eyes of God, rather than focus on attempting to convert the Jews in the Last Days. It is clear that in this passage, the reader is supposed to identify with the one sinner, because of the belief that humanity was inherently tainted by original sin and thus must make amends.[149] This may reflect trends regarding late medieval piety, where there was an expectation that people would create closeness with God through an inward contemplation of their soul.[150] While penance was still an external act, there was a need for genuine contrition within the heart of the person, and this was based in the need to recognise oneself as a sinner.[151] In turn, the compiler also rejects the need for the Jews to convert during the End Times. His belief comes from the fact that the Jews, as followers of the Law (the Torah) and subsequent rejectors of Christ, would never be able to reach the status of a repenting Christian. Given that the compiler takes an unequivocal stance towards Jews as followers and disciples of the Antichrist, it makes it impossible for them to be redeemed in the Last Days in the way that gentile sinners could be. While this is a rejection of traditional apocalyptic narratives, the basis for it lies in the compiler's uncompromisingly negative stance towards Jews. This created a malleable apocalyptic thought that could be structured to suit the compiler and audience's needs, and allowed for the compiler to position the Jews in direct opposition to the sinful but repentant Christians.

Antichrist's disciples are shown to be 'marked' by the beast, thus marking them out against the general population.[152] While the Jews were expelled from England in 1290, this can still be seen to reflect life for Jews in England before this, where it was mandatory for Jews to wear a *tabula* in order to mark themselves out against the Christian populace.[153] It is hard to believe that the comparison was not lost on the audience, some of whom may have

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followers of the Law (Torah, or the first five books of the Old Testament), rather than as a positive descriptor of the Jews.

[149] M. Ormrod, 'Pardon, Parliament and Political Performance in Later Medieval England', in C. M. Nakashian and D. P. Franke (eds.), *Prowess, Piety and Public Order in Medieval Society* (Leiden, 2017), p. 304.

[150] A. C. Bartlett and T. H. Bestul, *Cultures of Piety: Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation* (Ithaca, 1999), p. 2.

[151] D. G. Denery II, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology and Religious Life* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 40.

[152] B.10.2, f.24v. 'Potest fieri ut sicut nos habemus caracterem Christi, id est, crucem, qua signamur; ita habeat Antichristus proprium caracterem, quo signentur ii, qui in eum crediderint.'

[153] A. W. Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England: Law and Jewishness in Marian Legends* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 38.

come into contact with Jews through connections abroad. The disciples are also shown to teach ideas that are contrary to Christ. For example, they teach that the bread and wine have been made so 'men would use them abundantly and sufficiently' (perhaps here either referring to the Eucharist, or just referring to food in terms of gluttony), as well as that sexual acts with women, while forbidden, were to be carried out so that all carnal desires 'are to be fulfilled.'[154] This further built on the anti-Semitic medieval fear that Jews were proselytising to Christians, converting them either willingly or unwillingly, and performing circumcisions.[155] Anthony Bale has also reflected that images such as these in English manuscripts of Jews provided contrast between the spiritual Christian and the worldly, sinful Jew, thus affecting emotion in the reading Christian who looks on with pride at Christ's sacrifice.[156] As such, the compiler both drew on the fear that many Christians had of Jews, providing evidence for why this fear was founded, as well as emphasising the transcendent and righteous nature of Christianity. It also provided a new role for the Jews during the end times away from the conversion narrative discarded by the compiler, thus solidifying his apocalyptic narrative within the manuscript.

In contrast, the reprobates are shown to be Christians whose hearts are in peril of being damned. They are the ones who undergo trials in order to resist the temptation of the devil and achieve salvation. A key example of this can be seen in f. 23v, where the Seven-Headed Dragon cascades a river of water from his mouth against the Woman Clothed with the Sun. In the commentary, Berengaudus has interpreted this river as being a flood of 'carnal desires' which could be cast at the reprobate, here represented by the sand which the dragon stands upon. The commentary describes how Christ, representing the Earth, took up the river and 'completely extinguished the river of vices.'[157] While the commentary states that this

[154] B.10.2, f. 24v. 'Discipuli Antichristi laudatores erunt vitiorum, docebunt enim ideo creatum vinum ceterasque divitias, ut homines iis abundanter, et sufficienter uterentur: ideoque fecisse Deum genitalia membra, ut homines feminis miscerentur, et nephas esse ut aliquis a concubitu abstineat: omnia desideria carnalia esse perficienda.'

[155] P. Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision and Ritual Murder in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2020), p. 48; S. F. Kruger, *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis, 2006), pp. 131-2.

[156] A. Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London, 2010), pp. 12-15.

[157] B.10.2, f. 23v. 'Reliqui de semine Ecclesiae electi sunt qui in fine mundi nascituri sunt. Quemadmodum autem hoc prelium diabolus peragat in sequentibus manifestatur. Per harenam maris multitude reproborum, qui

pertains to the those ‘who are about to be born in the end of the world’, the connotations of the passage would have resonated with its readership more widely, and while being placed in an apocalypse, also pertained to contemporary time. Here, this folio acts as a moral story, or exemplum, for the reader: the key message being that through Christ, one can be forgiven for their sins, literally gaining ‘Christ’s mercy’, and therefore having a chance at gaining salvation. Here the concerns of contemporary Christian society, of people acting on sin without repentance, are directly spoken about, but by setting them in an apocalyptic context, it adds weight to their importance, and sets simple acts up as being part of a greater cosmological battle.

The act of sinning was a concern throughout the Christian world in the Middle Ages, and fourteenth-century England was no different. F. 23v specifically states that Christ is able to extinguish the vices throughout the Earth, that represents him, opening its mouth.[158] This, here, could be reminiscent of the act of confession, in which the Christian would gain mercy and forgiveness through speaking his or her sins to a priest, the human representative of God on Earth. As stated above, confession had been introduced as compulsory for everyone from 1215, and a flood of confessional literature made its way into England from the thirteenth century onwards.[159] By the late fourteenth century, some arguments were made that there was not a need for human intercession during the act of confession, and there were a minority who believed that the act of repentance and absolution needed contrition alone, where one could confess the sins in their heart to God alone, without guidance from the Church.[160] The

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eo tempore future sunt, designatur. Per flumen aque desideria sunt carnalia. Videns quippe diabolus Ecclesiam non posse deici persecutionibus, sed potius crescere et roborari, multitudinem desideriorum carnalium ei immittere voluit. Possumus per terram reprobos intelligere, qui susceptores fuerunt desideriorum carnalium, quibus diabolus fidelis irretire voluit et ad se pertrahere. Possumus etiam per eandem terram Christum intelligere. Et quia in sermonibus Domini magna potestas est: dixit enim et facta sunt mandavit et create sunt; haud absurd per os terre potestas eius intelligi potest. Adjuvit ergo terra mulierem, id est Christus Ecclesiam, et aperuit os suum. Et suscepit flumen quod misit serpens ex ore suo. Id est sinum misericordia sua aperuit; flumenque vitiorum potestas eius funditus extinxit.

[158] B.10.2, f. 23v. ‘Et quia in sermonibus Domini magna potestas est: Dixit enim et facta sunt mandavit et creata sunt; haud absurde per os terre potestas eius intelligi potest. Adjuvit ergo terra mulierem, id est Christus Ecclesiam, et aperuit os suum. Et suscepit flumen quod misit serpens ex ore suo. Id est sinum misericordia sua aperuit; flumenque vitiorum potestas eius funditus extinxit.’

[159] P. Biller, ‘Confession in the Middle Ages: Introduction’, in P. Biller and A. J. Minnis (eds.), *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages* (York, 1998), p. 10.

[160] J. Patrick Hornbeck II, M. Bose and F. Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 125-6.

above folio, for example, does not have a human intercessor in it, instead the 'river of vices' is extinguished through the mercy of Christ alone, without the need for intermediary.

Figure 1.12: The hellmouth in the south-western corner of the scene of the fourth horseman, Westminster Apocalypse. Trinity College, Cambridge, B.10.2, f. 8v. Copyright: Trinity College, Cambridge.[161]

It appears that a preoccupation with salvation is the clear motive for the representation of confession in the *Westminster Apocalypse.* The hellmouth on f. 8v, for example, tells us and the audience the likely outcome of rejecting confession, and therefore not achieving salvation (see Fig. 1.12.) The black bestial head takes up the south-west corner of the image, its jaws wide to show the small human figures inside, unhappy in their torment. Several wear crowns on their heads, signifying their higher status, which could represent previous monarchs that had not been pious in their reverence of God. Sandy Bardsley has argued that the hellmouth was a well-recognised metaphor in the late medieval period, where its gaping jaw was seen as a site of evil, and an entrance to Hell, in the same way that the mouth was a site of sin.[162] The hellmouth took the fear that emanated from unknown creatures to produce a conscious living being that represented the torment of Hell.[163] It can be seen, in some ways, to be an inverse of Christ's representation as the Earth in f. 23v, but both ultimately situate the opening of mouths as significant, as they link together the idea of both sin and confession as an act of the mouth, and the importance of this in Christian living. The people represented

[161] https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/B.10.2/UV#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=23&r=0&xywh=-6647%2C-1%2C19685%2C9188

[162] Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues,* p. 26.

[163] A. Pluskowski, 'Apocalyptic Monsters: Animal Inspirations for the Iconography of Medieval North European Devourers', in B. Bildhauer and R. Mills (eds.), *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2003), p. 161.

inside the hellmouth forecast a warning to the reader, that regardless of status, those who are not pious in life, and who do not confess and do penance, will be cast into Hell.

The hellmouth here is only a small part of a greater image concerned with the final horseman. In the commentary, Berengaudus believes that the four horsemen all belong to Antichrist, another means by which he can control and bring about the end of the world.[164] The connection here between the fourth horseman, who in Revelation is said to signify death, the Antichrist and the hellmouth highlights the importance of death, the afterlife and salvation within the greater scheme of the Last Days. This is particularly highlighted in the Westminster wall paintings, where a depiction of the last judgement interrupts a series of paintings on the apocalypse.[165] The importance of this for the reader would have been to reassess their own mortality, to think about the world beyond their body and direct their thoughts towards spiritual renewal.

Further, the link between this folio, and to others which also emphasise the mouth (such as 23v and 34v) as a site of both evil and good, ultimately brings us back to the concern with 'sins of the tongue' and the need for confession, where what one said and how was integral to their role within interpersonal and broader relations with others. Both heretical and treasonous speech became shackled together through their relationship with the mouth, and these 'sins of the tongue' were particularly notable in the late fourteenth-century, especially after 1381. Evidently, the apocalypse became a book used for devotion and reflection, similar to other devotional literature popular in the fourteenth century, because of its ability to encourage studying and conscious thought. Trends towards reading as an inward and self-reflective practice meant that the apocalypse could now be used to create a closer relationship with God.[166] The inherent need to contemplate brought about by the complex and intricate layers of the apocalypse, alongside the use of the images to guide the reader in certain directions would have meant that the message of confession and reflection would have been conveyed to its audience.

Despite this negative portrayal of sinners in the hellmouth, the *Westminster Apocalypse* finishes on a more optimistic tone for the sinners. On f. 35v, the commentary

[164] B.10.2, f. 8v. 'Videntur hec que de equite quarto dicuntur, ad Antichristum pertinere.'

[165] Westminster Abbey: Wall Paintings, <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/about-the-abbey/history/wall-paintings> [accessed 20th April 2023.]

[166] Whatley, 'Crusading for (Heavenly) Jerusalem', p. 55.

states that, ‘from which this torment, so may the mercy of our Redeemer deign to free us, he who with the Father and Holy Spirit, lives and reigns for ever and ever, amen.’[167] In the image above, we find two men pushing the devil and his minions back into the abyss. The folio, overall, suggests an element of redemption for humankind, and the fact that, through God’s grace, salvation will be attainable for the sinners in the end time, and by extension, that salvation could be accessible to the reader. The *Westminster Apocalypse* appeals to the idea that salvation is available to all who sin, and that the devil does not have control over those who can choose to act in a way that is good. It reminds the reader that, although in their current time they may be susceptible to the devil’s influences, it will end with good triumphing over evil, and the possibility for all to attain salvation. This optimistic tone is characteristic of the apocalypse in general, but the picture highlights the role humanity would play in defeating the devil. For the compiler, the emphasis ultimately is on the role of the Christian sinner, reflecting its audience and allowing for them to contemplate and self-reflect on this material. Perhaps, it may have even inspired contrition in the hearts of its audience to repent.

The *Westminster Apocalypse* is shown, then, to contrast the evil disciples of the Antichrist, for which there is no redemption, with the ‘reprobi’, who are shown as sinful Christians who could reach God through penance and repentance. The compiler makes it clear that for him, the Jews are more than just rejectors of Christ, but in fact minions of the devil, given their subservient role to the apocalyptic beasts. In the *Westminster Apocalypse* the line is drawn between who may reach God’s salvation and who may not and that for the reader, they should identify with the ‘reprobi’, aiming towards salvation in an effort to avoid the fate of the hellmouth. As such, the human physicality of the disciples provided an example of what would happen to Christians if they were to fully reject Christ, thus encouraging the audience to act in accordance with God’s will.

1. 9. Conclusions

The *Westminster Apocalypse* provides an example of the sorts of illuminated commentaries being used and discussed in late medieval England. Being produced in London in the late-fourteenth century, the *Westminster Apocalypse* likely appealed to aristocratic and noble audiences, allowing them to contemplate and understand the end of the world. The choice of

[167] B.10.2, f. 35v. ‘A quo cruciatu misericordia redemptoris nostri nos liberare dignetur, qui cum Patre et Spiritu sancto vivit et regnat in saecula seculorum, amen.’

the Berengaudus commentary likely stemmed from its popularity during this period, and the ability to cut and alter the text in ways that suited both compiler and audience. It also meant that the apocalypse could be transferred to other media, in this case being painted onto the walls of Westminster's chapter house.

Principally, the manuscript is concerned with politics, centring discussions on how society should and should not look. The references to chivalry throughout the manuscript reflect the actualities of court life, and the value that individuals placed on their role as nobles and knights in medieval English society. The use of the apocalyptic beasts allowed the compiler and the work's audiences to express fears and anxieties about the hierarchy of society, and the ability to change one's social status. Speech became a tool by which to assert one's loyalties and position, and its use by both the apocalyptic beasts and Christ shows its multifaceted nature as being an implement which could both be a positive and negative force in society.

Further, it reinforced norms surrounding what should and should not be said, showing the damage that treasonous or heretical speech could do to the ordained framework of society. The idea of sins of the tongue was important to understanding the effect speech could have on others, and the *Westminster Apocalypse* reflects this in showing how the apocalyptic beasts' speech could impact on the very souls of the sinful. It may also reflect the concerns regarding itinerant preachers, and the teaching of non-orthodox views that threatened the survival of the Church. The position of the Antichrist in direct contrast to Christ highlights fears surrounding incorrect belief, putting the mortal soul at risk in the future end.

Finally, the manuscript provided an outlet in which to hold up Christianity as the ultimate salvation for each and every soul. This is done through contrasting the Jews as disciples of the Antichrist, with the sinful Christians, whose repentance would allow them to reach salvation. This relied on using anti-Semitic stereotypes in order to fuel hatred and anxiety about Judaism. Focus on sin and salvation also provided a point of contemplation and meditation for those engaging with this illuminated apocalypse, encouraging devotion in a way similar to other devotional texts from the period. Overall, the *Westminster Apocalypse* provided a way of understanding Revelation and encouraging an inward and outward reaction to this in preparation for the soul's future judgment.

2. Henry of Kirkstede's Prophetiae

Henry of Kirkstede's *Prophetiae*, found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 404, is a compilation of various prophecies and other esoterica.[1] These prophecies and texts in order are as follows: a prophecy attributed to the Tiburtine Sibyl; the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius;* a prophecy entitled, 'Quibus dies judicii manifestatur et per quem'; a prophecy attributed to Eusebius; Hildegard of Bingen's *Speculum temporum futurum* (an anthology of her prophecies); two more prophecies attributed to the Sibyls; a prophecy attributed Joachim; a tract entitled, 'Revelacio mirabilis super statu totius ecclesie'; a note on the Eucharist; the pseudo-Joachite prophecy *Ascende calve*; a note on Joachim (written in the sixteenth-century hand of C. Gesner); the pseudo-Joachite tract *De seminibus literarum*; an anonymous text entitled, 'De Antichrist et fine mundi'*;* a summary of the seven seals, taken from *Libro visionum apud Sibecone et apud Coggeshale*; several letters and texts taken from the *Oraculum Cyrilli*; the pseudo-Joachite prophecy *Genus nequam,* including images; a series of prophecies entitled, 'Prophecie de regibus anglorum'; the pseudo-Joachite text *Prophetie Joachim in maiori libro de concordanciis*; the Tripoli prophecy; the vision of 'Friar John'; writing by the friar William Blofeld; a political prophecy entitled, 'Anno gr. m° ccc° xlviii misit rex Swecie mense octobre. ad regem Anglie petens unam de filiabus suis sibi dari in uxorem'; a letter by John of Rupescissa; a text entitled, 'De quadam conjunctione'; a text entitled, 'Johannes Tholosanus et omnes magistri eiusdem loci omnibus'; a letter sent to the Popes; a text concerning a comet in the year 1315.[2] Many of these prophecies are concerned with eschatology and apocalypticism, and so the *Prophetiae* is of keen interest when looking at apocalypticism in fourteenth-century England.

The *Prophetiae* is said to have been produced in the mid-to-late fourteenth century by Henry of Kirkstede, a librarian and then later prior to the Benedictine house of Bury St. Edmunds who entered the monastery in approximately 1331 and stayed there until his death sometime after 1378.[3] Henry is well known as a librarian, as he compiled the *Catalogus*

[1] Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 404. Catalogue entries include: M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge* (Vol. 2, Cambridge, 1912), no. 404; M. Reeves, *Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study of Joachimism* (Oxford, 1969), p. 539; L. Freeman Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts 1285-1385, II: Catalogue* (Oxford, 1986), no. 95; N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books* (Vol. 3, London, 1941), p. 10.

[2] This list has been compiled based on descriptions produced by M. R. James and M. Reeves (see above).

[3] R. H. Rouse, 'Kirkestede, Henry', *ODNB* (2004).

scriptorum ecclesiae, which gives us an insight into at least twenty-six English monastic libraries in the fourteenth century.[4] Henry was also evidently interested in apocalyptic and eschatological discourse as can be seen by the production of his *Prophetiae*, showing that he pursued this interest throughout most of his life. Henry copied many of the prophecies from other texts that made their way to Bury St. Edmunds, as well as seeking out prophetic texts on his travels to other monasteries in East Anglia while completing the *Catalogus*.[5] Palaeographical comparison of the *Catalogus* and the *Prophetiae* has shown that the hands match and that both texts were indeed written by Henry. As well as this, the palaeography suggests that while Henry copied the majority of the prophecies in Corpus Christi College MS 404 himself, he did sometimes have one or more other scribes copying for him.[6] The *Prophetiae* is also host to a selection of images of the popes, f. 88r to f. 95r, which Henry most likely gave to an illustrator to complete. The presence of Henry's hand plus at least one other scribe and an illustrator suggests that MS 404 was part of a larger effort to compile prophetic texts into a single volume, overseen most likely by Henry, who showed a keen interest in apocalypticism through his comments on many of the texts within the volume.[7]

The creation and dating of Henry's manuscript have been widely accepted by scholars. Henry appears in Bury documents, first in 1346 when he became monk at Bury St. Edmunds, placing the manuscript after this year.[8] Henry is firstly recognised through his list and class marks in his *Catalogus*, a catalogue of all the manuscripts held in Bury St. Edmunds library, which was initialled, 'per fratrem H. de K.'[9] It was soon recognised that this hand matched that of the *Prophetiae* and meant that they were very likely produced by the same person, Henry of Kirkstede, librarian and then prior of the abbey of Bury St.

[4] R. H. Rouse, 'Bostonus Buriensis and the Author of the Catalogus Scriptorum Ecclesiae', *Speculum* 41/3 (1966), p. 472.

[5] R. E. Lerner, *The Powers of Prophecy: The Cedar of Lebanon Vision from the Mongol Onslaught to the Dawn of the Enlightenment* (Ithaca and London, 2008), p. 94.

[6] A series of hands has been identified in James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College* (Vol. 2), no. 404.

[7] Rouse, 'Boston Buriensis', p. 493.

[8] Rouse, 'Boston Buriensis', pp. 480-1.

[9] R. Sharpe, 'Reconstructing the medieval library of Bury St. Edmunds Abbey: the lost catalogue of Henry of Kirkstede', in A. Gransden (ed.), *Bury St. Edmunds: Medieval Art, Architecture, Archaeology and Economy* (Cambridge, 1998), pp .204-6.

Edmunds.[10] As for the dates given above, Marjorie Reeves remarks that in *prophecia de papis* (f. 41r, now known as *Ascende calve*), a series of pope prophecies, the last named pope is Clement VI (1342-1352), and the text then goes on to name several apocalyptic popes including *papa futuro post eum, de penultimo papa* and the *de ultimo papa* following after Clement. This suggests that he possibly expected the end of the papacy within his lifetime and that he was writing in the time of Pope Clement VI, as otherwise, he would have included later popes' names.[11] This can be seen in later copies of the *Vaticinia* elsewhere which feature later popes, such as the copy in the Morgan Library, New York, MS 272 which goes up to Pope Calixtus III. Most likely, at the time Henry was writing, Clement VI was the pope.[12]

Further, much later in the manuscript, Henry copied the *Genus nequam,* another set of pope prophecies, which contains an annotated passage in which Henry recorded the death of Pope Gregory XI and identified the beast with Pope Urban VI, suggesting that he must have been continuing to work on his *Prophetiae* until sometime after 1378.[13] Here, it has been suggested that Henry had developed a tremor in his hand, due to the shaky writing, perhaps because of age, and it has been argued that he may have died within a few years of this.[14] For Henry, his *Prophetiae* was a culmination of a lifetime of work and indicates that the apocalypse must have weighed heavily on his mind.

Henry of Kirkstede's interest in apocalypticism was focused mainly on the works and prophecies of Joachim of Fiore, those produced in his name, and those produced by his followers. Joachimism has been shown to have had some English interest throughout the first half of the thirteenth century, but the *Prophetiae* suggests that this interest was sustained throughout the fourteenth century, especially because of Henry's connection to other monasteries where some of these prophecies may have been copied.[15] We know that Henry had connections with other monasteries through his *Catalogus*, as in it there is a record of

[10] Rouse, 'Boston Buriensis', pp. 475-6.

[11] M. Reeves, 'Some Popular Prophecies from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Century', *Studies in Church History* 8 (1972), p. 119.

[12] New York, Morgan Library & Museum, MS 272.

[13] K. Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writings in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, 2006), p. 66.

[14] Rouse, 'Boston Buriensis', p. 494.

[15] M. W. Bloomsfield and M. Reeves, 'The Penetration of Joachimism into Northern Europe', *Speculum* 29 (1954), p. 789.

twenty-five other libraries' manuscript collections outside of Bury St. Edmunds.[16] So, it is likely, as suggested by Lerner, that Henry gathered and made copies of prophecies found at other monasteries.[17]

Joachite prophecies, such as those found in Henry's *Prophetiae* can be found almost solely in monastic manuscripts, despite Joachim's widely published condemnation in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council.[18] This brings about questions of whether the laity in England were uninterested in Joachite accounts of the end of the world, or whether they were actively prohibited from accessing these prophecies. Unfortunately, these questions cannot be fully answered, but insight can be gathered as to the position of Joachite material within monastic communities.

2. 1. Joachite material in England

Kathryn Kerby-Fulton provides a list of all known Joachite tracts and prophecies recorded in English manuscripts up until the seventeenth century, with a total of 61 extant manuscripts, as well as more containing small samplings of Joachite writings.[19] This suggests that the condemnation did little to curtail interest in Joachim of Fiore throughout the medieval period and that his writings were actively being transmitted both within England and from abroad, as seen through many of the prophecies' recorded by Henry having predecessors on the continent.[20] Those identified as possessing Joachite material in England are all from a monastic background, either suggesting increased interest in Joachite materials among the regular clergy or that Joachite material was less likely to be suppressed among learned communities.[21] This may be because of the learned nature of Joachim of Fiore's texts, which may have rendered his apocalyptic material of more interest to religious and structured communities. In particular, Joachite material became of prominent interest to monastic orders, due to their proposed role in Joachim's 'third status' which would see them take over

[16] Rouse, 'Boston Buriensis', p. 494.

[17] Lerner, *The Powers of Prophecy*, p. 94.

[18] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* p. 72.

[19] K. Kerby-Fulton, 'English Joachimism and its Codiological Context: A List of Joachite Manuscripts of English Origin or Provenance before 1600', in J. E. Wannenmachen (ed.), *Joachim of Fiore and the Influence of Inspiration: Essays in Memory of Marjorie E. Reeves,* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 198-224.

[20] M. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 37, 39-41.

[21] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* p.88.

from the Church as the 'spiritual men' that would lead the people into the Sabbath.[22] Joachite thought had the most influence on the 'Spiritual Franciscans', a breakaway group of the Franciscan Order.[23] This is because Joachite apocalypticism emphasised the need for the Church to return to the traditions established by Christ and his apostles, and this fitted with their worldview of living in apostolic poverty.[24] It was therefore believed by many members of the Spiritual Franciscans that their lifestyle would enable them to fill Joachim's role of the 'spiritual men' who would lead Christianity to its next evolved stage.

Joachim's works circulated primarily in learned and monastic spheres, although it cannot be ruled out that Joachite thought did enter lay apocalyptic thought. This has been stressed most vehemently by both Morton Bloomfield and Katheryn Kerby-Fulton who have made the case for the influence of Joachite thought on William Langland's writing of *Piers Plowman*; although it is hard to assess to what extent his readers may have picked up on this strand of apocalypticism.[25] Likely, the division between different strands of apocalyptic thought may have been meaningless to a lay audience, and the intricacies of Joachite thought such as his concepts of three statuses, and the concords between the Old and New Testament may have been out of reach for lay readers. Regardless, this mattered little in terms of Joachite ideas being used to engage people with apocalyptic ideas more generally, and basic Joachite ideas may have infiltrated parts of lay readership. Further, lay audiences were not likely to have been engaged in the suppression and transmission of Joachite texts deemed erroneous by the Church in the same way as monastic individuals and communities. *Piers Plowman,* for example, was a lay text influenced by Joachite apocalypticism and was most likely read by literate laymen, often of some wealth as can be seen through Londoners' wills, where the poem was likely passed through the hands of companies and Inns of Court.[26] Large portions of society were unable to possess copies of *Piers Plowman* but still, for those who

[22] B. E. Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2009), p.108.

[23] D. Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis* (Philadelphia, 2001), p. 77-8, 86.

[24] R. Vos, 'Heresy Inquisitions in the Later Middle Ages', in D. S. Prudlo (ed.), *A Companion to Heresy Inquisitions* (Leiden, 2019), p. 155.

[25] M. W. Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, 1962), p. 95; K. Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 164-172.

[26] S. Horobin, 'Manuscripts and Readers of Piers Plowman', in A. Cole and A. Galloway (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 190.

could, it provided an outlet in which to examine beliefs regarding the end of the world, and for readers to recognise and explore their own beliefs concerning these.

Those expressing Joachite thought on the continent were brutally repressed; many were forced to recant their Joachite beliefs, and four Spiritual Franciscans were even burnt at the stake.[27] On the contrary, it is debated as to whether Joachite thought was similarly suppressed in England. We find that four English Franciscans were arrested in 1329-30; one of whom was Henry of Costesy who produced a Joachite-inspired Revelation commentary.[28] However, when we exclude the Spiritual Franciscans, we find little evidence in the way of arrests and persecutions by the Church in England. It does appear that Joachite works were suppressed by those copying them by either mutilation of the pages, the absence of the author names, or the removal of some of the contents in the texts. In three of the six extant copies of Henry of Costesy's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, his name is absent or suppressed.[29] This is probably because Costesy had been punished by the Church for his beliefs, and so holding material written by him would likewise be dangerous. As for other Joachite texts that were not linked with the Franciscans, many still contained Joachim's name. This suggests that possessing Joachite material was not deemed a crime in itself by Church authorities. Many of the names we have linked with the possession of Joachite texts, such as Henry of Kirkstede, Richard de Kilvington and John of Beverly, to name a few, were not part of the Franciscan Order which may have saved them from confrontation with the Church.[30] It appears, then, that it was Franciscan ownership of Joachite texts that aroused the suspicions of the Church authorities. This is not to dismiss Kathryn Kerby-Fulton's argument that active suppression of non-Wycliffite texts took place in England throughout the later Middle Ages, but that possession of Joachite texts in of itself was not a punishable offence. Instead, a person's opinions or actions while in possession of these texts, may have caused Church officials to act. Ultimately, it appears that it was the prestige and actions of groups associated with individuals possessing Joachite texts which caused issues in the Church, and it was likely Henry's identity as a Benedictine, rather than a Franciscan, that allowed him to read and possess Joachite texts.

[27] Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans,* pp. 204-5.

[28] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* p. 74, 81.

[29] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* p. 84.

[30] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* p. 88.

Still, even concerning Joachite texts held by non-Franciscan religious orders, we find that some censorship took place, although it is hard to assess exactly who may have partaken in this. In Harley MS 3969, the pseudo-Joachite text *De oneribus prophetarum* is missing a folio in the section about the Third Status.[31] Similarly, in Harley MS 3049, the first leaf from Joachim's *Enchiridion super Apocalypsim* has been removed, as well as the first leaf of Jerome's apocalypse commentary and the leaf containing his exposition on the number of the Beast.[32] Evidently, in this case, the interest here may have been to remove anything deemed erroneous, especially given that the number of the beast was a controversial topic in medieval apocalyptic discourse.[33] More generally, however, these removals suggest that there was some concern about the possession of Joachite texts even among non-Franciscans, or that those in possession of the texts felt the need to reduce the risk of heresy by removing those parts deemed unsafe. The missing leaf from MS Harley 3969, for example, contained prophecies that would happen during the Third Status, when the monastic orders would supplant the medieval Church and its papacy.[34] Censorship, then, was seen as a mechanism by which to own and disseminate more controversial apocalyptic ideas and texts, while still controlling what was allowed to be discussed, and who was deemed eligible to discuss these ideas.[35] Henry's *Prophetiae* became subject to minor censorship, either by him or by others, showing that Joachite material in England held a precarious position between orthodoxy and heresy.

Henry's *Prophetiae* contains too much material for a full survey of his apocalypticism to be made within this thesis and so this chapter concentrates on three Joachite texts present in his manuscript. This is because Joachite material in England has been understudied by scholars, with Lollardy having attracted the most attention. After all, the latter was deemed

[31] London, British Library, Harley MS 3969; Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* pp. 88-92.

[32] London, British Library, Harley MS 3049; Kerby-Fulton, 'English Joachimism and its Codiological Context', p. 198, n. 1. It is possible that the first leaf for the *Enchiridion* may have been lost in its binding, but as it is part of a collection of texts, in which the only other text missing its first leaf is Jerome's Apocalypse commentary, meaning that it is equally likely that this was a targeted removal.

[33] V. F. Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning and Influence on Thought and Expression* (New York, 2000), pp. 64-5.

[34] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* p. 88; E. Randolph Daniel, 'The Double Procession of the Holy Spirit in Joachim of Fiore's Understanding of History', *Speculum* 55/3 (1980), p .470.

[35] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* p. 88.

the greatest heretical threat facing religious authorities in England.[36] In comparison, Joachite material on the continent has received more attention, due to the spread of radical Joachite beliefs throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as well as violent responses by many secular and religious authorities.[37] This chapter addresses several short texts connected with Joachim of Fiore: the *Columbinus Prophecy* and two papal prophecies, the *Genus nequam* and the *Ascende calve.* The *Columbinus Prophecy* was an apocalyptic prophecy attributed to 'Brother Columbinus' which used Joachite thought to interpret the coming of the end of the world. The prophecy adapts vague and contemporary events, such as the rule of the Hohenstaufen dynasty in Germany and wars with the French, to situate the end times in the contemporary time of the reader. This text became particularly widespread in England; there are eight extant late-medieval English copies.[38] As such it can offer invaluable further insight into Joachite beliefs there.

The two papal prophecies, meanwhile, speak about the series of popes which would exist before the end of the world. They were attributed to Joachim of Fiore throughout the medieval period, but it has now been suggested by Herbert Grundmann and endorsed by Marjorie Reeves that they were produced by various circles of Spiritual Franciscans.[39] However, what is particularly important here is that the papal prophecies used Joachite thought in their interpretation of the papacy.[40] These prophecies flourished both in England and on the continent where people made annotations and changes to their copies of the text, and eventually, they were drawn together with further prophecies to form the *Vaticinia de Summis Pontificibus*. Through this, insight can be gained as to how people saw the role of the papacy in the end times, as well as their own opinions on the Church. This is particularly important as the text became increasingly popular during the Western Schism, and therefore

[36] J. Kolpacoff Deane, *A History of Medieval Heresy and Inquisition* (Lanham, 2011), pp. 217-8.

[37] Such examples include Frederick II (1194-1250) accused of being the Antichrist and the belief in the end of the world in 1260, the spread of Joachite ideals by Peter John Olivi and John of Rupescissa, and the persecution and execution of the Spiritual Franciscans. Kerby-Fulton, 'English Joachimism and its Codicological Context', pp. 183-4.

[38] K. Kerby-Fulton and E. Randolph Daniel, 'English Joachimism, 1300-1500: The Columbinus Prophecy', in G. L. Potestà (ed.), *Il Profetismo Gioachimita tra Quattrocento e Cinquećento* (1990), p. 346.

[39] M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London, 1976), pp. 75-6. See also: H. Grundmann, 'Dante und Joachim von Fiore', *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch*, 14 (1932), pp.210-256.

[40] Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, p. 75.

reflected attitudes about this, as well as, in comparison, how they viewed the Church before the schism.

2. 2. The Columbinus Prophecy

The earliest extant copy of the Columbinus Prophecy is on the continent in a cartulary of the Saint-Pierremont monastery in Lorraine, dating to 1292. We also have reference to 'Columbinus' as one of several prophetic authorities who could date the end of the world in Arnold of Villanova's *Responsio objectionibus* a decade later in *c.* 1303-5.[41] It is likely, then, that the prophecy was first produced in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, and no later than the first years of the fourteenth. The transmission from the continent to England appears to have been quick with the first extant copy of the prophecy appearing in Cotton MS Cleopatra C X.[42] This copy has been dated to the early fourteenth century by a palaeographical survey of the hand, but more concrete evidence cannot be given due to the fragmentary nature of the manuscript, the quires only being gathered together in the seventeenth century.[43] Evidently, the prophecy's quick dissemination throughout Europe suggests that its contents were of interest to many monastic communities, and is a testament to the continued interest in apocalypticism among late medieval society.

Arguments have also been made as regards the structure and contents of the *Columbinus Prophecy;* mainly that it is composed in two parts, which were written by two different authors with different intents. This argument has been principally proposed by Robert E. Lerner and A. R. Elizabeth Brown, who state that there is a change in tone and structure approximately two-thirds of the way through the prophecy; the first part details the seals, the rise of the Antichrist in conjunction with the Hohenstaufen dynasty, and then the destruction of the Antichrist, in which the seventh seal would be triggered, and there would be lasting peace and tranquillity; while the second part of the prophecy revisits the rise of the Antichrist, linking this to the struggle of the French king and finally the downfall of the papacy. They argue that not only does the tone of the writing alter between the two parts, but the structure becomes jumbled by the addition of the second part.[44] They do note, however, that the manuscript transmission suggests the opposite, as we have no conclusive evidence

[41] A. R. Elizabeth Brown and R. E. Lerner, 'On the Origin and Import of the Columbinus Prophecy', *Traditio* 45 (1989-90), pp.2 20-2.

[42] London, British Library, Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, ff. 157r-158r.

[43] Kerby-Fulton and Daniels, 'The Columbinus Prophecy', p. 322.

[44] Brown and Lerner, 'Origin and Import of the Columbinus Prophecy', pp. 224-8.

that the prophecy ever circulated in two separate parts, as the only references to the *Columbinus Prophecy* are to it as a single text.[45]

It appears most likely that the parts were written on separate occasions, and that part two was written not long afterwards as an addition, probably by another author who either associated with or agreed with the message of the first author. This is because of the differences in style between the two parts, and the way that the second part builds on much that is already sketched out, thereby keeping the link between the two halves, while emphasising contemporary events and a more grounded perspective. The second author revisits aspects discussed within the first part but does not use much of the seven seals or acknowledge the Hohenstaufen connection, thereby moving away from the Joachite narratives utilized in the first part, and instead concentrating on the aspect of tribulations found in more orthodox retellings of the apocalypse. The two parts have the same narrative, but they differ in specifics, showing that the authors had in some ways different concerns, but still felt the need to bring forth their beliefs in the apocalypse.

As for the author of the *Columbinus Prophecy*, the text states that it was written by a 'brother Columbinus'.[46] Evidence is absent regarding who this may have been, or whether he existed at all. The reference to him being a 'brother' points to Columbinus being a member of a religious order, thereby giving the prophecy some authoritative status. Kerby-Fulton and Daniels have assumed that the name 'Columbinus' is allegorical, suggesting a 'man of dove-like innocence and purity', although this is only speculation on their behalf.[47] In the *Columbinus Prophecy* copy present in Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, the author is referred to as 'sanctus Columbinus.'[48] Possibly, the word 'sanctus' is used in a way that means 'blessed', referring to his religious nature in recording the prophecy, and perhaps affording the writer a sense of revelation and divine premonition.[49]

It is more likely, however, that this is a reference to St. Columbanus, an Irish missionary who founded multiple churches in the Frankish Empire in the sixth century. St. Columbanus, while not actively apocalyptic in his sermons and outlook, held eschatological

[45] Brown and Lerner, 'Origin and Import of the Columbinus Prophecy', p. 235.

[46] MS 404, f. 7v. 'Intende s[e]c[un]d[u]m euseb[iu]m inclus[u]m in [BLANK] suis et se[cun]d[u]m fr[atr]em colu[m]pinesem in collat[i]o[n]e sua.'

[47] Kerby-Fulton and Daniels, 'English Joachimism 1300-1500', p. 316.

[48] Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, f. 157v.

[49] L. A. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Late Medieval England* (York, 2000), p. 41.

beliefs in a transitory world that would lead to the ascendancy of the soul into the afterlife. Further to this, after his death, a hagiography called *Vita Columbani* was written about him by Jonas of Bobbio and included many saintly deaths and visions of Doomsday, setting Columbanus's life in a distinctly eschatological tone.[50] Columbanus also had an impact on early medieval monasticism, and the Frankish nobility's support for him solidified his role in religious thought, where he was often referred to.[51] It would not be surprising, then, if Columbanus's name had been attached to this prophecy to expand its circulation among those interested in apocalypticism, as well as monastics influenced by Columbanus. This would help explain the origins of the *Columbinus Prophecy* on the continent, where Columbanus had the most support and interest in his ideas.

Eusebius is mentioned in the first line of the prophecy, before he disappears all together in the rest of the text.[52] Eusebius here has little to do with the prophecy, but rather his weight as the first historian of the Christian Church in the third and fourth centuries may have lent credibility to the prophecy's authenticity, as well as linking the prophecy to a long line of historical tradition. His name also provided the author with an overall schematic of salvation history which he could incorporate into the *Columbinus Prophecy* more widely.[53] This situated the prophecy in biblical history from Genesis to Revelation, connecting it within a biblical timeframe while acknowledging the role of humanity throughout time.

2. 2. 1. Alterations made to Henry's copy of the Columbinus Prophecy

Henry of Kirkstede's copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* is written in Henry's own hand, suggesting a personal need to copy the text.[54] Moreover, the end of the text implies that Henry may have either run out of time to copy the text in full or that Henry was copying from another witness which did not contain the final lines. As such, it cannot be said specifically when the prophecy was copied, and there are no textual clues that can narrow down the dating any further than between *c.* 1350-*c.* 1378. Nor can we say which witness Henry copied his *Columbinus Prophecy* from, whether he copied it exactly from a witness or whether he

[50] Jonas of Bobbio, *Ionae Vitae Sanctorum Columbani, Vedastis Iohannis,* ed. Bruno Krusch (1905); A. O'Hara, 'Death and the Afterlife in Jonas of Bobbio's *Vita Columbani',* in P. Clarke and T. Claydon (eds.), *The Church, The Afterlife and the Fate of the Soul* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 64-6.

[51] J. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 83-4.

[52] MS 404, f. 7v. 'De durac[i]o[n]e mundi s[ecundu]m euseb[iu]m.'

[53] M. J. Hollerich, *Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers* (Oakland, 2021), p. 10.

[54] MS 404, ff. 7v-8v.

made changes himself to the material. Henry's copy appears different from the only earlier extant English copy, that in Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, both in a different date for the end of the sixth seal, and that Henry's prophecy misses the last few lines. As so, Henry's copy states,

> 'Moreover, the sixth seal lasts to the year of our Lord 1220 of whose end was hard and full of sorrows and tribulations, more that can be said or believed. And the tribulations will be near at hand in the year of our Lord 1287 and will not cease until the year of our Lord 1325… The clergymen who come later will cover up their tonsure and will deny that they are clergymen.'[55]

In comparison, Cotton MS Cleopatra C X states,

> 'Moreover, the sixth seal lasts to the year of our Lord 1320, whose end was heavy with sorrows and full of tribulations, more that can be said or believed. And the tribulations will begin to be near at hand in the year of our Lord 1287 and will not cease until the year of our Lord 1320…The clergymen who come later will cover up their tonsures and will deny that they are clergymen. Then man will be swift to the table and slow to the Church, capable of drunkenness (but) reluctant to sing, prone to refutations (but) lazy to speeches; seeing a rod in someone else's eye, he will not observe the beam in his own. The Pope will yield, and a pope will succeed him, proud, lowly, heretical, saintly and afterwards, no one.'[56]

While there is no marked differences between the two texts, the removal of the latter lines of the *Columbinus Prophecy* from Henry's version highlights the stark differences. In this case, it is likely that Henry simply did not have access to the witness in MS Cleopatra, as Henry would have likely been interested in the last lines regarding the ends of the pope. This

[55] MS 404, f. 7v, 8v. 'Sextu[m] au[tem] signaculu[m] durante[m] ad annu[m] domin[um] MCCXX cu[ius] finis erat gr[a]vis et plen[us] doloribus et angustiis plusq[ua]m dici sit credi pot[e]st. Et incipient iminer[e] t[ri]bulac[i]o[n]es a[nn]o d[o]m[in]i MCCLXXXVII et no[n] cessab[u]nt usq[ue] ad annu[m] d[o]m[in]i MCCCXXV…Cl[er]ici v[ero] sup[er]uenie[n]tes coop[er]ient to[n]suras suas [e]t denegabu[n]t se esse clericos.'

[56] Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, f. 157r, 'Sextum a[utem] signac[u]l[u]m durat usq[ue] ad ann[um] d[omi]ni m[ille] CCCXX cuius finis erit cu[n]ctus g[ra]vis dolorib[us] et angustiis plenus plusq[uam] dici v[el] credi pot[er]it. Et incipient im[m]in[e]re tribulac[i]ones anno d[omi]ni m[ille] ducento LXXXVII et non cessabu[n]t usq[ue] ad ann[um] d[omi]ni m[ille] CCCXX…Clerici vero sup[er]bientes coop[er]ient tonsuras suas et denegabu[n]t se e[ss]e cl[eri]co[s]. Tu[n]c erit homo velox ad mensam et tardus ad ecc[les]iam potens ad pota[n]du[m] eg[er] ad cantand[um], p[ronus] ad dissoluc[i]ones, piger ad orac[i]ones; in alieno oc[u]lo festucam videns, in sui ip[s]ius trabem n[on] prospiciet. Papa cedet et ei succedet p[a]p[a] sup[er]bus, humilis, h[er]eticus, s[an]c[tu]s et postea nullus.'

will be shown later in the thesis, given that Henry copied multiple prophecies concerning the last popes into his *Prophetiae.*

Henry of Kirkstede's copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* is also different from other copies such as Ashmole MS 393, in that it dates the end of the sixth seal to 1325 (Ashmole dates this to 1355) and dates creation to 5199 (Ashmole dates this to 5299.)[57] For example, Henry's copy states,

> 'And when five thousand, nine times twenty and nineteen years [5199 years] had passed since the creation of the world, God was born of the Virgin Mary.'[58]

Meanwhile, Ashmole MS 393 states,

> 'Thus in addition the son of God, our lord Jesus Christ, who, when in five two-hundred ninety-nine years had passed since the creation of the world, was born from the blessed virgin Mary for the redemption of the human race.'[59]

The use of 5199 (and by extension 5299), envelopes the prophecy into it a traditional dating system, anno mundi II (AM II), which was created by Eusebius and popularised by Jerome, and it may help explain why this date is mentioned early in the prophecy.[60] AM II placed the

[57] MS 404, f. 7v. 'Et incipient iminer[e] t[ri]bulac[i]o[n]es a[nn]o d[o]m[in]I M CC L XXX VII et no[n] cessab[u]nt usq[ue] ad annu[m] d[o]m[in]i M CCC XX V'; 'Et t[ra]nsactis a c[on]stitut[i]o[n]e m[u]ndi V milibus nouies XX [e]t XIX an[n]is nat[us] d[eus] de maria virgi[n]e.' Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 393, f. 80r. 'Sextum a[utem] signaculu[m] durat us[que] ad an[n]um d[omi]ni M CCC L V c[uius] signac[u]li finis erit cu[n]ctis g[ravior], plena dolorib[us] [et] angustiis pl[us]q[uam] dici [et] credi pot[er]it'; 'Sic i[n]sup[er] d[e]l fili[us] d[omin]us noster Ih[esus] [Christus] qui, tr[an]sac[t]is a cr[e]ac[i]o[n]e mu[n]di quinque ducentis nonaginta novem annis, de beato vir[gin]e Maria p[ro] r[e]de[m]pc[i]o[n]e humani gen[er]is nascebat[ur].' Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, f. 157r. 'Et t[ran]sactis a creac[i]one mundi V milib[us] nouies XX et XIX an[n]is, deus natus e[st] de b[eat]a v[irg]ine Maria.'

[58] MS 404, f. 7v. 'Et t[ra]nsactis a c[on]stitut[i]o[n]e m[u]ndi V milibus nouies XX e[t] XIX an[n]is nat[us] d[eus] de maria virgi[n]e.

[59] Ashmole MS 393, f. 80r. 'Sic i[n]sup[er] d[e]l fili[us] d[omin[us noster Ih[esus] [Christus] qui, tr[an]sac[t]is a cr[e]ac[i]o[n]e mu[n]di quinque ducentis nonaginta novem annis, de beato vir[gin]e Maria p[ro] r[e]de[m]pc[i]o[n]e humani gen[er]is nascebat[ur].

[60] For the different early dating schemes in the Latin West, see: Landes, 'Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronology, 100-800 CE', in W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Leuven, 1988), pp. 137-211.

incarnation of Christ to 5199, meaning that the end of the world was predicted for 5699.[61] Given the specificity of using 5199, it is evident that the author is referring to the AM II dating, but it appears that the original author (or a scribe of an earlier, no longer existing copy) was confused with how the system worked, thereby dating it to creation rather than the incarnation of Christ. The use of AM II within the prophecy more generally is interesting for two reasons. The first is that it is used at all, given that its prediction for the end of the world would have already passed by the time that the copy was composed.[62] Second is that the dating system is being used at all, given that it was replaced by anno domini dating, created by Dionysius Exiguus and popularised by Bede, which is now the basis for time reckoning in the western world.[63] The use of an older dating system may have been used by the original author to make the prophecy appear as if it is a lot older than it actually is, which would, in turn, help legitimise it in the eyes of its audience.

This is present alongside a more general reference to the 'millennial week', in which it is stated that the world will end after 7000 years. The prophecy states,

> 'God, in creating the world, laboured through seven days. Truly, he established, first of all, that the world was going to last through seven thousand years and he ordered it through seven days which are rolled out each week, and he illuminated it through the seven planets placed in the seven spheres of the heavens.'[64]

The millennia week belief represented here is when each day of creation is represented by a 1000 years, or an 'age', with a final seventh day being the earthly sabbath, which would see a rest period preceding the end of the world.[65] This belief in thousand-year periods of history proved unpopular and was disavowed by Augustine, who later chose to interpret these

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[61] R. Landes, 'The Fear of the Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern', *Speculum,* 75/1 (2000), pp. 111-2.

[62] Landes, 'The Fear of the Apocalyptic Year 1000', p. 112.

[63] Landes, 'Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled', p. 140, 178-9.

[64] MS 404, f. 7v. 'Deus in c[re]at[i]o[n]e mu[n]di op[er]atus est p[er] septenas. Constituit [e]n[im] p[r]imo m[u]nd[u]m duraturu[m] p[er] VII mille annos et disposuit ip[s]u[m] p[er] VII dies qu[i] de[v]oluu[n]t[ur] qual[ibet] septi[m]ana et illu[m]i[n]auit ip[su]m p[er] VII planetas po[s]itas in VII speris celo[rum].'

[65] B. E. Daley, 'Apocalypticism in Early Christian Theology', in B. McGinn (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Volume 2, Apocalypticism in Western History and Culture* (New York and London, 1998), pp. 30-1. For a general view of the 'millennial week' and 'sabbatical millenarianism', see: R. E. Lerner, 'The Medieval Return to the Thousand-Year Sabbath', in R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1997), pp. 51-71.

metaphorically rather than literally, ensuring that no exact date for the end of the world could be calculated.[66] Yet again, it is strange to find it here as a prevailing narrative despite its repudiation throughout the thousand years of history before Henry.[67] However, while the dating itself is clumsy, it is not surprising that these systems prevail within the *Columbinus Prophecy,* given that the text attempts to harken back to chiliastic beliefs and encourage feelings of immediacy regarding the end of the world.[68] As such, the use of the 'millennial week', despite being outdated by the time of the prophecy's creation, situates the text firmly in the more radical apocalypticism than that found in, for example, illuminated apocalypses. Further, while the text itself does not encourage chiliastic belief, the expectation of an impending time of goodwill on Earth before the Last Judgment, the text still builds on this same immediacy and expectation that could be found in chiliastic texts.[69] The fear created by the imminency of the end may have contributed to Henry's copying of the text into his *Prophetiae.*

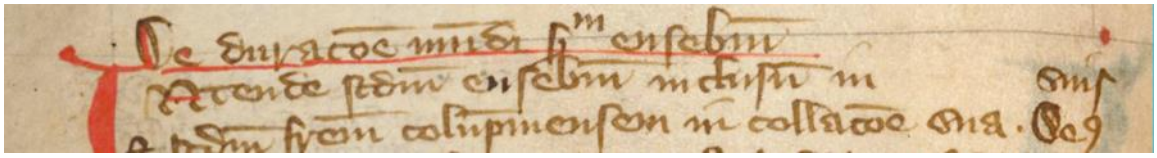

Figure 2.1: Lines from The Columbinus Prophecy, including a purposeful gap where a missing word should go. The Columbinus Prophecy, MS 404, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, f. 7v. Copyright: Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.[70]

Henry's copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* contains changes and alterations that are unique, despite following the same structure and content as found in other copies. It may be that we do not have access to the witness that Henry used for his copy, but it is more likely that he made his own, rather minor, changes to the *Columbinus Prophecy* as can be found in other extant copies of the *Columbinus Prophecy*. We find that Henry adapts and changes small details of other prophecies that he copies, such as the *Vaticinia,* and therefore we can be confident that he tampered with the *Columbinus Prophecy* to suit his own needs.

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[66] Augustine, 'Psalm 89', in *Exposition of the Psalms 79-98 (Vol. 4)*, ed. Maria Boulding, pp.305-6; Landes, 'Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled', p. 157. See also Augustine's discussion on the earthly sabbath: Augustine, *City of God,* trans. Henry Bettenson (1972), pp. 906-910.

[67] Landes, 'The Apocalyptic Year 1000', pp. 112-3.

[68] For an overview into chiliastic belief, see: R. Landes, *Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience* (Oxford, 2011), especially pp. 20-22.

[69] Lerner, 'Antichrist and Antichrists', p. 556.

[70] https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/jy663fr8353

Henry's copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* also appears to have undergone minor censorship in the form of missing words or dates, and, arguably, this was most likely by Henry. This can be seen by his leaving of purposeful gaps in the text where missing information should have gone (see Fig. 2.1). This can be seen twice on f. 7v. Whether Henry was planning on filling in these gaps is debatable, as he may have left the gaps as he was unsure what to put there. Another hand can be seen on f. 8v in a paler ink, which is not Henry's nor the scribe's hand on ff. 88r-95r. It is hard to know whether this person was filling in a gap left by Henry or had erased a previous date here and written in their own revised date. The inserted date here appears to be 1344 and refers to the time in which Henry (son of Frederick) would bribe his way into the office of emperor.[71] However, the change of dating still had no historical basis, as the Holy Roman Emperor during this period was Louis IV who continued to rule until 1347, and even further afield in Byzantium, the emperor who was known as John V Palaiologos would continue to rule on and off until 1391. Why, then, this change was made cannot be said, but the text was evidently of interest enough to warrant updates and changes throughout its later life.

This addition of another hand into this gap also shows that others were also using the text at some point, either while Henry was alive or afterwards. This is important as it illuminates that others participated in Henry's apocalypticism and that possibly the *Prophetiae* was not just a personal work, but an endeavour which would be read and updated by others as they saw fit. The manuscript was likely housed in the library, given that Henry was a librarian for much of his time at Bury St. Edmunds, meaning that other monks would have had access to it, and the manuscript may have proved useful for the oblates that were educated at the cloister, as well as for those at Bury's grammar and Song school.[72] The changes to the text, then, appear even more strange as it could be argued that the text was teaching erroneous beliefs to the other monks. However, in another vein, these incorrect insertions may be the point: by writing in a year that had already passed, it proves to the audience that the text is wrong as it was unable to predict the end of the world. Doing so may have nullified the text's apocalyptic immediacy, and instead allowed for the prophecy to be appreciated as a piece of historical writing without its more radical baggage.

[71] Kerby-Fulton and Daniel, 'English Joachimism 1300-1500', p. 324.

[72] Rouse, 'Kirkestede, Henry', *ODNB* (2004); R. S. Gottfried, *Bury St. Edmunds and the Urban Crisis 1290-1539* (Princeton, 1982), p. 208.

The gaps present in f. 7v include the year the devil is released/Antichrist is born as well as the removal of a word in the first line of the prophecy. In other English copies of the *Columbinus Prophecy,* these gaps were not put in and instead have been filled with dates. These are dates which, at the time of producing the various copies, had already passed for those who were recording the prophecy. For example, in Ashmole MS 393, a miscellany of astronomical, medical and 'prognostications' that dates to the fifteenth century, the *Columbinus Prophecy* states that in the year 1350, Frederick would be elected as emperor by the practice of simony.[73] For a work copied in the fifteenth century, the reference to a time already gone by appears unusual and suggests that the copier was recording the prophecy for some other non-apocalyptic reason. Meanwhile, no other copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* has dates which have either been removed or were put into the future at the time of recording (perhaps except for Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, as the dating of the text is unclear). With Henry deciding to completely remove these dates, it suggests a want to err on the side of caution. It also suggests that Henry may have believed in the possibility of these events coming to pass in the future, or that the prophecy was worth copying for its apocalyptic potential.

Likewise, as suggested above, this could be an example of self-censorship, where Henry has removed this information under concerns that it may incriminate him in some way. This is most notable with the removal of the word on the first line, which reads 'Hear, according to Eusebius included in his [BLANK] and according to the brother Columbinus etc'.[74] From other copies of the *Columbinus Prophecy,* we can identify this missing word to be chronicle ('cronicis'), in which the full statement would be that the *Columbinus Prophecy* could be at least in part found in Eusebius' chronicle. Possibly, Henry removed this word so that other readers would be unable to source his claims, and therefore refute the ideas in the *Columbinus Prophecy.* Either this or the removal of the word means that it is harder to trace where this tract may have come from. It is also possible that Henry only had access to a copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* in which this word was also missing, although no other extant copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* leaves this word out. Further, the removal of the dates from the text also shows a refusal to date the coming apocalypse and therefore prevents a chiliastic reading of the text. Predicting the end date of the world was condemned by the

[73] Ashmole MS 393, f. 80v.

[74] MS 404, f. 7v. 'Intende s[e]c[un]nd[u]m euseb[iu]m inclus[u]m in [BLANK] suis et se[cun]d[u]m fr[atr]em colu[m]pinesem in collat[i]o[n]e sua.'

Church, based upon the scripture of Matthew 24:36, and the removal of certain dates securing the prophecy to a predicted end date thereby removed the more radical aspects of it and made the prophecy safer to possess.[75] Either way, the erased words and dates all appear purposeful on the page and suggest that Henry was particular when copying his version of the text.

Henry's genuine belief in the coming end can be endorsed further by his attempts to revise the dates and names of the *Columbinus Prophecy.* This can be seen firstly by the end of the sixth seal's backdating to 1220, as opposed to 1320 as seen in MS Cotton Cleopatra C X.[76] There may be a possibility that Henry was attempting to fit the *Columbinus Prophecy* within his worldview. Placing it to 1220 would give more credence to the idea that Henry was living in the end times, rather than the sixth seal having been opened within his lifetime. Although this does not explain why Henry did not change other dates referring to past events that did not occur, it may be that Henry continued to be cautious about what events may or may not happen, and so left the prophecies open to interpretation and possibilities. Lerner points out that Henry copied out the Columbinus Prophecy just like he did with the rest of his prophecies, even if the Columbinus Prophecy predicted events that had supposedly already taken place, and the blanks he put in may be representative of times where he was uncertain as to their reading.[77] The manipulation and changes made to Henry's copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* therefore may be reflective of Henry's openness and interest in the apocalypse, and a willingness to examine a range of apocalyptic perspectives from a variety of different prophecies.

2. 2. 2. History and Politics in Henry's *Columbinus Prophecy*

In one section of the prophecy, Henry writes about the former emperor of Alemania:

> 'Hear then, that in the year of our Lord [BLANK] Henry, of the third generation of Frederick, formerly emperor prince of Alemanie, by simony, will be elected as emperor and for three and a half years in his time, there will be such a great heresy that the Christian people will not be able to recover.' [78]

[75] Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages,* p. 54.

[76], MS 404, f. 7v; Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, f. 157r.

[77] Lerner, *The Powers of Prophecy,* pp. 99-100.

[78] MS 404, f. 8v. 'Intende tu[um] q[uod] a[nn]o d[o]m[in]i [BLANK] H[e]nnric[us] de t[er]cia g[e]n[ar]ac[i]o Frederici quo[n]da[m] imp[er]atoris p[ri]nceps Alman[n]ie simoniace eligetur in i[m]p[er]atore[m].'

This differs from other versions of the text, such as in Cotton MS Cleopatra C X and Ashmole MS 393, which uses the name Frederick rather than Henry.[79] Possibly, the change from Frederick to Henry was an effort to update the prophecy for a contemporary audience. Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250), the grandchild of Frederick Barbarossa (1155-1147) who was the first of the Hohenstaufen line to be proclaimed the Holy Roman Emperor, was often wrapped up in many pseudo-Joachite prophecies as the Antichrist who was the 'once and future emperor.'[80] However, by the time that Henry was writing, Frederick had been dead around 100 years and the prophecy of him rising as the Antichrist had not come to pass. As a result, Henry may have changed this name in order to situate the prophecy, perhaps to understand it further, or make it more comprehensible for other monastic readers that may have interacted with his *Prophetiae.* It is possible that Henry may be referring to the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII, who was elected in 1313, thereby making the prophecy more historically accurate, although Henry would have known that he did not rule for three and a half years as suggested in the next line of the prophecy. Indeed, this three-and-a-half-year rule was not meant to be read factually but instead was a reference to the time that Antichrist would reign for before his defeat by God.[81] In doing this, Henry thus mixed the apocalyptic with factual history, to make the prophecy more understandable to those that might have read it, as well as attempting to use it in order to understand the world and events that occurred around him.

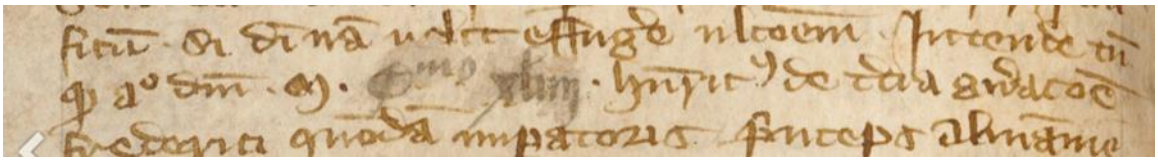

Figure 2.2: Lines from The Columbinus Prophecy, including an erased number. The Columbinus Prophecy, MS 404, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, f. 8v. Copyright: Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.[82]

Here, it must be noted that on f. 8v of MS 404, Kerby-Fulton and Daniels state that Henry writes that the year in which the third descendant of Frederick will be elected as emperor was 1344.[83] In my own transcription of the text, I have left this blank. As can be seen, in Figure 2.2, this is because the text is faded, in my opinion, erased, and therefore it

[79] Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, f.158r; Ashmole MS 363, f.80v.

[80] Lerner, 'Frederick II, Alive, Aloft and Allayed, in Franciscan-Joachite Eschatology', pp. 359-60.

[81] This came from Daniel 7:24-5, DRBO <https://www.drbo.org/chapter/32007.htm> [accessed 7th April 2023.]

[82] https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/jy663fr8353

[83] Kerby-Fulton and Daniels, 'English Joachimism 1300-1500', p. 324.

cannot be said with any certainty that the Roman numerals for 1344 can be read here. Either way, the reference to Henry, whether Emperor Henry VII or another mythical Henry, shows unsuccessful tampering on behalf of Henry Kirkstede to place the apocalyptic prophecy within his current timeframe, and make it more applicable to history.

Henry's copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* also speaks about the wars that will commence, when it states:

> 'Hear, that when evils begin with the birth of Antichrist, the city of Acon will again be destroyed through unbroken power. Thereupon the great pope will lament over her and will call the kings and princes to aid the sacred land, and no one will be found to aid him because the Lord ordained [it]. Indeed, wars will rise up between the Gauls and the English and the Spaniards, Aragonese, Flemish and Waldensians.'[84]

In Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, instead it speaks of the wars between 'the Gauls and the Gauls', instead of the English.[85] Meanwhile, the copy in Ashmole MS 393, for example, does state that wars will take place between the English and the Gauls. These changes may have been made to reflect the anti-French sentiment present in England and to reflect the present in which readers lived, one where wars between these two countries were common.[86] Leslie Coote has noted the exceptional interest in political prophecy among the English, with over 500 manuscripts containing late medieval political prophecy surviving to this day.[87] Often, political prophecy reinforced an 'us' vs 'them' mentality, an idea that particularly appealed to English political thought, in which Englishness was defined, in part, in opposition to its neighbours.[88] By inserting the English into this prophecy here as fighting the French, it places them in the epicentre of the action, in which England's wars against the French are justified as part of an apocalyptic struggle. Andrea Ruddick has suggested that one attribute of 'Englishness' was military prowess; therefore, it can be suggested that the insertion of the

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[84] MS 404, f. 8r. 'Intende q[uod] nato Antic[hrist]o incipientib[us] malis iteru[m] dest[ru]etur ci[vi]tas Aconie p[er] potestate[m] soldani. Deinde magn[us pontifex planget sup[er] ea[m] et vocabit r[e]ges [e]t p[ri]ncipes in s[u]bsidiu[m] t[er]re s[an]c[t]e [e]t no[n] i[n]veniet[ur] qui adiuvet q[uia] do[mi]n[us] ordinavit. Im[m]o c[on]surge[n]t guerr[e] int[er] Gallicos et Anglicos et Hispanos, Aragoncenses, Frandricos [et] Wandalicos.'

[85] Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, f. 158r. 'Immo consurgent guerre inter Gallicos et Gallicos et Hispanicos et Burdegalenses, Flandrenses et Wandalicos.'

[86] A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Ethnicity* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 48.

[87] Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 6.

[88] Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture*, pp. 141-2.

English here further emphasises their military skill and reinforces English superiority.[89] Political prophecy such as the second half of the *Columbinus Prophecy* could then reinforce ideas about the status and position of readers, by strengthening beliefs in the importance and uniqueness of 'Englishness' to its English audience.

Secondly, by changing one of the references to Gauls and the English in the *Columbinus Prophecy,* Henry further situated the prophecy within contemporary times. If Henry copied this prophecy sometime between 1350 and 1378, it can be suggested that this reflects the ongoing conflict of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). The prophecy here is encouraging its audience to make a connection between the current wars and the greater history of salvation and revelation. For Henry in particular, this is important as it connects his interest and belief in apocalypticism with the time that he is living in. For Henry, the wars were an extension of the apocalypse, as they were precursors for what was to come. Therefore, by situating England in this narrative, it connects the now with the greater apocalyptic narrative, but more importantly, it places England into the heart of the apocalypse, where God's attention is drawn. While apocalyptic narratives pertain to the collective, in the fact that they will occur to everyone at the same time, Henry individualises his interest in the apocalypse, by focusing on the apocalypse's connection to England. This is important as it provides insight for the English reader as to their role in salvation history.[90] While it is likely that Henry was writing primarily with apocalypticism in mind, he also wanted to preserve the rights and customs of English communities, as can be seen, more generally through the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds' conflict with Rome over rights to elect one's own abbot.[91] Therefore, the *Columbinus Prophecy* may be seen as an extension of this, in which England's place in the apocalyptic narrative is important in Henry's understanding of England.

This feeds into a greater narrative surrounding the politics of dynastic rights between France and England, and the role of the French king. England plays a minimal role in the overall scheme of the prophecy, existing on the periphery only in terms of its wars with France, and assumedly being part of the Pope's call to aid. Despite this, the *Columbinus Prophecy* circulated in England and became popular, even if England is not the central

[89] Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture,* p. 139. Similar instances can be seen in romances, see: G. Ashton, *Medieval English Romance in Context* (Chippenham, 2010), p. 14.

[90] Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture,* pp. 258-9.

[91] A. H. Sweet, 'The Apostolic See and the Heads of English Religious Houses', *Speculum,* 28/3 (1953), p. 473.

concern within the prophecy, as was the case with many other political prophecies from the time.[92] One reason for this was how the *Columbinus Prophecy* deemed England's wars against France as, in essence, 'holy wars' through the assertion that these wars were part of a larger apocalyptic narrative. In this prophecy, the king of France is shown to be weak, his position being 'abused and usurped' by others.[93] This justified England's wars on a cosmic scale and drew a comparison for the audience between their English king, and its portrayal of the French king. Coote states that political prophecies muddled the boundaries between kings and kingdoms, meaning that often they were seen as one in the eyes of the audience.[94] This meant that the English king and England were often synonymous, and that Englishmen were able to interpret prophecies about the English king and kingdom as also directly relating to them on an individual scale.

In conjunction with this is the idea of the English birthright over parts of France, such as Normandy, Aquitaine, and Calais.[95] The claimed right to own and govern these places in the interests of the English crown often brought the English into conflict with French interests.[96] Given that prophecies often linked together king and country, the birthright of the English king to France, therefore, became the claim of all Englishmen. This idea of English domination, therefore, was particularly important in these prophecies because of the belief held by many English people that English identity was inherently superior to foreign nations.[97] The *Columbinus Prophecy* amplified this belief to those that already held it, and could also act as evidence of French inferiority in comparison to English superiority. This, then, justified the Hundred Years War at the time Henry was writing, but it also placed England within a cosmic scheme that saw these wars as ordained by God. This represented the English as a distinct political and religious unit which was ordained by God and that

[92] Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place in Medieval England,* p. 3.

[93] MS 404, ff. 8r-8v. 'Et n[isi] r[e]x Fr[an]cor[um] sup[er] abuso et usurpac[i]o[n]e iurisdicc[i]on[e]m suar[um] r[e]primate eor[um] sup[er]bia[m] n[e]c[es]e habet succu[m]ber[e].'

[94] L. Coote, 'Prophecy, Genealogy, and History in Medieval English Political Discourse', in R. Radulescu and E. D. Kennedy (eds.), *Broken Lines: Genealogical Literature in Late Medieval Britain and France* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 30-1, 34.

[95] Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture,* p.221.

[96] M. Vale, *The Ancient Enemy: England, France and Europe from the Angevins to the Tudors* (London, 2007), pp. 4-5.

[97] Vale, *The Ancient Enemy,* p. 76.

would constitute the elect in the last days.[98] While England only features once in the text, the *Columbinus Prophecy* can still be seen to have pushed the notion of English domination despite the limited English presence within the text.

Finally, on a broader scale, one could understand 'Acon' as actually being Acre, the city in Israel that was sieged by the Mamluks in 1291, and resulted in decline of the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem.[99] Its destruction, while not the first time, in 1291 had sent shockwaves through the Christian community, and many had interpreted as a sign of the end and a realisation of the end of Joachim's third status.[100] The reference to its destruction again likely would stir up similar sentiments for its audience as to the extreme nature of these events in heralding the end. Moreover, the desertion of the pope here by the English, among other countries, suggests a movement away from orthodox Christian institutions and towards Joachim's 'spiritual men' who would lead Christians into the Sabbath. As a Benedictine, Henry may have found this particularly interesting as he may have been concerned with what role the Benedictines were to take upon the end of the world. When viewed alongside the other texts explored in this chapter (on the last popes), it suggested that Henry was interested in the development of the Christian church as it approached the end times, and that Henry was, if not making preparations, then actively thinking about how he and his brethren would fit into this greater apocalyptic narrative. As such, as well as the implications for English politics, the text also reflects concerns regarding the Church in the end times.

2. 2. 3. What attracted Henry to this text?

Henry appears to have copied the text sometime in the mid-to-late fourteenth century. It is possible that while apocalypticism was always of concern to Henry if he began writing the *Prophetiae* early in his career, this interest may have intensified with the passing of the Black Death. James Clarke has argued that the aftermath of the Black Death left a group of Benedictine scholars who were some of the most energetic of their time, and we can see that Henry was no exception.[101] We find that Henry transcribed his copy of the *Vaticinia* sometime after 1378, proving that he was still writing well into the later years of his life, and

[98] Coote, 'Prophecy, Genealogy and History', pp. 33-4; Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture,* p. 284.

[99] E. Randolph Daniel, 'Medieval Apocalypticism, Millennialism and Violence', in J. Kaplan (ed.), *Millennial Violence: Past, Present and Future* (Abingdon, 2002), p. 297, n. 47.

[100] C. W. Connell, 'The Fall of Acre in 1291 in the Court of Medieval Public Opinion', in J. France (ed.), *Acre and its Falls: Studies in the History of a Crusader City* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 134-7.

[101] J. G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2011), p. 272.

so it would not be absurd to claim that Henry's copying of apocalyptic prophecies was in some way related to, or maybe even brought on by the Black Death. The plague visited Bury St. Edmunds in the years 1349, 1361 and 1368 and there is no doubt that these outbreaks impacted the lives of Henry and the other monks living during this time.[102] In fact, we find that in the outbreak of 1361, Henry became prior due to the death of his predecessor at the hands of the disease, along with 18 other monks.[103]

With death seemingly all around him, and large portions of his community dying, it is not surprising that Henry turned to apocalyptic literature to make sense of what was happening. The importance of the seven seals in the *Columbinus Prophecy,* in which the end of the sixth seal coincided with 'sorrows and tribulations' likely rang true for Henry at the time that he was copying the prophecy.[104] We find that it specifically states that in the time of the devil being released, 'there were plagues and pestilences'.[105] The expectation that the plague would lead to greater and more important events may have provided, surprisingly, hope to Henry that he was living in a significant time in Christian history and that the frequent deaths of those close to him were part of a greater meaning. After all, Joachim's apocalyptic thought often contradicted the more mainstream Augustinian apocalyptic thought in its optimism of the triumphant coming of the 'Third Age', where the apocalypse was expected to occur, and peace and tranquillity would reign supreme.[106] Therefore, the parallels between the *Columbinus Prophecy* and the lived experiences of Henry likely spurred him to copy and preserve the prophecy within his manuscript, and trust in it to speak the truth of things to come.

Other influences may also have played on the changes made by Henry to his *Columbinus Prophecy.* As the librarian and later prior of Bury St Edmunds, Henry's job would have mainly been concerned with the pastoral and disciplinary running of the church, but his close relationship with the abbot would have meant that he would have had some connections to the community and political life. This was especially prevalent in cases when

[102] Rouse, 'Kirkestede, Henry', *ODNB* (2004).

[103] Rouse, 'Kirkestede, Henry', *ODNB* (2004).

[104] MS 404, f. 7v. 'Sextu[m] au[tem] signaculu[m] durante[m] ad annu[m] domin[um] M C XX cu[ius] finis erat gr[a]vis et plen[us] doloribus et angustiis plusq[ua]m dici v[e]l credi pot[e]st.'

[105] MS 404, f. 7v. 'Et suo t[em]p[or]e fueru[n]t plage et pestile[n]cie.'

[106] B. McGinn, 'Introduction: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Culture', in M. Riedl (ed.), *A Companion to Joachim of Fiore* (Leiden, 2017), p. 9.

the abbot was either absent or ill, where the prior often acted as a substitute during this time.[107] Henry likely took part in the political life of the monastery, especially given that Bury St. Edmunds was given successive writs by various kings that allowed it to have complete jurisdiction over the areas within its locality. This included such things as the execution of royal writs, trials of pleas from the king, control of the baronial courts, and exemption from royal taxes.[108] Because of Bury St. Edmunds' keen connection with the Crown, this placed both the abbot and the prior in a position of power and they were expected to as per royal policy to ensure the smooth running of the kingdom. This was very much understood by the residents of Bury St. Edmunds in June 1381 when the rebels looted the monastery, capturing and beheading the prior, John de Cambridge, a few days later in response to bad lordship and many long-standing grievances held by tenants of the abbey.[109] With this in mind, the changes made to the *Columbinus Prophecy* by Henry can be considered in this context, and Henry's interest in the position of England in a greater salvific history may have come from his interactions with politics and the Crown. For Henry, Joachite thought was perhaps best suited to his aims, as traditionally Joachite thought was bound up in political intrigue and so could be easily manipulated to bring across a message of English superiority within the greater scheme of the apocalypse. While it is unlikely that the *Prophetiae w*as ever read by anyone connected with the Crown, the *Columbinus Prophecy* still reflected Henry's dealings with politics, and this prophecy drew together two interests and intersecting parts of his life.

Henry's personal experiences likely coloured his perceptions of the prophecy, and so this text may have helped him understand the world around him. The comments regarding England and its politics may have provided some context in which to understand why France and England were at war, and more generally the focus on the tribulations may have allowed him to make sense of the Black Death. While, as mentioned above, this manuscript was likely present in the library and accessible to other learned monks, there evidently appears to have been a personal dimension in its production. Unfortunately, there is no scholarship regarding the prevalence of specifically prophetic anthologies in late-medieval England, although some

[107] Heale, M., '"Like a mother between father and sons." The role of the prior in later medieval English monasteries', in K. Stober, J. Kerr and E. Jamroziak (eds.), *Monastic Life in the Medieval British Isles* (Cardiff, 2018), pp. 29-30.

[108] Gottfried, *Bury St. Edmunds*, pp. 167-8.

[109] Gottfried, *Bury St. Edmunds*, pp. 231-234; M. Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: An Economic and Social History, 1200-1500* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 192.

collections can be found. These collections tended to follow specific themes; this could be for commercial purposes, educational purposes, or because the texts held significant interest for the collector, in this case the texts being more personalised to the particular user.[110] For example, Bodley MS 623, was a prophetic anthology which, from its contents, can be seen to have been primarily concerned with the history and future of England.[111] Similarly, Cotton MS Vespasian E. VII, a prophetic anthology written around 1470 by someone in the service of Henry Percy, gathers together prophecies concerned with the rise of a messianic British king.[112] Lerner has argued that the collected prophecies and text were those which either connected to the Percy family directly or the Yorkist cause more widely.[113] From examining other prophetic anthologies, it is evident that they were collated and adapted to suit the needs of the individual compiling and using the manuscript, rather than having a broader appeal. As such, the *Prophetiae's* being focused specifically on apocalyptic texts, without the presence of other political prophecies, suggests that this manuscript was likely used as a personal collection, to gather information on Henry's interests.

The manuscript that contained the *Columbinus Prophecy* was likely housed in the abbey's library. Throughout the later Middle Ages, Bury increasingly became a cultural centre for education, as can be seen by the presence of the monastic, grammar and Song Schools in the town.[114] As such, both secular and the regular clergy may have possible had accessed the library at any time. These would have included parish priests from the churches of St. James and St. Mary, and unbeneficed stipendiary priests, alongside the abbey's monks.[115] Babwell Friary, a Franciscan community, was situated just outside the town and may have had access to the library, despite being discouraged to settle there, with

[110] For different types of anthologies and their uses, see: J. Boffey and J. J. Thompson, 'Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts', in J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (eds.), *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 279-316.

[111] R. W. Hunt, *A summary catalogue of Western manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford which have not hitherto been catalogued in the quarto series: with references to the Oriental and other manuscripts* (Vol. 2, Part 1, Oxford, 1922), pp. 234-5.

[112] J. Planta, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library* (London, 1802), p. 480.

[113] Lerner, *The Powers of Prophecy*, pp. 101-3.

[114] J. H. Moran Cruz, 'Education, Economy and Clerical Mobility in Late Medieval Northern England' in W. J. Courtenay and J. Miethke (eds.), *Universities & Schooling in Medieval Society* (Leiden, 2000), p.1 94.

[115] R. Dinn, 'Popular Religion in Late Medieval Bury St. Edmunds' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Manchester, 1990), pp. 136-45.

approximately 40-44 friars residing in the premises in the year 1300.[116] Many of these priests, friars and canons may have had access to the *Columbinus Prophecy*, possibly with a mediator or interpreter from the abbey itself. However, monastic libraries such as that at the abbey in Bury were unlikely to have provided access to the local community, especially given the precarious nature of MS 404 as containing sensitive information. Even though, from the thirteenth century, the lending out of books was encouraged to those in need, this was restricted to those not part of the lay community, such as friars, canons and other monastic orders.[117] For those that could access MS 404, their fine-tuned religious knowledge would have put them in good stead to understand the implications of many of the prophecies that Kirkstede copied. Moreover, the mixture of political prophecy within an apocalyptic framework would have appealed to those interested in the end of the world and their position in this history.

Some other copies of the *Columbinus Prophecy* also appear to have been copied for their contribution to religious thought and a want to interpret them. Ashmole MS 393, for example, is captured alongside some astrological texts and foreboding warnings dating to the fourteenth century, suggesting that the scribe may have believed that they were still worth interpreting and investigating into the fifteenth century.[118] Similarly, the copy in Lib. MS 66, was recorded alongside a series of devotional and pastoral texts written for clerical uses, highlighting the importance of apocalyptic thought in the wider curriculum of Christian learning, and that apocalypticism often played a background role in all religious activity.[119] Interestingly, the *Columbinus Prophecy* appears here alongside a summary of *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, highlighting the contrasting apocalyptic thought present in late medieval England.[120] Perhaps, this suggests that clergy were less concerned with the spectrum of apocalyptic thought but rather believed that apocalyptic literature was worth gathering because of its inherent revelatory nature. Balliol College MS 149 similarly fits into this pattern of clergy collecting prophetic texts, although, unlike Henry's book, we find that

[116] D. Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious House: England and Wales* (New York, 1971), p. 224.

[117] P. J. Lucas, 'Borrowing and reference: access to libraries in the late middle ages' in E. Leedham-Green and T. Webber (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (Vol 1., Cambridge, 2008), p. 245.

[118] Kerby-Fulton, 'The Columbinus Prophecy', pp. 325-6.

[119] Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral Library, Lib. MS 66.

[120] R. M. Thompson, *Catalogue of Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 47-49.

there is a sense of anti-fraternal, and to some extent, anti-papal feelings present in the collection. The text next to the *Columbinus Prophecy* in Balliol MS 149 is a copy of William of St. Amour's *De periculis novissimorum temporum,* a text exposing the mendicant orders as the final Antichrist threatening Christendom, and a letter from the Bishop of Salisbury to Pope Boniface VIII complaining about the canonries elected by the pope.[121] Here, it is clear that the scribe's copying of the *Columbinus Prophecy* is likely to present the apocalypse as occurring within contemporary times and as proof of the Antichrist's ongoing evil. While Henry's copy seems to portray more personal interest than in Balliol MS 149, it shows that the location of the text within the larger collection of material could portray the reason for its existence and that it was possible to manipulate the text to reflect contemporary voices.

Subsequently, Henry's copy of the *Columbinus Prophecy* can be seen as being both personally and politically motivated. Henry may have initially recorded the *Columbinus Prophecy* for his own use, manipulating the text to situate the prophecy more closely within his own time. Given that it is situated within many other apocalyptic prophecies, he likely recorded it for personal interest and use. More generally, his comments throughout much of his manuscript, such as writing 'take note' next to a passage regarding many Christian countries falling away from Rome, and a comment next to the text of *De Antichristo et fine mundi* which states that the text agreed with Methodius 'in a large part', but not that in the *De semine scripturarum,* suggests a need to compare and deliberate over many of these apocalyptic texts.[122] The *Columbinus Prophecy,* then, can be seen as one text of many in which Henry sought to collect and deliberate over in order to become more informed on apocalyptic thought. Whether Henry collected this text and others because of a genuine belief in the end of the world, or because he was simply very interested in the topic, it is hard to say with any certainty. Still, it provides insight into how a minority may have felt regarding the apocalypse, as well as the breadth of different apocalyptic narratives that circulated through England. Further, the *Columbinus Prophecy* and others may have helped Henry examine the world around him and reflect on his personal experiences, as well as his experiences more broadly with the political and religious life of England.

2. 3. The Latin Pope Prophecies

[121] R. Mynors, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford* (Oxford, 1963).

[122] Lerner, *The Power of Prophecy,* pp. 100, 95-6. The 'take note (no[ta])' can be found on f. 102r while his comments about Methodius can be found on f. 65v (*De semine scripturarum* is called *De seminibus litterarum* in the text, and is incorrectly connected to Joachim).

The other prophecies that will be examined from the *Prophetiae* are the two Latin pope prophecies, entitled *Genus nequam* (ff. 88r-95r) and *Ascende calve* (f. 41r) respectively.[123] *Genus nequam* is a series of 15 prophecies, from the pontificate of Nicholas III (1277-1280) up to the end of Benedict XI's papacy (1304-5), before detailing a few other, unnamed popes, each of which is accompanied by an illustration depicting that pope. The *Genus nequam* was originally based on the *Oracles of Leo the Wise* (866-912), named after a Byzantine emperor who was, according to the historian Cedrenus, very interested in astronomy and prophecy. [124] The oracles are likely to be dated to c.1180, later but still a century before the *Genus nequam* was produced. [125]

Lerner originally argued for a larger time period, between 1277 and 1305, for dating the prophecy based on a mixture of internal and manuscript dating, although he rejected Spiritual Franciscan involvement in the creation of the papal prophecies.[126] This is based on the fact that within the prophecy, the Orsini family are attacked and this would be unlikely to occur in a Spiritual Franciscan-made text, many of whom had a close relationship with the Orsini circle.[127] Lerner also originally argued for an English origin for the prophecies, in part because of the origin of some of the earliest manuscripts, and that in one of them, a Rabanus the Englishman has been cited as the creator, which would have particular implications for Kirkstede's copy if this were true.[128] However, upon reflecting on the work of Andreas Rehberg since then, Lerner has changed his opinion and stated that the earliest iterations of the papal prophecies were actually about the Orsini cardinals, especially the first five units, and that they were created by an enemy of theirs well versed in curial politics. This places the original prophecies firmly in Italy and their date of composition sometime after 1280 because of the accurate recording of Pope Nicholas III's death in the text.[129] This appears most convincing when reading the *Genus nequam* itself. However, its quick circulation into other

[123] MS 404, ff. 88r-95r, 41r; R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints and Visionaries of the Great Schism 1378-1417* (Philadelphia, 2005), p. 167.

[124] C. Mango, 'The Legend of Leo the Wise', *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog Instituta* 6 (1960), p. 70.

[125] Reeves, 'Some Popular Prophecies', p.109.

[126] R. E. Lerner, 'On the Early Latin Pope Prophecies: A Reconsideration', in J. Detley (ed.), *Fälschungen im Mittelalter: Internationaler Kongress der Monumenta germaniae Historica* (Hanover, 1988), p. 627.

[127] Lerner, 'On the Early Latin Pope Prophecies', pp. 616-7.

[128] Lerner, 'On the Early Latin Pope Prophecies', p. 632.

[129] R. E. Lerner, 'Recent Work on the Origins of the *Genus nequam* Prophecies', *Florensia: Bollettino del Centro internazionale di studi Gioachimiti,* 7 (1993), pp. 155-6.

countries and circles must not be ignored, and the original intent of the prophecies soon came to reflect individual owners and communities, rather than its original audience.

Reeves has argued for a later dating on the belief that the *Oracles* reached the hands of a small enclave of Spiritual Franciscans in Perugia, Italy, headed by Angelo Clareno, who reinterpreted the text to produce new prophecies that were relevant to the Spiritual Franciscan cause and spoke of a changing, radical future. Angelo was a hugely important Spiritual Franciscan, and before the compilation of the *Genus nequam* in 1304-5, had been persecuted under Boniface VIII and Benedict XI, causing him to move his group to Italy where he deemed it safe.[130] Reeves believes that the prophecy was likely produced as a sharp attack on the papacy, as well as disguising radical hope under layers of prophecy.[131] This work circulated through Europe under Joachim's name in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[132]

Samantha Kelly has instead argued for an earlier dating of the *Genus nequam* at 1292, by comparing it to the *Visio Fratres Johannes* which can also be dated to around the same time. She argues that both were created as a reaction to the death of Pope Nicholas IV (1288-1292).[133] Martha Fleming has argued that while the first six or eight units of the pope prophecies were in circulation during this date, we cannot conclusively argue that the full 15 pope prophecies were being disseminated until about 1304-5, hence Reeves' later dating.[134] This raises the question of whether just some of the units were produced originally by the Spiritual Franciscans under Clareno and if so, who else may have produced parts of these prophecies.[135] Based on work by both Rehberg, and Millet and Rigaux, suggestions have been raised that the first five units were intended to apply to the Orsini cardinals and had been made negatively as a response to them, and thus a dating of between 1280 to 1305 has been accepted.[136] Regardless, the *Genus nequam* was later adopted and used by the Spiritual

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[130] S. N. Botterill, 'Angelo Clareno', in C. Kleinhenz (ed.), *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia.* (Vol. 1, New York, 2004), p. 36.

[131] Reeves, 'Some Popular Prophecies', p. 109. A lot of Reeves work on the *Vaticinia* is based off the following: H. Grundmann, 'Die Papstprophetien des Mittelalters', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte,* XIX (1929), pp. 33-91.

[132] MS 404, f. 88r. 'Incipiu[n]t p[ro]phecie Joachim abbatis de papis.'

[133] S. Kelly, 'The *Visio Fratris Johannis:* Prophecy and Politics in Late-Thirteenth Century Italy', *Florensia: Bollettino del Centro internazionale di studi Gioachimiti,* 8-9 (1994-5), p. 24-6.

[134] M. H. Fleming, *The Late Medieval Pope Prophecies: The Genus Nequam Group* (Tempe, 1999), p. 9.

[135] Lerner, 'Recent Work on the Origins of the *Genus nequam* Prophecies', p. 156.

[136] A. Rehberg, 'Der Kardinalsorakel Kommentar in der Colonna Handscrift Vat. Lat. 3819 und die Entstehungsumstände der Papstvatizinien', *Florensia* 5 (1991), pp. 45-112; H. Millet and D. Rigaux, 'Aux

Franciscans to push a political agenda, as well as guide them in their understanding of the Last Things. As will be shown below, Henry's copy of the *Genus nequam* on ff. 88r-95r draws inspiration from both of these ideas and uses the copy for his own agenda at times at odds with the possible 'original intent' or the Spiritual Franciscan use of the text.

In contrast, *Ascende calve* has received much less attention than its predecessor. This is partly because it was later combined with *Genus nequam* in the fifteenth century to form the *Vaticinia de summis pontificibus.*[137] Much like the *Genus nequam,* each unit comprised of text, a motto, and an image of the pope in question, with the last five popes being referred to vaguely, rather than by name. There has been some argument over which popes are actually named in the *Ascende calve:* Reeves believed that they detailed the popes from Nicholas III to Benedict XII (1334-42), while Lerner and Schwartz argue that only the first nine are identifiable up to John XXII (1316-1334).[138] This contradiction may have arisen from the constant editing and alterations of the texts to keep up with the changing political situation of the papacy so that they could remain relevant to their readers. This has, of course, made dating the text particularly hard, with Reeves dating it to sometime before 1356.[139] However, Schwartz and Lerner have narrowed it down to between 1328 to 1330 because of John XXII's ardent persecution of Franciscans.[140] Reeves, Lerner and Schwartz, all agree, however, that the prophecy was likely produced by the Spiritual Franciscans, but by a different person or group from the *Genus nequam.* They were inspired by the *Genus nequam,* however, and compiled it as a critique of the papacy and its persecution of their Order.[141]

MS 404 contains both a full copy of *Genus nequam* (ff. 88r-95r) and a fragmentary copy of *Ascende calve* on f. 41r. The *Genus nequam* appears to have been copied by a scribe working under Henry, with Henry's writing featuring a sentence or two above each of the

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origins du succès des *Vaticinia de summis pontificibus*', in A. Vauchez (ed.), *Fin du monde et signes des temps. Visionnaires et prophètes en France méridionale (Toulouse, 1992)*, pp. 129-156; Lerner, 'Recent Work on the Oirigins of the *Genus nequam* Prophecies', pp. 155-6.

[137] O. Schwartz and R. E. Lerner, 'Illuminated Propaganda: The Origins of the "Ascende calve" pope prophecies', *Journal of Medieval History,* 20 (1994), p. 159.

[138] Reeves, 'Some Popular Prophecies', pp. 117-8; Schwartz and Lerner, 'Illuminated Propaganda', p. 159.

[139] Reeves, 'Some Popular Prophecies', pp. 117.

[140] Schwartz and Lerner, 'Illuminated Propaganda', pp. 168-9. This conclusion has been supported by Katelyn Mesler based on circumstantial evidence from John Rupescissa's copy in his *Sexdequiloquium,* see: K. Mesler, 'John of Rupescissa's engagement with prophetic texts in the *Sexdequiloquium*', *Oliviana* 3 (2009), pp. 5-6.

[141] Reeves, 'Some Popular Prophecies', p. 117; Schwartz and Lerner, 'Illuminated Propaganda', pp. 167-9.

prophecies, and occasionally other comments elsewhere on the page. He also likely employed a separate illuminator to produce the images, as was common when creating manuscripts.[142] These must have been done during Henry's lifetime, as we find both the naming of the popes, and several notes written under the prophecies in Henry's hand. This shows that Henry was actively involved in the copying of the text and that he revisited it on occasion. Unlike the copy of *Genus nequam*, the *Ascende calve* is written in Henry's hand, but it only contains the text of the last five units of the prophecy. Interestingly, Henry's copy of the *Ascende calve* names the tenth pope as Clement VI (1342-52), rather than Benedict XII (1334-42). It is hard to know whether this was an active change made by Henry to reflect the time he was writing, or whether his model copy also possessed this change, but it likely reflected the time in which he copied this text, given that in the *Genus nequam,* he gives the names of all the popes up to Gregory the XI (1370-1378), and also the name of the succeeding pope, Urban VI (1378-1389), while in the *Ascende calve* he stops at Clement VI. Henry also chose to omit the images that appear in all other extant copies of the *Ascende calve,* making it a particularly unique version of the prophecy not seen elsewhere. The omission of images from the *Ascende calve* but not in the *Genus nequam* is hard to quantify. Possibly, it may have come from the amount of space available to Henry; the manuscript is made up of 12 quires, with other prophecies having been recorded after the *Ascende calve.* One would assume, however, that if Henry had wanted the images, he would have provided space before recording other prophecies. So, we can assume that either Henry's *Ascende calve* model also possessed no images, or that Henry made a specific choice not to include them. Either way, the copying of both these papal prophecies, despite their similarities, suggests that Henry was keenly interested in both of the texts for their apocalyptic merit and that he was willing to entertain beliefs in the popes being intricately connected with the end of the world.

Henry's copy of the *Ascende calve* clearly shows his interest in the apocalypse. Henry records the last five popes before the end of the world, labelling one of them as Clement VI, while the others are given more vague titles such as *de papa futuro post eum* and *de ultimo papa.*[143] It is, most likely, that Henry recorded his copy sometime between 1342 and 1352, as he otherwise would have likely included the names of other popes after Clement VI had he known them. Henry also evidently appeared to be interested only, in this case, in the last five popes before the end times, as these are the only ones recorded. Schwartz and Lerner have

[142] C. de Hamel, *Medieval Craftsmen: Scribes and Illuminators* (London, 1992), p. 5.

[143] MS 404, f. 41r.

argued that Henry possibly aimed to record the other units at a later date. There are a few pages before the start ff. 40-v that are empty, suggesting that this is where he was to record the previous ten units.[144] If this is true, then possibly Henry had limited access to the exemplar, perhaps because he saw it on his travels around England; the lack of images which would have required the skills of a separate illuminator further suggests that Henry saw the copy on his travels. These may have included monasteries and houses in Babwell, King's Lynn, Hulme and Elmswell.[145] But moreover, the recording of only the last five popes seems to highlight where Henry's priorities lay. For Henry, these prophecies were an expectation of what was to happen, and Henry most likely concurred with the unit on Clement VI enough to have believed that they were worth recording, and were in some parts true.

2. 3. 1. Depictions of the Papacy

Henry's copy of *Ascende calve* is positive in its depiction of Clement VI. He is described as being,

> 'A lover of the crucified one, a cultivator of peace, high in talent, attempting lofty things.'[146]

This is surprising given the negative view of Clement VI, and the papacy, more widely in England during the fourteenth century. Clement V (1304-1315) was the first pope to move the papacy from Rome to Avignon, a move widely criticised in England where it was widely believed this put the papacy and the Church at the mercy of the French king.[147] By the time of the papacy of Clement VI, this had been exacerbated by the Hundred Years War with the papacy unable to carry out its traditional role of mediator between England and France effectively, due to their move to Avignon in France, and the personal relationship that Clement VI fostered with France.[148] Moreover, the fourteenth century saw an increasing struggle over ecclesiastical appointments between England and the papacy, which did nothing to improve the popularity of the Avignonese popes there.[149] The passing of the Statute of

[144] Schwartz and Lerner, 'Illuminated Propaganda', p. 185.

[145] Rouse, 'Boston Buriensis', p.492. For a list of libraries that he may have visited, see: M. R. James, 'The List of Libraries Prefixed to the Catalogue of John Boston and the Kindred Documents', *Collectanea Franciscana* II (1922), pp. 37-60.

[146] MS 404, f. 41r. 'Amato[r] crucifixi, cultor pacis, alt[us] ingenio ardua attemptans.'

[147] C. Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England 1400-1530* (London and New York, 1996), p. 3.

[148] D. Green, *The Hundred Years War: A People's History* (New Haven and London, 2014), p. 64; B. Bombi, *Anglo-Papal Relations in the Early Fourteenth Century: A Study in Medieval Diplomacy* (Oxford, 2019), p. 78.

[149] Green, *The Hundred Years War,* pp. 64-5.

Provisions (1351) within the lifetime of Clement VI, which forbade petitions or acceptance of papal appointments to ecclesiastical benefices, illustrates the turbulent relationship between the two powers, and the push for English independence under the French popes.[150] Despite this, Henry still held a positive view of Clement, as can be seen through the prophecy connected with Clement's pontificate. This may have been because of Clement's former background as a Benedictine monk, which may have resonated with Henry. Members of the Benedictine orders often shared a sense of spiritual fraternity which separated them from the secular world.[151] This is not to say that the Benedictines were uninvolved in political and secular life, but rather that their relationships with others in their order could often be coloured by this sense of fraternity. As such, Henry's depiction of Clement may have been influenced by his loyalties to the Benedictine pope, rather than by his inherent 'Englishness.'

Further, Clement's efforts to broker peace between the warring countries may have influenced Henry's opinion of him.[152] Clement's letters to the kings of France and England emphasised the need for peace, especially as the war interfered with the papal role of overseeing the salvation of souls, and the need for a crusade against Turkish invaders in the east of the Mediterranean.[153] This opinion was similarly endorsed by Thomas Hoccleve and shows that not all English subjects agreed wholeheartedly with the continuation of the war.[154] Henry may have counted himself among them, and his description of Clement VI likewise demonstrates that he thought positively of Clement VI for his attempts at securing peace. At the very least, Henry saw Clement as having fulfilled the roles ascribed to him in the *Ascende calve*.[155] The presentation of Clement's papacy in the *Ascende calve,* and Henry's support of this meant that the final four popes were represented in a way that Henry most likely accepted would be true of the future popes.

For the final four popes, one is written about positively, one in a neutral tone, and the final two as being destructive figures. Here, the text reflects the Joachite idea of the

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[150] Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England,* p. 3.

[151] Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages,* pp. 127-129.

[152] D. Wood, '*Omnino Partialitate Cessante:* Clement VI and the Hundred Years War', in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *The Church at War* (London, 1983), p. 180.

[153] Wood, '*Omnino Partialitate Cessante',* pp. 180-2, 188.

[154] A. McHardy, 'The English Clergy and the Hundred Years War', in W.J. Sheils (ed.), *The Church at War* (London, 1983), p. 175.

[155] D. Wood, *Clement VI: The Pontificate and Ideas of an Avignon Pope* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 7.

dissolution of the papacy, and its corruption concurrent with the beginnings of the apocalypse. Joachim argued that as the world reached its end, the Church as an institution would go into decline in favour of two contemplative orders, who would more closely resemble Christ through the use of apostolic poverty.[156] As such, the *Ascende calve* represents this decline through the representations of the popes becoming more ineffective in their ability to lead the Church. The text may also reflect criticisms of the papacy and the want for reform, and by showing the papacy as in decline, it highlights the growing resentment of the papacy in late-medieval England. The papacy had faced weakened authority in fourteenth-century England for its pro-French stance, as well as continued opposition to papal provisions. Further, Parliament also passed the Statute of Praemunire (1353) which stopped appeals to papal courts in situations pertaining to the royal prerogative.[157] The *Ascende calve,* then, acted as a critique of the dominion and bureaucracy of the papacy, which encouraged nationalistic sentiments for England among its audience.[158] Henry evidently had mixed views of the papacy, as while he may have thought neutrally, or perhaps even positively of Clement VI's pontificate, Henry likely saw the papacy as a temporary institution, where its current importance mattered little as it would not survive the coming apocalypse.

The 'ultimo papa' (the final pope) is shown in the text as 'final wild beast, terrible to look upon, which will draw down the stars', a representation of the Great Red Dragon of the Apocalypse who is said to bring down a third of the stars with his tail (Rev. 12:3-4).[159] In this case, the popes become apocalyptic figures in themselves, with the corruption of the papacy as the reason for its dissolution. Further, the text juxtaposes the role of the papacy as God's representative on Earth with its future role as arbiter of the end times akin to the Antichrist. This is particularly interesting as many later Joachite texts relied on the idea of an 'Angelic Pope' who would act as the being by which the spiritual revolution would be achieved.[160] Henry's copy of the *Ascende calve,* however, counters this, despite the text's Joachite underpinning of the text, with the papacy continuing to decline to its lowest point before its dissolution. Perhaps, it was expected that there would be a continued conflict with the

[156] Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy,* p. 258.

[157] Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England,* p. 3.

[158] B. McGinn, 'Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist', *Church History,* 47/2 (1978), p. 159.

[159] MS 404, f. 41r. 'Hec est fera ulti[ma] aspectu t[e]rribilis, q[ui] detrahet stellas.'

[160] Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future,* p. 76.

papacy, and it was likely that he continued to reflect on this text with the beginnings of the Western Schism in 1378, heightening his beliefs that the conflicts with the papacy were part of a larger cosmic battle against the evil of the Antichrist.

Henry's copy of the *Genus nequam* is more ambiguous in its expectation of conflict with the papacy. The final pope represented in Henry's *Genus nequam* is Urban VI. In other copies of the *Genus nequam,* just like in the *Ascende calve,* the final unit describes the final pope as a beast, one akin to that in Revelation who will signal the coming of the apocalypse. In Henry's copy, the usual prophecy and motto are absent, and a unique picture of a beaver has been drawn.[161] Much has been made of this beaver image. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinki has argued that beavers were often representative of monastic penance in the medieval mind, and the image of Urban VI as a beaver showed the belief that Urban VI needed to perform penance in order to redeem himself for his failure as a papal leader.[162] This is made more likely given the conflict between Bury St. Edmunds and Urban VI at the time over the election of an abbot, in which Urban VI had attempted to overrule the monks' election in 1379.[163] Henry was alive in 1378 when Urban VI was consecrated as pope and may have felt disgruntled, believing that he was not acting correctly. At the very least, the beaver must have held some significance for Henry given that it is, to current knowledge, completely unique to any copy of the *Genus nequam*. The lack of accompanying text could also suggest that Henry was not sure what he expected to happen with the coming of the final pope, and therefore did not record anything. It is hard to tell, then, whether Henry did believe that Urban VI was the Antichrist, but Henry was evidently willing to keep his options open as to what would happen at the end.

More generally, however, Henry's copy of the *Genus nequam* shows a consideration for the involvement of the papacy in the apocalypse. Henry counts down the popes to the end of the world, labelling each of the images in his own hand in a way that suggests he believed that the end was soon to come. Under the last eight units (apart from the one on Urban VI), Henry recorded in his own hand the date of death and the number of years that each pope

[161] MS 404, f. 95r. For copies produced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a pope holding a papal tiara is shown (sometimes accompanied by an image of the beast with a human face.) See various examples: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce MS 88, f. 146v; New Haven, Yale University Library, Marston MS 225, f. 22r; Vatican City, Vatican Library, Vat. Lat. 3819, f. 149r.

[162] Blumenfeld-Kosinki, *Poets, Saints and Visionaries of the Great Schism,* pp. 176-7.

[163] Lerner, *The Powers of Prophecy,* p. 98.

lasted.[164] Henry wrote these notes starting with Pope Clement V (f. 91v), who was pope until 1314. Given that Henry was ordained in 1338 in Ely, and that ordination could not take place until the age of 24, it is likely that at the latest Henry was born in 1314, if not earlier if he was ordained later in life, meaning that Henry must have been born in the pontificate of Clement V.[165] Henry, then, evidently placed these notes at the end of each unit for the pontificates during which he was alive. In this way, Henry detailed his own life within the prophecy. It shows Henry charted his own life within the greater scheme of the apocalypse, and that he perhaps found this worldview valuable in understanding his life and the events that pertained to it. As shown earlier, given the Black Death's impact on the Bury St. Edmunds community, it is possible that texts such as *Genus nequam* helped Henry understand his own experiences, and may even suggest that he saw his life as being part of the encroaching end times.

Henry made a particularly interesting note in the *Genus nequam* under the passage relating to Clement V. This states,

> 'That pope sweated very much over the collecting of treasures and the construction of a camp. He destroyed [and] condemned the order of the Templars. But he ordained the 'decretalium' and was the first of all the popes to transfer the papal court from Rome to Avingnon, in Gaul, near to the Rhone. Which thing, done either with divine approval or by human daring…wonderful [miraculum]. He died in AD 1313, and sat in the papacy for 12 years.'[166]

The remark that Clement V's role in moving the papacy in Avignon is quite surprising if one is to translate 'mirandum' as wonderful, as it gives the impression that he supported this move. More so, given that this move had been frowned upon by many living in England. The 'wonderful (mirandum)' though can also be translated as strange, or occasionally has been used in other Latin texts as surprising.[167] As such, it is hard to say with any certainty whether

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[164] MS 404, ff. 91v-94v.

[165] Rouse, 'Bostonus Buriensis', p. 480; ODNB records Henry's birth at being around 1314: Rouse, 'Kirkestede, Henry', *ODNB* (2004).

[166] MS 404, f. 91v. 'Iste p[a]p[ae] c[ir]c[a] thesauros colligendos [e]t castra [con]st[ru]enda pl[ur]im[um] i[n]studa[v]it ordine[m] te[m]plarior[um] dest[ru]xit da[m]pnav[it]. A[utem] decr[e]taliu[m] ordi[n]avi[t] [e]t p[ri]m[us] o[m]n[i]u[m] p[a]p[arum] papale[m] curia[m] de Roma usq[ue] vie[n]enam sive Avynione[m] i[n] Gallia iux[ta] Rodanu[m] t[ra]nstulit. Q[uo]d f[a]c[tu]m sive d[iv]ino nutu sive hu[m]ano ausu [contr]agerere est mirandu[m]. Obi[i]t a[nno] d[omi]ni 1313 [e]t sedit i[n] p[a]p[a]tu a[n]nis 12.' Here the 'decretalium' likely refers to the *Constitutiones Clementis V.*

[167] Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources online, <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/> [accessed 16th March 2023.]

this was meant positively, neutrally or negatively. At the very least, Henry was evidently surprised at the amount that Clement V was able to accomplish during his nine-year reign, referencing the destruction of the templars and the creation of the 'decretalium', highlighting his religious and legalistic gains. His reflection on whether the acts were committed under God's command or his own may have led to some hesitancy over whether the papacy's move to Avignon was the correct one.

Moreover, the text in the prophecy presents Clement V in a positive light, and as such, Henry may be taking from its lead. The text reads,

> 'From where you formed humans, I have proclaimed, they will suffer, and there will come into being a man who restrains sense, a very old and white-haired man, having sense but coming on two accounts. You will take the seven pleasures of the species, which are to be broken in pieces. and shed the vile blood. You graciously spread out your hands to the lord for victory and you received the reward in the end of your sceptre.'[168]

The reference to breaking the seven pleasures and receiving the reward in the end of the sceptre highlights the power and grace of Clement V and the esteem in which Henry may have held him. The shedding of blood in this prophecy is not to be interpreted negatively, but in cleansing the world of those who are 'vile' or sinful. Such a positive representation of Clement V, then, highlights that Henry likely saw Clement V as a pious, Christian figure, against the political norms of his day. If so, Henry may be echoing earlier views towards the Avignon papacy, where relations between the papacy and England under Edward I and II remained friendly, and those uninvolved in political discourse in these years seldom remarked negatively on the move to Avignon from Rome.[169] Further, the Benedictines continued to flourish in both pro- and anti-Avignon countries, suggesting that the views of individual Benedictines on the papacy had little impact on their continued success within both England and other European countries.[170] For Henry, it seems that the move to Avignon

[168] MS 404, f. 91v. 'P[ro]ph[ec]ia de d[omi]no p[a]p[a] Clem[en]te V. Bona gr[aci]a.
Unde homine[m] figurasti a[n]nu[n]ciavi pacie[n]t[ur], [e]t sensu[m] refrena[n]s, fiet multu[m] senex [e]t canus h[abe]ns se[n]sum, veniens au[tem] dupplicit[er]. Volupt[aci]o[n]es sepcies, voluntas, co[n]dimis[ti] confringe[n]das ad i[n]vice[m] [e]t effus[i]o[n]es vili sa[n]guinu[m] effunde[n]das. Tu p[ro] victoria expandisti manus d[omi]n[o] gr[ati]ose [e]t b[ra]viu[m] accepisti i[n] fine sceptri.'

[169] K. Plöger, *England and the Avignon Popes: The Practice of Diplomacy in Late Medieval Europe* (London, 2005), p. 23.

[170] Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages*, p. 266.

was probably seen positively, although whether this is a reflection of general sentiments towards Clement V in the early years of the Avignon papacy, or a personal view written later and not shared by many later Englishmen, it is hard to say with any certainty.

Henry is also shown to be interested in the dissolution of the Templars in France, and their prosecution in England.[171] The Templars had been accused of various heresies, including sodomy, worshipping of idols and denying Christ.[172] Reactions in England appear mixed, with the king himself disbelieving the charges until receiving a papal bull, *Pastoralis praeeminentiae,* in December 1307, but English chroniclers, on the whole, believed these accounts.[173] It is evident that Henry believed similarly in the stories of the Templars' heresy, and he found this compelling in terms of viewing Clement V positively. It is interesting, however, that when viewing the following unit, on John XIII (1316-1334), Henry makes no personal comment on John's suppression of the Spiritual Franciscans, despite the acknowledgement that they similarly held heretical views regarding apostolic poverty.[174] Part of this may have come from Henry's opinion of the Spiritual Franciscans, as he likely supported them through his interest in Joachimism, or at least did not view them as inherently heretical. However, perhaps it may be that he did not want to contradict the *Genus nequam* which viewed Clement V in a positive light, but John XXII in a negative light. For example, the text on John XXII includes such references as,

> 'Woe to you, seven-hilled city…Then the fall and destruction of your powerful men and of those who judge injustly…And justly shall he fall [into] the deep pit. And most greatly blameworthy advisor of death [is] the priest whose name is John.'[175]

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[171] MS 404, f.91v. 'Iste p[a]p[ae] c[ir]c[a] thesauros colligendos [e]t castra [con]st[ru]enda pl[ur]im[um] i[n]studa[v]it ordine[m] te[m]plarior[um] dest[ru]xit da[m]pnav[it].'

[172] G. Mollat, *The Popes at Avignon 1305-1378* (Toronto and New York, 1949), p. 233.

[173] J. S. Hamilton, 'King Edward II of England and the Templars', in J. Burgtorf, P. F. Crawford and H. J. Nicholson (eds.), *The Debate on the Trial of the Templars 1307-1314* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 193-4; S. Menache, *Clement V* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 210-1.

[174] Kolpacoff Deane, *A History of Medieval Heresy and Inquisition,* pp. 117-8.

[175] Genus nequam, MS 404, f. 92r. P[ro]ph[ec]ia de d[omi]ni p[a]p[a] Joh[an]ne XXII. Potestas.
Ve tibi civitas septicollis. Q[u]in K. l[ite]ra i[n] manib[us] tuis. Tunc ap[ro]pinq[ua]bit cas[us] [e]t destruct[i]o tuor[um] pote[n]tu[m] [e]t iudica[n]tiu[m] i[n]iusticia[m]. Qui h[abe]t digitos suos falca[n]tes. Qui e[st] falx desertitudinis [e]t i[n] altissima[m] blasphemabit. Qui T. K. tt. E. f. i. tt. Ysaachios cui copam cedis sang[ui]nis Ioh[n]is bona gr[ati]a, Co[n]sta[n]tin[us] paup[er]is. Vide a[utem] tu qui s[an]cta consideras [e]t s[an]c[t]a

However, while not explicitly, the text still condemns John XXII's suppression of the Spiritual Franciscans through its reference to John XXII judging 'injustly' and that his actions have caused him to become a 'blameworthy advisor of death.' In such a way, the prophecy may have provided comfort for Henry in that it reflected his possible religious and political views. As such, Henry framed his comments and labelled the prophecies in such a way as to endorse the popes that he viewed particularly favourably, and these were also similarly endorsed within the text of the prophecy. The prophecy, then, became a lens through which Henry could view the political and religious situation of the day, and understand it in a more apocalyptic light.

Further to this, Henry believed that the *Genus nequam* was important to understanding the world as he went to the effort to instruct another monk to illustrate his copy, and dedicated a page for each unit. Henry must have believed that the images contained information and interpretation that would not have been present in the text itself.[176] The lack of space given to each unit in the *Ascende calve,* and to some extent the lack of images, may suggest that Henry held the *Genus nequam* in higher esteem. Moreover, this prophecy is in fact the only prophecy with images in the entirety of the *Prophetiae,* suggesting that these images were integral to this specific prophecy and that they were highly valued in Henry's eyes because they could help elucidate the text they were attached to. The section on John XXII, for example, has the subtitle, 'power' and the image shows a papal throne, perhaps signifying the papal power that John XXII held in his reign. It is possible that they also had other meanings that may have been clear to Henry, but have been lost to us given that the complete context and life of Henry cannot be fully reconstructed. For the monks, and clergy that may have later come into contact with this prophecy, the images allow them to view and understand it in several ways, given their indistinct nature.

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fere[n]s s[upe]r hum[er]u[m] ne pulvis tuis fiat obp[ro]briu[m]. [E]t bara[th]rum p[ro]funde[m] iuste i[n]cidet. [E]t maxime vitup[er]abil[is] co[n]siliarius mortis pontifex cu[ius] nom[en] I'o cor[um].'

[176] J. Green, *Printing and Prophecy: Prognostication and Media Change 1450-1550* (Michigan, 2012), p. 95.

Figure 2.3: Pope Clement V with a dog, several flags in the background while hands gesture to the image. MS 404, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, f. 91v. Copyright: Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.[177]

The images could be adapted to the owner of the prophecy; for example, the image in the unit on Clement V details the pope, presumably, Clement V himself holding a scroll representing a papal bull, standing next to a dog, with three standards with flags in the background, and two hands gesturing to the scene as if to emphasise the majesty of the pope. In many of the other copies of the *Genus nequam* a fox is used, and a fox is also used in the corresponding image in the *Oracles of Leo the Wise.*[178] It is simply possible that the exemplar the illustrator was using had the image of a dog rather than a fox. However, it is also likely that this was an intended change. Dogs were, for the most part, seen as loyal creatures, and their kinship with humans meant that they were believed to be able to tell those who were good from those who were deemed bad.[179] In contrast, foxes in the medieval world were often seen as deceitful creatures, and it was believed that this was the form that the devil took to deceive the faithful.[180] This is not a flattering creature to use if you are intending to portray Clement V in a particularly positive way. As such, the dog was a much better animal to use here to exemplify Clement's positive qualities and suggests his loyalty to Christianity and his role as pope. As can be seen, the adaptation of images allowed for the *Genus nequam* to possess fluidity and tell different stories for different audiences. For Henry, this let him represent each pope in the way that suited him best. In turn, it may also have influenced how

[177] https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/jy663fr8353

[178] Fleming, *The Late Medieval Pope Prophecies,* p. 106. Fleming mistakes the image in MS 404 to be that of a bear, but as can be seen from the picture, it is in fact a dog.

[179] K. Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 8-9.

[180] E. Morrison, *Book of Beasts: The Bestiary in the Medieval World* (Los Angeles, 2019), p. 22.

he viewed each of the popes, considering them through an apocalyptic lens in order to understand the end.

Ultimately, Henry's collection of papal prophecies can be seen as a response to the impending apocalypse, which he expected to happen possibly within his lifetime. Both the *Ascende calve* and the *Genus nequam* show that Henry was looking expectantly to the end, attempting to work out when and what would happen. In this case, Henry appears disinterested in what the majority of the text, especially in the *Genus nequam,* said about the past and present, and the emphasis was on the last few popes in each case. The choice to include images in his copy of the *Genus nequam* and not in his copy of the *Ascende calve,* suggests he was more interested in the *Genus nequam* than the *Ascende calve,* and this is further expressed through the notes attached to the latter half of the *Genus nequam* detailing the lives and deaths of each pope. This demonstrates that he continued to return to the prophecy throughout his life – such close involvement with these prophecies indicates that Henry personally connected his life with the coming end and that he may have genuinely believed in the imminent end of the world.

2. 4. Conclusions

The *Prophetiae* can be seen as a culmination of a lifetime of work for Henry of Kirkstede. From consideration of the three prophecies discussed here, the *Columbinus Prophecy,* the *Ascende calve* and the *Genus nequam,* it shows a strong dedication to understanding and exploring the intricacies of apocalyptic thought. Henry evidently had an intense interest in the apocalypse, as can be seen through his constantly adding to and revising the prophecies in this manuscript throughout his life. By keeping a record of the popes and their lives, Henry can be seen to have keenly observed the situations of his day to understand and reflect on his own life. It is likely that the effect of the Black Death on Henry's personal circumstances, the deaths of at least 18 other monks living in Bury St. Edmunds, affected how he viewed and understood apocalyptic rhetoric and may help explain why he was drawn to quite radical forms of apocalyptic prophecy.[181] The selections of prophecy and comments which accompanied them suggest that the apocalypse was both an intellectual and personal pursuit for Henry. The solely apocalyptic tone presented in the contents of the *Prophetiae* suggests the intense significance that the apocalypse played in Henry's mind.

[181] Rouse, 'Kirkestede, Henry', *ODNB* (2004).

Henry's attraction to pseudo-Joachite material is apparent when looking at these prophecies, although his interest lay more in their descriptions of what would happen at the end of the world, rather than any specific intricacies regarding accurate predictions regarding the end date of the world, or the concordance between the Old and New Testaments. The differences between the texts and the implications of these do not appear to have bothered Henry, as he copied them nevertheless and, on at least one occasion, noted their inconsistencies.[182] His demeanour is that of acceptance, without feeling the need to warn or evoke fear. It is a far cry from the texts created by authors such as Wulfstan, writing three hundred years earlier.[183] Both the *Columbinus Prophecy* and both copies of the Pope Prophecies provided Henry with ideas of when and what would happen during the apocalypse, and it is this that seems to have attracted him to the texts in the first place. [184] Henry's interest in the apocalypse appears personal; perhaps his life experiences as an abbot during the plague years made him more susceptible to apocalyptic thought than those that came after him.

It is hard to say if there was any specific reason why Henry copied and examined this material. Much of the material here is ambiguous and complex, and so it cannot be said with any certainty whether Henry held specific apocalyptic beliefs or any radical notion of reformation and renewal of the Church as encouraged in Joachite rhetoric.[185] This compilation suggests that Henry had little interest in self-improvement, or that of society, and so his prophecies do not call for change or reform, rather the emphasis is placed on the imminent breakdown of the world. The *Genus nequam* shows that Henry most likely believed that the papacy would not have a great role to play in the future of Christianity, and this might even suggest a reversion of the Church to that of the early days of Christianity.[186] Nor did his position as a monk impact his ability to criticise the Church where he felt it was

[182] Lerner, *The Power of Prophecy,* pp. 95-6.

[183] Wulfstan, 'The Sermon to the English', *The Homilies of Wulfstan,* ed. and trans. Dorothy Bethurum, pp.255-277; Wulfstan, 'Sermo Lupi ad Anglos', ed. Melissa Bernstein, <https://web.archive.org/web/20081105112615/http://english3.fsu.edu/~wulfstan/noframes.html> [accessed 20th April 2023.]; Anonymous, *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts,* ed. and trans. D. G. Scragg (1992); Anonymous, *The Blickling Homilies,* trans. R. Morris (2000); E. Duncan, 'Fears of the Apocalypse: The Anglo-Saxons and the Coming of the First Millennium', *Religion & Literature,* 31/1 (1999), p. 16, 22.

[184] Fleming, *The Late Medieval Pope Prophecies,* p. 48.

[185] Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman,* p. 163.

[186] MS 404, ff. 41r, 88r-95r.

needed, even if we are unsure of what actions he believed should be taken. It can be said, however, that Henry did believe that the apocalypse would happen sometime in the future, even if this was not imminent within his lifetime. As such, the recording of these prophecies for himself, and maybe with an eye for his future English audience, would allow others to study the apocalypse and keep it in mind while living in the contemporary time.[187] Such studying may have helped Henry understand the world around him, and fit his time within the greater construct of salvation history. Unlike other apocalyptic material shown later in this thesis, these texts do not make individuals aware of the Last Judgment, or the need for salvation for one's soul.[188] Rather, for Henry and possibly for the manuscript's subsequent audiences, these texts elucidated or explained the events and process of the apocalypse, rather than being an exhortation for change. This may have provided a different perspective for their audience, who would have been used to the apocalypse being used morally to challenge them to act better.[189]

To conclude, Henry held apocalyptic thought in great importance, and the *Prophetiae* is proof of his curiosity in such matters, as well as his curiosity in the current state of the world. Henry was likely attracted to these prophecies because of their claims, and the possibility to use them to understand and reflect on his life, and the life of England more broadly. The political and religious implications for the prophecies chosen here may have influenced Henry to write them down, as they would have provided a record of England within an apocalyptic context, and clues as to the future. Fundamentally, however, Henry's *Prophetiae* reflected his own views of the apocalypse – inevitable, necessary, and of great interest.

[187] Gottfried, *Bury St. Edmunds*, p. 212

[188] In particular, see the sections on the Carthusian Middle English *Apocalypse*, and the objects mentioned in chapter 4.

[189] R. Boenig, 'The Apocalypse in Medieval England', in M. A. Ryan (ed.), *A Companion to the Premodern Apocalypse* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 326-7.

3. The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius

The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, also sometimes called the *Revelationes*, is a prophetic text, produced first in the mid-to-late seventh century but continuing to be retold and reshaped until the later Middle Ages.[1] The text first traces the lines of succession from Adam and Eve, presenting the rise and fall of numerous great kingdoms, and the ongoing conflicts between the Israelites, known later as the kingdom of the Romans (or Christians), and the Ishmaelites, also referred to as the Saracens. The prophecy predicts that the Ishmaelites will rise again, and many Christians will either suffer under their command or altogether fall away from Christianity. The Last Roman Emperor will rise against them, defeating them and ushering in a time of peace. After a time, Gog and Magog will descend with their hordes, the Son of Perdition will appear, and the Last Roman Emperor will ascend the mountain at Golgotha to give his crown to Christ.[2] The Son of Perdition would be destroyed by Christ, and all will be judged to either sink into the depths of Hell or spend eternity in God's presence.

The original text was written in Syriac by a Christian likely living in North Mesopotamia, under the pseudonym of St. Methodius. The text ascribes itself to the fourth century, but on further inspection, it likely dates to the seventh century.[3] Michael Kmosko was the first to suggest that it was written in Mesopotamia, based on the discovery of a Syriac version of the text, which contained many features typical of a Mesopotamic origin, and this view has had widespread acceptance by scholars working on Byzantine apocalypticism.[4] Despite these origins, the *Apocalypse* appealed to an audience outside of Mesopotamia and was quickly translated into numerous different languages including an authoritative Greek version that became particularly notable and into Latin.[5] The Latin version appears to have been translated from the Greek, itself a faithful adaptation of the original Syriac, between 710

[1] Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 112-3.

[2] The Son of Perdition was often used to refer to the Antichrist in the Middle Ages, based on a passage from II Thess. 2:3-12. For more information, see: K. L. Hughes, 'The Formation of Antichrist in Medieval Western Christian Thought', in C. McAllister (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Apocalyptic Literature* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 251-269.

[3] B. Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo Methodius & An Alexandrian World Chronicle* (London, 2012), p. vii.

[4] P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkley, 1985), pp. 24-5. For a discussion on the Mesopotamic origin of Pseudo-Methodius, see pp. 26-33. See also: M. Kmosko, 'Das Rätsel des Pseudo-Methodius', *Byzantion* 6/1 (1931), pp. 273-296.

[5] K. Scarfe Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2004), p.141.

and 725, by a man who introduces himself in his own prologue to the text as Petrus Monachus.[6] From a palaeographical review of his version, it has been suggested that Petrus was from France. His version of the text was the one that spread throughout the Latin West.[7] The earliest copy of Pseudo-Methodius that we can situate in England is a Latin copy located at Salisbury Cathedral in the eleventh century, although it was possibly circulating in England before this. Pseudo-Methodius continued to circulate into the seventeenth century, highlighting its popularity through the ages.[8] New copies of Pseudo-Methodius have been discovered to this day.[9]

The Latin version of the *Apocalypse* has undergone a variety of revisions throughout the Middle Ages. The original translation carried out by Petrus is often referred to as Recension 1, which bears the closest resemblance to the Greek and Syriac versions of the text. Currently, only one copy of the Recension 1 text has been found in England, Salisbury Cathedral Library, MS 165, ff. 11-22.[10] By comparison, Recension 2, an edited version of the *Apocalypse* was much more popular in medieval England. This version is much shorter, lacking many of the passages contained within the original, and altered parts of the text to appeal to a new audience. Several Recension 2 manuscripts date from the eighth century, although not from England, which would suggest an overlapping tradition between the two recensions in the early medieval period.[11] By the late medieval period, however, the preference for Recension 2 was clear because of the sheer number of copies being produced at this time. An example of a Recension 2 copy, in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS

[6] C. Grifoni and C. Ganther, 'The Third Latin Recension of the *Revelationes* of Pseudo-Methodius – Introduction and Edition' in V. Wisser, V. Eltschinger and J. Heiss (eds.), *Cultures of Eschatology, Vol. 1: Empire and Scriptural Authorities in Medieval Christian, Islamic and Buddhist Communities* (Berlin, 2020), p. 197.

[7] Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages,* p. 113.

[8] B. McGinn, 'Portraying the Antichrist in the Middle Ages', in W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Leuven, 1988), p. 18.

[9] M. W. Twomey, 'The Revelationes of Pseudo-Methodius and Scriptural Study at Salisbury in the Eleventh Century', in C. D. Wright, F. M. Biggs and T. N. Hall (eds.), *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill* (Toronto, 2004), p. 370.

[10] S. Pelle, 'The *Revelationes* of Pseudo-Methodius and "Concerning the Coming of the Antichrist" in British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D. XIV', *Notes and Queries,* 56/3 (2009), p. 328. See also: P. Hoare, *Salisbury Cathedral Library Catalogue of Manuscripts: A Provisional Upgrade of the 1880 Catalogue by Sir Edward Maunde Thompson* (2019), pp. 140-2.

[11] L. DiTommaso, 'The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius: Notes on a Recent Edition', *MEG,* 17 (2017), p. 316.

59, is examined in this thesis.[12] The third and fourth recensions of the *Apocalypse* are of little concern, as there are only a few of these copies, and they all pertain to the continent.[13]

Alongside the Latin recensions, copies of the *Apocalypse* in late-medieval England also circulated in Middle English. We know of three Middle English versions of the *Apocalypse*, two prose versions and a metrical verse version. Of the prose versions, one of these was thought to have been translated from Latin by John Trevisa, a contemporary of Wycliffe and well-known translator of the *Polychronicon.*[14] The second version survives solely in a fifteenth-century copy, likely translated and written by a Carthusian from northern England, and includes several images.[15] The northern dialect in this copy suggests that the translation was produced by one of the scribes of the manuscript with no other copies of this version of the *Apocalypse* having been found, although we cannot say for certain if this is a copy based on an earlier Middle English copy.[16] The final Middle English version is in verse, and while it is based on the Latin *Apocalypse*, also uses quotations from *Cursor Mundi* and Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*, in order to make its Middle-English translation.[17] Despite this, the fact that three separate translations were made of the *Apocalypse* suggests that there was an eagerness to make the *Apocalypse* more accessible among English readers, as well as illuminating the significance the seventh-century text still held in English society in the late Middle Ages.[18] The following discussion of manuscript copes explores the development of the *Apocalypse* in late medieval England and demonstrates that, while the text remained relatively faithful to its original Syriac counterpart, it was in some ways adapted and altered

[12] MS 59, ff. 141r-146r.

[13] M. Laureys and D. Verhelst, 'Pseudo-Methodius, *Revelationes:* Textgeschichte und Kritsche Edition. Ein Leuven-Groninger Forschungsprojekt', in W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Leuven, 1988), pp. 129-130.

[14] London, British Library, Harley MS 1900, ff. 21v-23v; D. C. Fowler, *The Life and Times of John Trevisa, Medieval Scholar* (Seattle and London, 1995), p. 118.

[15] London, British Library, Add. MS 37049, ff. 11r-16v; J. Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago, 2007), pp. 307-325.

[16] F. N. M. Diekstra, 'British Library MS 37049, fol.96r-96v: A mutilated tract on God's mercy and justice and material for its reconstruction', *English Studies,* 75 (1994), p. 214.

[17] London, British Library, Stowe MS 953; C. D'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version of the *Revelationes* of Methodius: With a Study of the Influence of Methodius in Middle-English Writings', *PMLA* 33/2 (1918), pp. 150-2.

[18] Laureys and Verhelst, 'Pseudo-Methodius, *Revelationes',* pp. 114-136. This gives a list of all Latin copies of Pseudo-Methodius, including all of those pertaining to England.

to fit a western audience. It will be shown that the *Apocalypse* was a multidimensional source which traversed both secular and clerical audiences and continued to be of interest throughout the late medieval era and beyond.

3. 1. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 59

MS 59 is a collection of historical and ecclesiastic documents, containing among them Pseudo-Methodius's *Apocalypse* Latin Recension 2. Montague Rhodes James has dated the earliest parts of the manuscript to the early fourteenth century, written in a single hand.[19] Parts of the manuscript, however, can be dated to much later, although it is hard to be precise regarding exactly when. The texts of Richard II's abdication and Henry IV's election are written in another hand, dating these parts of the manuscript to, at the very earliest, 1399. As well as the original hand in which the *Apocalypse* is written, it appears that there were a multitude of scribes working on the manuscript at different times. For example, the letter from the barons to Clement VI (ff. 234r-236v) is in a different hand, and separate from this is another hand which has written up the Statutes of Edward III (ff. 243v-244v). James conservatively predicts a total of seven different hands throughout MS 59 but concedes that there could have been more because of the close similarities between some of them.[20] This manuscript, therefore, may have been produced in quires and put together at a later date, and evidently had a very active life throughout the Middle Ages, being constantly updated and altered for current and future audiences.

It has been suggested that the manuscript came from West Langdon, Kent, which was home to the Premonstratensian canons.[21] There are several pieces of internal evidence for this. First is in the *Chronica pontificum et imperatorum* (ff. 99r-140v) which, in a comment inserted into the text by a scribe of MS 59, mentions the martyrdom of Thomas de la Hale of Dover in 1295, the patron of the abbey of West Langdon (f. 139v). The second is a marginal note in the MS 59's copy of the Merton Chronicles, which mentions that William de Aubervilla founded the Abbey of West Langdon in the year 1173.[22] The addition of this comment below the column of text in a separate hand suggests that the manuscript must have

[19] F. Liebermann, 'Reise nach England und Frankreich im Herbst 1877', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft,* 4 (1879), p. 35. For more information regarding the particulars of MS 59, see: James, *Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi,* no. 59.

[20] James, *Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi,* no. 59. See p. 124 for a rundown of scribal hands.

[21] James, *Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi*, no. 59. See p. 122.

[22] Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 59, f. 166r.

belonged to someone with close ties to the abbey. Finally, recorded in the manuscript is the proceedings of a visit to Bayham Abbey by the abbot of West Langdon (ff. 237-241r), suggesting an interest in the area in particular. It is likely that, at the very least, the manuscript had connections to West Langdon Abbey, if it was not actually produced by the abbey itself.

Other internal evidence from the manuscript hints more generally at its compilation somewhere in the south-east. Documents contained in the manuscript which support this conclusion include a charter of liberties granted to Surrey (ff. 193r-v), evidence of the liberty and immunity of the church of St. Martin's in Dover (ff. 195r-196v), a list of wardens of Dover Castle (ff. 180v-181v) and a list of services owed by barons to the 'cinque' ports, a group of coastal towns in Kent, Sussex and Essex (f. 180v). Most other documents in the manuscript appear to be less specific, for example, various statutes or papal bulls. Grants and confirmations of privileges by Anglo-Saxon kings are more historical in nature and therefore were probably included for reasons other than their importance locally. Therefore, it can be said with some certainty that the manuscript was produced in the south-east, with a possibility of tying it directly to Langdon Abbey, Kent.

Many abbeys contained a chancery where charters and other documents were composed, copied, and recorded by scribes working under the role of a precentor.[23] It is possible that MS 59 was produced by numerous scribes under the direction of a precentor, to be kept in the library for use by the precentor and other canons at the abbey. If we assume that MS 59 does have a connection with Langdon Abbey, it may have been produced on-site. Unfortunately, there are no library lists of West Langdon available to us, although we do know that other Premonstratensian abbeys had libraries, and there is evidence that at least some of the churches, such as Sulby and Hagnaby, were involved in manuscript production, meaning that West Langdon may have been among them.[24] A plan for how Langdon Abbey may have looked was drawn up by John Hope in the nineteenth century, who suggested that the abbey contained no chancery or library.[25] In part, the rooms and what they were used for have been assumed based on an inspection of 17 other Premonstratensian abbeys from the Middle Ages, but Hope himself admits that there was no uniformity between

[23] D. Preest and J. G. Clark, *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham 1376-1422* (Woodbridge, 2005), p.6.

[24] J. A. Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 133, 164.

[25] W. H. St. John Hope, 'On the Praemonstratensian Abbey of SS. Mary and Thomas of Canterbury, at West Langdon, Kent', *Archaelogia Cantiana* 15 (1883), pp. 62-3.

Premonstratensian abbeys, and, 'in fact, I know of no two even similar ones.'[26] It is possible that Langdon Abbey had a library, chancery or scriptorium, or likewise held manuscripts elsewhere. The abbey is known to have possessed its cartulary throughout the Middle Ages, further suggesting that they had some way to store quires and manuscripts.[27] It can be said that MS 59 did pertain to West Langdon, or at the very least, was produced and lent out within that part of Kent.

The manuscript is filled with political, ecclesiastical and historical documents, and these were evidently of interest to the Premonstratensians. Many of the texts covered both English and foreign politics, such as Martin of Opava's *Chronica Pontificum et imperatorum*, which gave parallel accounts of the lives of the popes and emperors, allowing the reader to understand the interlinking roles of the Church and Crown throughout history.[28] Other texts such as charters and papal bulls highlight the interest of the Premonstratensians in both the ecclesiastical and secular world. The changing scribal hands, and the addition of later documents from different years such as statutes and rulings, points to a constant use and reuse of the manuscript, as well as the importance for the Premonstratensians to be up to date with the latest knowledge on both a local and national level, in order to carry out their pastoral, administrative and at times, political, duties.[29] Much of the material contained in the manuscript is legalistic. The Premonstratensian Order were known to be particularly adept in legal discourse, and appeared to favour this over the new devotional literature circulating in England.[30] Approximately one in five of the canons who attended university went to study either canon or, on occasion, civil law, highlighting the role that this manuscript may have played in their education.[31] MS 59, then, may have been produced in order to serve the purposes of some of the members of the Premonstratensian Order, and support further education of the canons. Langdon Abbey hosted between 8-24 canons in 1475-1500, and similar numbers were likely present in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.[32] This

[26] John Hope, 'On the Praemonstratensian Abbey', p. 62.

[27] W. Page, 'Houses of Premonstratensian Canons: The Abbey of West Langdon', in W. Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Kent* (Vol. 2, London, 1926), pp. 169-72.

[28] W. Ikas, 'Martinus Polonus' Chronicle of the Popes and Emperors: A Medieval Best Seller and its Neglected Influence on Medieval English Chroniclers', *English Historical Review,* 116 (2001), p. 329.

[29] Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order,* p.185.

[30] Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order,* p. 172.

[31] Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order,* p. 170.

[32] Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order,* p. 51.

suggests that the manuscript had a small audience, but one which may have been very familiar with its contents and may have referred to it often.

The manuscript also contains several pseudo-historical documents, all of which are Eastern in origin. These include a letter from the famed 'Prester John' to the Byzantine emperor, Manuel I Komnenos (ff. 28r-31v) and a letter from Alexander the Great to Aristotle of India (ff. 31v-42v). Their inclusion in the same hand as the copy of Pseudo-Methodius, suggests that the scribe was familiar with Eastern Christian material and found them essential to the development of Christian history. The scribe may also have believed that these documents had some historical or legal value in the same way that the more recent charters and laws did.[33] Michael Twomey has argued that the *Apocalypse* was used as a patristic source for Old Testament history, and may partly explain why it was copied.[34] The *Apocalypse* lists the descendants and generations from Adam, and the copy in MS 59 takes special care to detail various groups and when they were in existence. The prologue states that the text 'is concerning the beginning of the age and the rules of the peoples and the end of the ages.'[35] As such, the document was important for what it could present about history, and what it could say about the future, and this made it worthy of copying in the eyes of the scribe. The prologue mentions St. Jerome, as well as Methodius, suggesting the importance of the text in terms of its connection to the patristic authors, even if it was actually produced after Jerome's death. To the scribe, the text was important because it spoke about the same things 'extolled very much in his [Jerome's] little works.'[36] To this end, the *Apocalypse* was important because it spoke both about the beginning and the end.

The next section of this chapter details the many alterations made to MS 59's copy of the *Apocalypse* from the Greek and Latin Recension 1 text. It demonstrates how the scribe made many alterations to both the past and future sections of the *Apocalypse* and how, in doing so, he emphasised the importance of certain passages, and further westernised the *Apocalypse* for its English readership.

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[33] A. Hiatt, *The Making of Medieval Forgeries: False Documents in Fifteenth-Century England* (London and Toronto, 2004), p. 30-1.

[34] Twomey, 'The Revelationes of Pseudo-Methodius', p. 370.

[35] MS 59, f. 141r. 'Id est de p[ri]ncipio seculi [e]t de regnis gentium [e]t fine secular[um] qu[a]e ilust[ri]s viror[um] beatus Jerominus in opusculis suis plurimu[m] collaudavit.'

[36] See above.

3. 1. 1. Abraham, Ishmael and the Saracens

MS 59, and the Latin Recension 2 more widely, suppressed the material concerning Abraham and Ishmael in the *Apocalypse,* to distance Christians from Muslims. In Genesis, Abraham is said to be unable to have children with his wife, Sarah and instead has a child with his concubine, Hagar, who is named Ishmael (Genesis 16:1-15). Soon after, Abraham is visited by God who blesses him with another child, Isaac, the ancestor of the Jews (Genesis 17:15-19.) In the Middle Ages, the sons of Isaac were referred to as the Israelites, and likewise, the sons of Ishmael were considered Ishmaelites. By the time the *Apocalypse* was produced, these Ishmaelites were to be understood to be Muslims or Arabs.[37] This contrasted with how Christians saw themselves, as the New Israelites who were God's new chosen people, and as a result of this, it was their duty to rid the world of non-Christians.[38] Pseudo-Methodius reflected these beliefs by placing the Ishmaelites in the context of aggressors threatening the unity of Christendom, putting them in league with Gog and Magog.[39] This portrayal likely came about as a reaction to the Arab invasion of the Near East in the seventh century, and the increasing influence of Islam in previously Christian areas of the Eastern Roman Empire.[40]

The Latin Recension 2 including MS 59 does not refer to the story of Abraham and Hagar in its text, unlike that of the Greek version.[41] This alters the context of the Saracens, whereby they are not as closely associated as 'brothers' to the Israelites, used here to mean Christians. The copy in no way denies this context, and the Ishmaelites are in one line considered 'brothers' to the Christians, but the removal of Abraham and Ishmael from the *Apocalypse* helped distance Christians from Muslims as having any form of shared religious aspects and helps realign them with the minions of the Devil.[42] MS 59 also uses the word Saracen ('Saracenorum') more, where it appears a total of four times, as opposed to the

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[37] J. V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York, 2002), p. 11.

[38] M. Garrison, 'The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne', in Y. Hen and M. Innes (eds.), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 115.

[39] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, p.115; A. R. Anderston, *Alexander's gate, Gog and Magog, and the inclosed nations* (Cambridge, 1932), pp. 44-5.

[40] Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition,* p. 24. See also: G. J. Reinink, 'Ps-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam', in A. Cameron and L. I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Middle East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1999), pp. 153-168.

[41] Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* pp. 13-15.

[42] MS 59, f. 143r. 'S[e]c[un]d[u]m q[uo]d p[ro]misit deus Ismaeli q[uo]d e regione frat[re]m suor[um] figeret tab[er]nacula.'

Greek version where it does not appear at all, and in the Latin Recension 1, where it only appears once.[43] Often, Saracen was used as a replacement for Ishmaelite, suggesting that the view regarding how Muslims were understood changed over time; the traditional view was that Islam was a form of Christian 'heresy', whose divergence from Christianity was caused by Muhammad.[44] However, the onset of the Crusades saw many chroniclers portraying their battles as being against a pagan enemy, rather than against Christian heretics.[45] This narrative helped perpetuate the idea of God's newly chosen people, in which the Crusaders could see themselves as Christian apostles, fighting back against their pagan persecutors.[46] Evidently, it was felt that the battle against paganism should be emphasised to update Pseudo-Methodius, so that it could be brought in line with contemporary experiences regarding Saracens by subtly removing some of their original relations to Abraham.

Further, portraying Saracens as pagans fed into the narrative that the Saracens were sent as a punishment by God, because of Christian sin and unrepentance. This was based on the belief that God's chosen people would be given into the hands of their enemies if and when they acted against God (Judges 2:11-15). Because of this, there was an expectation that their pagan enemies existed in order to punish Christians for their sins, and the Saracens were seen as tools through which to accomplish this.[47] This punishment would be able to sort the righteous Christians, who would survive, from the 'bad' Christians, who would be killed by the Saracens.[48] As such, the Crusades, and wars with the Saracens more generally, were placed into an apocalyptic context, where defeating one's enemies ensured God's favourable judgment and a place in Heaven. Wars such as these could even, in some instances, be seen as a catalyst for the Second Coming of Christ.[49] This, in turn, helped explain the importance and popularity of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* as it was a text which propounded the evils of the Saracens and encouraged the continued need to fight against them.

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[43] Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* pp. 170-1.

[44] N. Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, 1960), p. 184.

[45] Tolan, *Saracens,* p. 109.

[46] Tolan, *Saracens,* p. 113.

[47] R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997), pp. 524-5.

[48] MS 59, ff. 144v-145r. 'Non p[ro]pt[er]ea misit deus has t[ri]bulat[i]ones sup[er] Christianos ut iusti deleantur qui Christi sunt crediturі set ut manis estent[ur] qui Christi sunt fidelissime crediturі.'

[49] Tolan, *Saracens,* p. 110.

This *Apocalypse* copy makes great efforts to depict the Saracens as barbaric and evil. It states that the Saracens 'were eating human bodies and the flesh of camels and drank the blood of cattle mixed with milk'.[50] The same sentiment is in both the Greek version, and in Latin Recension 1, possibly originating from the writings of Jerome who believed that the Saracens lived off the milk and meat of camels.[51] Despite a myriad of encounters with the Saracens through trade and crusading, stereotypical ideas regarding Saracen life as told by Jerome and Bede were similarly upheld throughout the later Middle Ages. For Christians, the Saracens must be barbarians if they were to act as a punishment from God for their sins. This is emphasised in the MS 59 copy:

> 'Truly, Christians do many unlawful things because they defile themselves most shamefully for that reason, a thing which is most disgraceful to say, God delivered those men to the hands of the Saracens.'[52]

While the earlier copies also contained this attitude, it appears to be particularly significant within this copy as it specifically twice blames Christians' inability to follow God's commandments for the Saracen's wrath.[53] These exhortation to act pious and penitent may have been useful for the Langdon Abbey Premonstratensians who likely had parishioners to tend to, as a reminder to serve faithfully and encourage his parishioners to do the same.[54]

The existence of the Saracens was a concern for the scribe, as was the expectation that the Saracens would be exterminated before the end of the world. In MS 59, the Saracens are mentioned as ruling again 'until the number of finite times', leaving the future open as to

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[50] MS 59, f. 143v. 'Unde corpora hominu[m] edebant [e]t carnes camelor[um] [e]t bibebant sanguinem iumentor[um] mixto lacte.'

[51] Jerome, *Vita Malchi: Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Christa Gray (Oxford, 2015), pp. 82-3. For more information regarding early medieval attitudes to Saracens, see: J. V. Tolan, '"A wild man, whose hand will be against all": Saracens and Ishmaelites in Latin Ethnographical Traditions, from Jerome to Bede', in W. Pohl, C. Gantner and R. Payne (eds.), *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300-1100* (London, 2012), pp. 513-530.

[52] MS 59, f. 144r. 'Faciunt eni[m] Christiani multa illicita quia maculant semet ip[s]os eo q[uo]d turpissimu[m] est [e]t ad dicendum p[ro]pt[e]rea t[ra]didit illos deus in manus Saracenor[um].'

[53] MS 59, f. 144r. 'Et tradet deus in man[us] eor[um] cuncta regna gentiu[m] p[ro]pt[er] peccata [e]t scelera que op[er]ati sumus cont[ra] dei precepta. Itaq[ue] t[ra]didit nos deus in manus barbaror[um] q[uod] obliti sumus precepta d[omi]ni [e]t p[ro]p[er]tea t[ra]didit nos pollutis barbaris.'

[54] Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order*, pp. 1-2.

when they would be defeated, and the end of the world would come.[55] This is opposed to the Greek version which specifically states that they would reign 'until the completion of seven weeks of years.'[56] By the time of the creation of this copy, the crusades were in the distant past and the Muslims still occupied much of the east. This was likely known to the scribe and yet he copied the text anyway, which suggests the scribe may have believed that conflict with Muslims may be ongoing until the apocalypse. In this copy, the presence of the Saracens was no longer connected with the immediacy of the Last Judgment as it had been upon the text's creation and early circulation.[57] Rather, the Saracens were reframed to be seen as a precursor more generally to the apocalypse, and as part of a greater narrative of good versus evil. Consequently, the defeat of the Saracens was shown as the overcoming of the tribulations at the end of the world, and a prelude to a period of peace and tranquillity for the Christians as written about by St. Jerome, which provided hope for the audience of the *Apocalypse* for a coming time of peace on Earth.[58]

3. 1. 2. Alexander and the Westernisation of the *Apocalypse*

The Latin Recension 2, including MS 59, does not mention Alexander the Great from its narrative of the *Apocalypse.* This is unsurprising given that Petrus also removed Alexander from his translation, and that it is most probable that it is this recension from which all English-made copies of the text descend.[59] However, this is not to suggest that the scribe did not know of Alexander, in fact, MS 59 contains a letter from Alexander the Great to Aristotle (ff. 31v-42v.) It appears, however, that Alexander was not a well-known figure in the West during the Early Middle Ages when Petrus was making his translation, and that a renaissance in Alexandrian literature only came about from the twelfth century onwards with the popularisation of *Roman d'Alexandre.*[60] Because of this, Alexander does not appear in many of the English copies of the *Apocalypse*, and there is no effort to reinsert him into the narrative. Here, the copy in MS 59, does not include the story of Alexander driving back the

[55] MS 59, f.143v. '[E]t non erit gens aut regnum q[uo]d eos possit expugnare us[que] ad num[er]um te[m]por[um] p[er]finitor[um].'

[56] Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* pp.16-17, paragraph 9.

[57] Tolan, Saracens, p. 49.

[58] R. E. Lerner, 'Refreshment of the Saints: the time after Antichrist as a station for earthly progress in medieval thought', *Traditio* 32 (1976), pp. 100-103.

[59] Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages,* p. 122.

[60] L. Harf-Lancner, 'Medieval French Alexander Romances', in D. Zuwiyya (ed.), *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2011), p. 201.

sons of Japheth and sealing them behind gates in the North.[61] The gate of the North is still mentioned, but instead, the focus is placed on its holding back the hordes of Gog and Magog.[62] This affects MS 59's *Apocalypse* copy in that it emphasises Gog and Magog, who appear when the devil is released from his prison after a thousand years as combatants against God during the tribulations.[63] This is as opposed to the Greek version of the text, which implies the reappearance of Gog and Magog, after their initial warring with Alexander.[64] Doing so reminds the reader that it was up to Christians to fight against Gog and Magog as agents of the devil and that their defeat would signal God's triumph over evil.

Further omissions, such as the marriage between Byzantia and Romulus Armelaus, and other later figures like Byzas, meant that Latin Recension 2 copies, such as MS 59, did not continue the genealogy present in much of the first half of the *Apocalypse.* After the recital of the wars between Nimrod, Chosdro, Japheth and Ham, MS 59 departs from the lineages present in the Syriac and Greek versions and instead centres on the conflict with the Ishmaelites.[65] The implication of the text on Greek genealogy ensured that the Byzantine Empire was seen as a continuation of the Roman Empire, and thus were the 'true' elect peoples chosen by God.[66] This could have proved unpopular for a Western Latin audience, who similarly saw the Western Roman Church as both the continuation of the Roman empire and the seat of Christendom, regardless of geographical location.[67] Latin Christians argued that even as far back as the reign of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, the Roman Church should be placed over all others, as referred to in the *Donation of Constantine.*[68] As such, removing this reasserted the 'natural' assumption that the Roman Church, and thus the

[61] Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* pp. 96-99 (paragraphs 4-8). The devil is released after a 1000 years is specified in Rev. 20:7.

[62] MS 59, f. 145v. 'Tu[n]c reserabuntur porte capsie in lateribus Aquilonis [e]t gentes ille cu[m] Gog [e]t Magog venient [e]t concucietur om[n]is terra pretimore eor[um] [e]t expavescent omnes homines qui habitant sup[er] faciem totius terre.'

[63] Douay-Rheims <https://www.drbo.org/chapter/73020.htm> [accessed 6th February 2023.]

[64] Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* pp. 26-7 (paragraph 10).

[65] MS 59, ff. 143r-v.

[66] E. Shay, *The Concept of the Elect Nation in Byzantium* (Leiden, 2018), p. 43.

[67] Whalen, *Dominion of God,* p. 12.

[68] F. Zinkeisen, 'The Donation of Constantine as Applied by the Roman Church', *The English Historical Review,* 9/36 (1894), pp. 627-629; Whalen, *Dominion of God,* p. 25. It should be noted that the Donation of Constantine was an entirely fictious document produced in the seventh-to-eighth centuries but was held up as genuine, and occasionally invoked by popes and the public alike.

Latin Christians, were God's chosen people, and thus would be victorious over their Saracen foes.

Additionally, from the time of the First Crusade, an emphasis had been placed on the reunification of the two churches, wherein Pope Urban II (1088-1099) stressed the similarities between the two Christian groups, according to a speech recorded by Guibert of Nogent.[69] This attitude of shared heritage can be seen within MS 59's *Apocalypse,* in which the Last World Emperor was referred to on one occasion as the 'King of the Romans and Greeks', bringing forth the idea that the Eastern and Western Churches were ultimately two sides of the same coin.[70] However, for the most part, the later medieval period saw an increased religious ambition to create one unified fold of peoples from pagans, Jews, Muslims and Eastern Christians under the rule of the Roman Church.[71] Because of this, the dominion of the Roman Church was to be reinforced. In MS 59, the Last Roman Emperor is referred to as the 'King of the Romans and Greeks' only once, while he is referred to as the 'King of the Romans' a total of six times.[72] By contrast, in the Latin Recension 1, he is referred to as the 'King of the Romans' four times, and 'King of the Greeks' twice.[73] Here, a picture is painted of the importance of the Roman Church in holding back the threat of heresy and paganism, as well as the significance of the Church in the events of the end of the world. Therefore, the removal of the Byzantine elements of the text meant that it resonated more with its now English audience, impressing onto them the importance of the Latin Christians in the end of the world sequence. As such, it repositioned its Western audience to be the true elect nation under God.

Further efforts to westernise the copy also included adding the 'Britones' among other Western countries who lived between the first and second Ishmaelite occupation.[74] Here, the

[69] Whalen, *Dominion of God,* p. 54.

[70] MS 59, f. 146r. 'Postea ascendet rex Romanor[um] [e]t Grecor[um] in Golgotha in eum locum in quo d[omi]n[i]s nost[er] Jesus Christus pro nobis crucem [e]t mortem sustinere dignatus est.'

[71] Whalen, *Dominion of God,* p. 151.

[72] MS 59, ff. 143v-146r. See: 'regno Romanorum' (twice), 'regnum Romanorum', 'Romanorum imperio', 'regi Romanorum', 'rex Romanorum'.

[73] Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* pp. 100, 102, 126, 128, 132.

[74] MS 59, ff. 143v-144r. 'Novem mille annis regnaveru[n]t hebrei [e]t a Romanis victi fueru[n]t. Babilonii q[uat]tour milia annor[um] regnaveru[n]t Macedonii regnu[m] pharcor[um] afflixeru[n]t armis Scithi [e]t indii supplices ad eos feceru[n]t aphros Hispanos, Gallos, G[er]manos, Suanos {Suavos?}, Britones, Belliricos armis adquieveru[n]t.'

scribe has added specific references that do not feature in either the Greek version or Latin Recension 1.[75] While these named countries do not have an important or substantial role in the narrative, their inclusion in the text still acted as a reminder to the reader that they, and their country, were involved in the greater scheme of history and revelation. This allows the Western audience to relate to a text that originally had a Byzantine audience, by acknowledging that the English also existed within this apocalyptic narrative. The text then continues to discuss what would happen to the Western countries upon the second advancement of the Ishmaelites. The text reads,

> 'France, Germany and Aquitaine will have been devoured by various conflicts; many will be led as captives. The Romans will be slaughtered and turn over in flight; the islands of the sea will be [turned] into destruction.'[76]

This further acted as a warning to the audience, that there was a real threat to their own Christian existence, and this evidence showed that the scribe believed violence against the Saracens was justified in order to preserve the Christian way of life. By doing so, the scribe warns his English audience to be vigilant against external threats, in order to preserve Christianity.

3. 1. 3. MS 59's *Apocalypse* and the Jews

There are a number of interpolations in MS 59's *Apocalypse* that are not present in either the Greek version or the Latin Recension 1. Most notable is the section about Enoch and Elijah, which includes references to the conversion of the Jews in the last days. The text states,

> 'After this, God will send two of his most sincere servants, Enoch and Elijah, who have been reserved in their testimony of him [the Son of Perdition], to prove him an enemy. And then the last will be the first, and the Jews will be about to believe.'[77]

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[75] Garstad's *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* includes both transcriptions and translations of the Greek and Latin Recension 1 *Apocalypse* (referred to by him simply as the 'Latin version' but refers to Petrus Monarchus in his introduction as being the translator of the Latin copy.) A search of this text electronically did not turn up the word 'Britones' or any similar derivatives (it should be noted that it did bring up results with regards to the Alexandrian World Chronicle, which is also translated within this book.)

[76] MS 59, f. 144r. 'Gallia, Germannia, Aquitannia variis preliis devorata erunt [e]t multi ex eis captivi ducentur. Romani in occisione eru[n]t [e]t conv[er]si in fugam insule maris erunt in dissolut[i]onam.'

[77] MS 59, f. 146r. 'Post hec mittet d[omi]n[u]s duos famulos suos sincerissimos Enoch [e]t Helias qui in eius testimonio reservati sunt ad arguandum ip[su]m inimicum. Et tu[n]c erunt novissimi p[ri]mi [e]t erunt crediturii iudei.'

This last phrase is then repeated a few lines later to emphasise the point.[78] The addition and repetition of these statements reflected long-standing apocalyptic attitudes about the Jews going back to the early Middle Ages, and as has been seen by similar suppositions in the texts analysed in the previous chapter.[79] These held prominence in Joachite texts but were also exacerbated during the Crusades, which saw intense violence against Jewish communities.[80] Crusading communities were drawn together because of their sense of Christian unity, which was encouraged by the papacy, and this strengthened the belief in one unified Christian body that must stand against its non-Christian foes.[81] While it was believed that the Saracens must be fought and defeated as shown through the battle against the forces of Gog and Magog, it was believed that during the end times, the Jews would be converted to Christianity and that this must occur for the Last Judgement to begin.[82] As such, the scribe endorsed this view of Jewish conversion in the end times, expounding it twice for his audience.

MS 59's *Apocalypse,* then, amalgamated traditional ideas about apocalyptic Jewish conversion into the Pseudo-Methodius framework. This is likely for two particular reasons. Firstly, the *Apocalypse* as a whole shared many overlapping features with Joachite apocalyptic thought, which became influential in changing some perceptions of the apocalypse, such as the popularisation of the Last World Emperor, and the expectation of Jewish conversion. It is not surprising, then, that later copies of the *Apocalypse* also reflected Joachite ideas, especially because of the connection between Joachim and the Crusades, which Joachim had endorsed until sometime after the Third Crusade.[83] After this time, Joachim preferred to favour the idea of sanctified monastic orders who would carry out the unification of eastern Christians with their Latin brothers, alongside the conversion of the Jews to Christianity.[84] Indeed, MS 59's *Apocalypse* mixes these two contrary ideas: keeping the context of the Crusades while developing the prominent idea of Jewish conversion before

[78] MS 59, f. 146r. 'Videntes autem cuncte ge[n]tes mendaciu[m] ip[su]m p[ro]fere[n]tem [e]t a sanctis dei confusum [e]t tu[n]c iudei erunt crediturі.'

[79] Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages,* p. 26.

[80] M. Gabriele, 'Against the Enemies of Christ: The Role of Count Emicho in the Anti-Jewish Violence of the First Crusade', in M. Frassetto (ed.), *Christian Attitudes Towards the Jews in the Middle Ages: A Casebook* (New York, 2006), p. 63.

[81] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision and Ritual Murder in Medieval Europe*, p. 18.

[82] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision and Ritual Murder,* p. 35.

[83] E. R. Daniel, 'Apocalyptic Conversion: The Joachite Alternative to the Crusades', *Traditio* 25 (1969), p.164.

[84] Daniel, 'Apocalyptic Conversion', p. 164.

the end times. This allowed the scribe to present Christianity in the end times as one unified body, drawing together Eastern and Western Christians, as well as reconciling with the Jews through their conversion to Christianity.

Secondly, Jewish conversion narratives were linked with the early development of the Premonstratensian Order. The *Opusculum de conversione sua* was written by Herman the Jew, a Jewish convert to Christianity, who joined first the Augustinian Order before then joining the new canons of the Premonstratensians.[85] Set down in 1150, the text is invariably of Premonstratensian origin and shows that the early Premonstratensian Order was concerned with the conversion of Jews, and the ability of these peoples to become integral parts of Christian society.[86] Jean-Claude Schmitt has argued that the *Opusculum* was written primarily to proclaim the Order's spiritual importance in the world and to legitimise a newly created order of canons.[87] It shows the importance that Jewish conversion had in establishing good Christian practice and that it equated the spiritual excellence of the Premonstratensians with their ability to win converts from the Jewish community. Further, given the apocalyptic interest held by many of the early Premonstratensians, such as their founder Norbert of Xanten, it is likely that more apocalyptic ideas about Jewish conversion became at least somewhat important within Premonstratensian texts, and so may be able to explain the inclusion of these statements within MS 59's copy of Pseudo-Methodius.[88] This is especially understandable due to the increased interest in Jewish conversion in England from the thirteenth century onwards, in which there was a shift towards missionary campaigns directly targeting Jewish communities in hopes of conversion.[89] Given that the Premonstratensians already had a history with both Jewish conversion and apocalypticism, albeit on the continent, it would not be surprising to find these attitudes among English Premonstratensians and expressed within their textual production.

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[85] J. Schmitt, *The Conversion of Herman the Jew: Autobiography, History and Fiction in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia and Oxford, 2003), pp. 9-10.

[86] C. Neel, 'The Premonstratensian Project', in K. Pansters (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Customaries and Rules* (Leiden, 2020), p. 212.

[87] Schmitt, *The Conversion of Herman the Jew,* p. 195.

[88] Neel, 'The Premonstratensian Project', pp. 209-10.

[89] R. C. Stacey, 'The Conversion of Jews to Christianity in Thirteenth Century England', *Speculum* 67/2 (1992), p. 264.

The *Apocalypse* in MS 59 is an example of the Latin Recension 2 tradition that circulated in late medieval England. The many alterations present in MS 59, and made to many of the Latin Recension 2 copies, suggest that efforts were made to appeal to a western audience. The use and presentation of the Ishmaelites highlights the ongoing conflict with the Saracens that existed in the minds of many Christians, and the belief that their destruction must occur before the end of the world. Similarly, the Jewish conversion narratives presented in MS 59, spotlights the importance of Christian unity against non-Christians more generally. In MS 59's *Apocalypse*, adherence to Christianity can be seen as a prerequisite of the end of the world and must come before any period of peace or judgment. Moreover, references to Jewish conversions may have made this copy particularly important for its Premonstratensian audience, who may have been comforted and validated by its reference to Jewish conversion. Evidently, the changes presented in this copy resonated with its audience, repurposing the text so that it could be read, analysed and enjoyed in its new context.[90] Finally, the omission of Alexander and the references to the 'King of the Romans' and 'Britones' allowed the text to be placed within a Latin Christian and English context, so that its audience could relate to the text and fit it into their own conception of history and the role of English Christians in this. For the Premonstratensians, this meant that the *Apocalypse* could fit with other collected historical, ecclesiastical and political texts they collected as it expounded a similar narrative of the importance of English and western Christianity in both the beginning and end of the world.

3. 2. London, British Library, Harley 1900

British Library, MS Harley 1900 contains a Middle English copy of Pseudo-Methodius's *Apocalypse*.[91] This can be found alongside two chronicles: the *Dialogus inter Militem et Clericum* and the *Polychronicon,* both of which were translated into Middle English by John Trevisa. Currently, the manuscript is believed to have been produced sometime in the early

[90] A. Holdenreid, 'The Old Made New: Medieval Repurposing of Prophecies', in S. Baumbach, L. Henningsen and K. Oschema (eds.), *The Fascination with Unknown Time* (London, 2017), p. 39.

[91] Catalogue entries of Harley MS 1900: C. E. Wright, *Fontes Harleiani: A Study of the Sources of Harleian Collection of Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1972), p. 167; R. Nares and H. Wanley, *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum Vol. 2.* (London, 1808), no. 1900 (pp. 318-20). A discussion of the text more generally exists in A. J. Perry, *Dialogus inter Militem et Clericum, Richard FitzRalph's Sermon: 'Defensio Curatorum' and Methodius: þe Bygynnyng of þe World and þe Ende of Worldes* (London, 1925).

fifteenth century, with its contents being copied from fourteenth-century sources.[92] Initially, it was believed that this was a copy of a version translated by Trevisa of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, given that the only copies of this *Apocalypse* version appear alongside other Middle English translations by Trevisa.[93] The 'Trevisan' Apocalypse only appears alongside Trevisa's translations of the *Dialogus* and the *Polychronicon,* such as in Huntington Library, MS HM 28561. This suggests that the scribes believed that this Middle English *Apocalypse* was also translated by Trevisa, or at least at some connection to him.[94] There are, however, other manuscripts that contain the *Dialogus* and the *Polychronicon* together but do not contain a copy of the 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse,* such as Cambridge, St John's College, MS H 1 and London, British Library, MS Additional 24194. This suggests that the Middle English *Apocalypse* did not circulate as widely, or was held in the same high esteem as these other works.[95] This is likely given that only a total of two known copies exist of the 'Trevisan' Apocalypse, in MS Harley 1900 and MS HM 28561.[96]

Circumstantial evidence also exists to support the idea that Trevisa produced this translated version. Trevisa held some interest in the apocalypse generally, as he spent much of his life working for the Berkeley family as a chaplain and priest, and as suggested by Jean Beal, may have worked in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist in Berkeley Castle.[97] Interestingly, in the thirteenth century, the chapel ceiling was inscribed with quotes from Revelation in both Latin and Anglo-Norman.[98] Current scholarship, however, remains unconvinced that Trevisa was the translator for this Middle English *Apocalypse* version. Textual analysis of the *Apocalypse* in comparison to Trevisa's other works suggests that it

[92] R. Waldron, 'The Manuscripts of Trevisa's Translation of the Polychronicon: Towards a New Translation', *Modern Language Quarterly,* 51/3 (1990), p. 312.

[93] D'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version', pp. 150-1.

[94] R. Hanna, *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and their Texts* (Stanford, 1996), pp. 71-2. For an overview of San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM. 28561, see: C. W. Dutschke et. al., *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library* (Vol. 2, San Marino, 1989), pp. 683-687. MS HM. 28561 is referred to as Burleigh House MS. in Perry's *Dialogus inter Militem et Clericum.*

[95] Perry, *Dialogus inter Militem et Clericum,* pp. xviii-xxii.

[96] G. H. V. Bunt, 'The Middle English Translations of the Revelationes of Pseudo-Methodius', in H. Hokwerda, E. R. Smits and M. M. Woesthuis (eds.), *Polyphonia Byzantina: Studies in Honour of Willem J. Aerts* (Groningen, 1993), p. 135.

[97] J. Beal, *John Trevisa and the Polychronicon* (Tempe, 2012), p. 8.

[98] D. A. Trotter, 'The Anglo-Norman Inscriptions at Berkeley Castle', *Medium Ævum,* 59/1 (1990), p. 115.

was likely that the translation is not by Trevisa.[99] Since then, there have unfortunately been no further insights into who may have produced this Middle English copy of the *Apocalypse*, and therefore the author remains a mystery.[100] Despite this, it should be highlighted that for those interacting with the text in medieval England, this version was likely understood as having been translated by Trevisa and should be seen through this lens.

3. 2. 1. The *Apocalypse* and Accessibility

The compilation of MS Harley 1900 likely took place by someone other than Trevisa himself. MS Harley 1900 is written completely in Middle English, which suggests that the audience was probably a secular and public one. Evidently, the manuscript would be of use to someone interested in Trevisa translations in particular, or for someone interested in a mixture of politics and history. The *Dialogus* is a political dialogue over the nature of the Church and state, while the *Polychronicon* is a chronicle which details history from the creation of the world to the reign of Edward III.[101] This raises the possibility of the compiler either being an educated layman or a member of the clergy, as this compilation would have relied on a knowledge of Trevisa and his works. Moreover, the inclusion of a Middle English copy in this manuscript demonstrates its continuing relevance to the compiler and his non-Latinate audience in the late Middle Ages.

This Middle English version of the *Apocalypse* appears to be, for the most part, a literal translation of the Latin Recension 2. Figures such as Abraham, Byzas and Alexander are all missing from this version of the *Apocalypse*, but the first half is still dedicated to retelling parts of Genesis. This may, in part, explain the want to translate and copy the *Apocalypse* from Latin into Middle English, to allow more people, such as non-Latinates, to access the Scriptures. The creation of the Wycliffite Bible in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, the first full English translation of the Bible, encouraged the private study of the

[99] Bunt, 'The Middle English Translations', p. 136.

[100] For the sake of convenience, this version of the Middle English *Apocalypse* will be referred to as the 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse*, as this is how it is referred to in the literature and to distinguish it from the Carthusian *Apocalypse* that is discussed later.

[101] N. N. Erickson, 'A Dispute between a Priest and a Knight', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 111/5 (1967), p. 288; E. Steiner, *John Trevisa's Information Age: Knowledge and the Pursuit of Literature, c. 1400* (Oxford, 2021), p. 74; K. Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature and English Community, 1000-1534* (Ithaca and London, 2006), p. 72.

scriptures by laypeople.[102] However, it proved controversial with the Church, and the promulgation of the *Ecclesiastical Constitutions* in 1409 by Archbishop Arundel, saw the prohibition of new translations of the Bible without episcopal permission.[103] A Middle English version of the *Apocalypse* for a general readership may have provided an alternative to translating the Vulgate Latin Bible, wherein the reader could get a concise understanding of the genealogy of Genesis without the controversial associations of its being a direct translation of Scripture. Latin biblical books were often produced as individual books, or small collections, rather than as a whole. As such, it would not be unusual for a text such as the *Apocalypse* to exist on its own and be used much in the same way as Revelation was.[104] Further, given the wide dissemination of the Wycliffite bible in late medieval England, with over 250 surviving manuscripts, there was evidently an appetite for access to the Scriptures, and it could be this that explains the production of this Middle English *Apocalypse* as an alternative religious text.[105] Indeed, the *Apocalypse* gives a concise view of the descendants from Adam through to Jonithus, picking up on key events from Genesis, such as man's exile from the Garden of Eden, and the flood of Noah. The *Apocalypse* could have provided an alternative to the book of Genesis as a method of biblical learning.

Additionally, the 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse* acted as an accessible overarching historical view of Christianity for the aspiring reader, portraying both the origins and the ultimate demise of humanity and their interactions with God.[106] The convergence of both the past and the future within the text meant that the *Apocalypse* could be understood as both a guide and a history. Vernacular historical writing grew in popularity from the thirteenth century onwards, as it provided a means of self-reflection and guidance for a Middle English

[102] E. Solopova, 'The Wycliffite Bible', in O. De Rold and E. Treharne (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval British Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 2020), p.179.

[103] Solopova, 'The Wycliffite Bible', p.179. The English text version of the *Ecclesiastical Constitutions* can be found in the sixteenth century volume: John Fox, *Acts and Monuments,* ed. George Townsend (Vol. 3, New York, 1965), pp. 242-9, esp. p.245.

[104] R. Gyug, 'Early Medieval Bibles, Biblical Books and the Monastic Liturgy in the Beneventan Region', in S. Boynton and D. J. Reilly (eds.), *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages: Production, Reception and Performance in Western Christianity* (New York, 2011), p.34.

[105] Solopova, 'The Wycliffite Bible', p.179.

[106] Emmerson, 'Apocalypse and/as History', p.66.

audience.[107] In order to facilitate this guidance, this 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse* splits its prophecy into six-thousand-year periods. This appears to be a mixture of the millennial week with Augustine's Six Ages theory. In this, time could be split into six 'ages', with certain events and people occurring in each age, for example, the birth of Abraham and the Flood pertained to the 'first age.'[108] Augustine stipulated that while it could be understood that each age lasted 1000 years, none of the first five ages were in actuality the same number of years, and therefore it could not be predicted with any certainty when the apocalypse would occur.[109] Similarly, MS Harley 1900 refers to events having occurred in the '…þousand of þe world' but this was often used non-literally as periods of human history, rather than as actual dates for when things occurred.[110] The ages, however, are not presented in MS Harley 1900 as the same as those stipulated by Augustine; for example, the Flood occurs in the first age according to Augustine but occurs in the second age in the 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse.*[111] Therefore, these chunks of time should be seen as a guiding framework for understanding the path that history was on and to help the reader locate themselves within the grand scheme of Christianity.

In particular, the copy sets up a narrative in which the audience could locate themselves in 'the laste sixe thousand of the world'.[112] This is the place in which the text shifts from a past tense narrative to a future tense narrative with speculations as to what was to come. From here on, it is expected that the Ishmaelites would defeat the Christians, before the rise of the King of the Christians and the defeat of the Son of Perdition, and then God would sort the just from the wicked, with a peaceful eternity for the good.[113] By rendering this in the future tense, as a prophecy of what was to come, the audience would expect that the end was approaching and could prepare themselves for it. It may also have encouraged penitence on the part of the audience, in much the same way as preachers who taught about

[107] M. Fisher, 'Vernacular Historiography' in J. Jahner, E. Steiner and E. M. Tyler (eds.), *Medieval Historical Writing: Britain and Ireland, 500-1500* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 340.

[108] Augustine, *The First Catechetical Instruction*, ed. and trans. Joseph P. Christopher (London, 1946), pp. 70-72. A discussion of the 'millennial week' can be found in chapter 2 on Kirkstede.

[109] Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 46.

[110] Examples of this can be seen: British Library, London, Harley MS 1900, ff. 21v, 22v.

[111] Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, p.46; Harley MS 1900, British Library, London, f. 21v.

[112] London, British Library, Harley MS 1900, f. 22v.

[113] Harley MS 1900, ff. 22v-23v.

the Last Judgement hoped to change the thoughts and actions of their congregation.[114] This position, in which humanity sat on the precipice of the 'last age' fitted with biblical and Augustinian views of the apocalypse. Matthew 24:36-44 stated that the hour or day in which the end would occur could not be known, but that the people should be ready.[115] Similarly, Augustine had ordered history in such a way that, while it was not expected imminently, there was an expectation that the apocalypse was near as time had entered the sixth, and last, age.[116] This is the attitude that pervades the Middle English *Apocalypse,* wherein the apocalypse was still distant, but that it would follow the outline provided within the *Apocalypse*. This distance from the imminent apocalypse meant that there was still time for its English audience to confess and repent before the Last Judgment.

Further to this Augustinian ordering of history, it must be understood that the text was altered in part to help it fit within this Western typology, as opposed to how the text ordered history in its Syriac and Greek forms. In the Greek and Latin Recension 1 versions of the text, there is a reference to seven millennia in which time passes through, and it is in the seventh millennium that the Ishmaelites would rise again.[117] This is in comparison to the Latin Recension 2 and its Middle English translation, neither of which refer to the 'seventh millennium', or anything similar, and instead focuses on the 'sixth millennium', or 'sixe thousand of the world.'[118] The removal of the seventh millennium in favour of six millennia, or ages, likely reflects the prevailing apocalyptic thought present in the high-and late-medieval period. The changing of the text to reflect the Augustinian idea of the Six Ages brought it in line with more mainstream Western ideas regarding time, history and apocalyptic thought, which meant it could be more easily conceptualised by its audience.

3. 2. 2. Devotion and Salvation

The 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse,* as well as the version in MS 59, also included a description of what would happen after the Antichrist was killed by Christ. For example, in Latin Recension 1, it is mentioned that the righteous would 'shine', while the 'impious will be cast forth into

[114] V. O'Mara, '"Go, ȝe curselynges, to euerelasting fier": Doomsday in Middle English Prose Sermons', in N. Morgan (ed.), *Prophecy, Apocalypse and the Day of Doom: Proceedings of the 2000 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington, 2004), pp. 281-2.

[115] Douay-Rheims, <https://www.drbo.org/chapter/47024.htm> [accessed 10th February 2023.]

[116] Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages,* p. 46.

[117] Garstad, *Apocalypse of Psuedo-Methodius,* pp .36-7, paragraph 1; pp. 110-1 (paragraph 1).

[118] MS 59, f. 144r; Harley MS 1900, f. 22v.

Hell' but otherwise does not dwell on the future of humanity.[119] In comparison, the 'Trevisan' version adds the following:

> 'Where of angels schule be þousandes of þousandes [e]t ten tymes an hundrid þousandes of archanngels, cherubyn [e]t seraphyn. Þ[er]e þe companies of holy men of p[ro]phetis, of pathaichis, of apostlis, of martiris, of co[n]fessours, of virgyns…Juste me[n] soþly for eu[er]more schul lyne and wiþ þe kyng of heuene schul be glorified of sladed. And wickid me[n] wiþoute[n] ende schule suffr[e] peyne. Wherfore þe lord vouche he saaf to delyner[e] us.'[120]

Like the Recension 2 version, the 'Trevisan' copy gives significance to the end of the text in order to remind the reader of their own worship, and gave further purpose to the text by exhorting the reader to pray. This created a more interactive text, in which the prophecy became an item of devotion that could be used to meditate on the end. In particular, it allowed one to reflect on the future and enact change in one's own life, such as carrying out private meditation and prayer, in order to create closeness with God.[121]

The encouragement of individual devotion through this ending highlights a growing concern with death and salvation. The increase in the number of chantries, whose priests celebrated mass and commemorated the dead, shows that there was a want to ensure the best possible outcome for one's soul, whether this was to be judged worthy of reaching Heaven, or to have the soul spend less time in purgatory.[122] Further, the creation of texts such as the *Ars Moriendi* created a model by which people hoped to die in a certain way in order to preserve the health of their souls.[123] It was believed that demons sought out the dead, tempting them to despair, and that by rejecting their temptations in favour of God, they would

[119] Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, pp. 138-9, paragraph 14.

[120] Harley MS 1900, f. 23v.

[121] Bryan, *Looking Inward*, p. 14.

[122] Chantries existed all over England; for some examples, see: C. Burgess, '"For the Increase of Divine Service": Chantries in the Parish in Late Medieval Bristol', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36/1 (1985), p. 49; R. B. Dobson, 'Citizens and chantries in late medieval York', in D. Abulafia, M. Franklin and M. Rubin (eds.), *Church and City 1000-1500* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 314-5; A. D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 92-5; M. Rousseau, *Saving the Souls of Medieval London: Perpetual Chantries at St. Paul's Cathedral, c. 1200-1548* (Farnham, 2011);

[123] A. Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540* (Philadelphia, 2014), pp. 142-3.

ensure their salvation.[124] This, in some ways, was a microcosm of the Last Judgment, as depicted in the *Apocalypse,* in which one's good deeds and the rejection of temptation by the devil would ensure salvation and eternity by God's side. Both the *Apocalypse* and the *Ars Moriendi* depict temptation, either by demons or the Antichrist. The 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse* warns that the Antichrist 'schal be disseynable [e]t by disseyte he schal bigyle many men.' This would have chimed with late-medieval sentiments regarding how one should guard one's soul against evil.[125]

If the copyist expected that this *Apocalypse* was read by a lay audience, continued interest in it in the late-medieval period may have been a result of its political implications, which would have found it in good company among the many other political prophecies of the era. While many could interpret the *Apocalypse* as being a reflection on the Crusades, and may have reflected the audience's own perceptions of the Saracen threat, the prophecy also allowed for reflection on political events closer to home. As discussed in the previous chapter, England saw an explosion in political prophecies during the later Middle Ages, which aimed to interpret contemporary politics and explain the turbulent lives of the kings of England.[126] This may help to explain the long life of Pseudo-Methodius's *Apocalypse,* in which the King of the Romans, or King of the Christians, is shown battling the Saracens before laying down his crown on the cross of Golgotha.[127] This King of the Romans is shown to be an Israelites and therefore a Christian. Further, it makes an explicit reference to the 'Britones' as one of the armies present just before the start of the Sixth Age.[128] It is not hard to speculate that many Englishmen reading the *Apocalypse* would have reflected upon this text and understood the 'King of the Christians' to be their own English king.[129] Prophetic discourse was largely used to endorse or challenge political authority, and a means of understanding the kings of England within a greater conception of history.[130] As such, the Byzantine text could be reinterpreted within an English lens to be understood as directly relating to the kings of England, and repositioned the whole text as taking place in England's

[124] N. L. Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the Ars Moriendi in England* (New Haven and London, 1970), pp. 3-4.

[125] Harley MS 1900, f. 23v.

[126] Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs,* p. 45.

[127] MS Harley 1900, ff. 23r-23v.

[128] Harley MS 1900, f. 22v; MS 59, ff. 143v-144r.

[129] Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs,* p. 43.

[130] Flood, *Prophecy, People and Place in Medieval England,* pp. 2-3.

future. This westernising of the *Apocalypse* meant it could resonate with English audiences, and be circulated more freely among them.

Overall, the *Apocalypse* in MS Harley 1900 is an accessible Middle English version of the Latin Recension 2 version of the *Apocalypse.*[131] The decision to translate the shorter Latin version of the text perhaps rested on the desire to provide a relatively accessible version of the *Apocalypse* for an English readership interested in history and its unfolding. For the Premonstratensians, the access to a historical and prophetic text may have aided them in their pastoral duties of the local community, as well as providing them with a knowledge of the history of Christianity, and the future direction of England. There is a possibility that the text would have also been shared with a non-Premonstratensian audience. The other texts in Harley MS 1900, such as Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon,* a chronicle of history and theology, and the *Dialogus* all show an interest in the importance of producing Middle English version of texts for those who would otherwise be unable to read them. The reader would likely be one with an interest in either translation or history, but ultimately it could appeal to a wide audience, from aristocrats, to reformers, to literate laypeople. Possibly, parts of the manuscript were read out for a participating audience, given the popularity that this format enjoyed during the late medieval period, and this may have provided a sense of community between the Premonstratensians and their parishioners.[132]

The popularity of political prophecies benefited the continued production of the *Apocalypse* and may have influenced the creation of the 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse*. The minor additions which come at the end of the Middle English text encouraged prayer and meditation over the future, both of the individual and the wider kingdom. This repositioned the text in an early-fifteenth century context, in which devotional texts were becoming more popular, including revelatory writings.[133] While the text does not necessarily feature alongside other devotional material, it may still have been interpreted in such a fashion due to its religious grounding, and as an eschatological piece would have provided a natural counterpart to the *Polychronicon* which depicted past events. Also, it accorded with wider concerns and widespread literature, concerning death and the Last Judgment. Moreover, it built upon the apocalyptic thought of the early medieval period by adapting Pseudo-Methodius to reflect

[131] D'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version', pp. 150-1.

[132] J. Coleman, *Participatory Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge, 1996), p. xi.

[133] Bryan, *Looking Inward*, p. 57.

Augustine's Six Ages theory and conform to orthodox teachings on what may happen at the end of the world. The 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse* provided an English audience with an accessible grounding in late-medieval apocalyptic thought.

3. 3. London, British Library, Additional MS 37049

The Carthusian Miscellany, Add. MS 37049, contains another distinct Middle English version of Pseudo-Methodius's *Apocalypse*.[134] The manuscript is made up of a multitude of religious texts in the vernacular, as well as many coloured images of great interest. This translation was likely based on the Latin Recension 2, as it misses all the same material from the Latin Recension 1. It also appears to be a relatively literal translation of Recension 2. Fritz Saxl described the manuscript as a 'spiritual encyclopaedia', for the spiritual improvement of its audience.[135] While the manuscript as a whole appears unstructured, small collections of items relating to certain themes appear to be clustered together. These include a grouping of texts on the Last Things. Because of this organisation, it has been suggested that the anthology was to be read in sections rather than from front to back.[136] It is possible that these 'clusters' were produced and circulated separately until being turned into a manuscript at a later date, but as the leaves are now mounted individually, the collation of the manuscript cannot be addressed.[137]

A watermark on the manuscript suggests that it dates between the middle and the third quarter of the fifteenth century. This is supported by the costumes of the figures in the coloured pen drawings, particularly the costumes of the figures in the *Desert of Religion* poem which dates the manuscript to around *c.* 1460-70.[138] The manuscript has been associated with northern English Carthusian monasteries, partly due to its inclusion of the *Desert of Religion,* one of only three English copies of the text, with the other two being

[134] London, British Library, Add. MS 37049, ff. 11r-16v; British Library Trustees, *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum 1900-1905* (London, 1907), pp. 324-331; Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness,* pp. 307-325.

[135] F. Saxl, 'A Spiritual Encyclopaedia of the Later Middle Ages', *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* 5 (1942), pp. 82-134.

[136] Gray, 'London, British Library, Additional 37049 – A Spiritual Encyclopedia', p. 103.

[137] R. Hanna, *The English Manuscripts of Richard Rolle: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Exeter, 2010), p. 79.

[138] A. I. Doyle, 'English Carthusian Books not yet linked with a Charterhouse', in T. Barnard, D. Ó Cróinín and K. Sims (eds.), *A Miracle of Learning: Studies in Manuscripts and Irish Learning: Essays in Honour of William* O'Sullivan (Aldershot, 1998), p. 128; Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts II*, p. 193.

found in manuscripts linked with northern English monasteries.[139] There are also numerous images of Carthusians in their white habits with 'distinctive' sidebands depicted in the manuscript; these far outweigh images of other monastic orders.[140] Yorkshire monasteries have been suggested, including Hull, but Anthony Ian Doyle argued that the language of two hands in the manuscript points to a Lincolnshire or Nottinghamshire monastery, either Axholme or Beauvale, and this has been accepted by some scholars.[141] Both of these monasteries were small, Beauvale hosted around 12 monks along with a prior, while Axholme hosted up to sixteen lay brothers.[142] The manuscript, then, likely had a small audience of Carthusian monks with the possibility of it being used to teach the lay brothers within the monastery.

The appearance of a distinctive Middle English copy of the *Apocalypse* in this manuscript suggests that it was used as a reflective or meditative piece, especially if, as accepted, it was produced in a Carthusian monastery. Carthusians were known to live solitary lives, spending much of their time in individual cells. They only came together to celebrate the liturgy, which was infrequent and without spectacle.[143] Carthusian book production was fruitful during the late medieval period, and was for the most part a solitary endeavour, although books would be checked by another scribe individually.[144] Similarly, Carthusians' solitary lives afforded intense spiritual practice such as meditation, in order to attain deep devotion and piety, and it was often these practices that seeped into the world beyond the

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[139] British Library Trustees, *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum 1900-1905*, p. 324; Doyle, 'Carthusian English books not yet linked with a Charterhouse', p. 128.

[140] Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness,* p. 11.

[141] Doyle, 'Carthusian English books not yet linked with a Charterhouse', p. 128; M. V. Hennessy, 'Passion Devotion, Penitential Reading and the Manuscript Page: "The Hours of the Cross" in London, British Library Additional 37059', *Mediaeval Studies* 66 (2004), p. 216; E. M. Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England* (London, 1930), pp. 324-6, 330-1.

[142] W. Page, 'Houses of Carthusian Monks: The priory of Axholme', in W. Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Lincoln* (Vol. 2, London, 1906), pp. 158-160; W. Page, 'Houses of Carthusian Monks: The priory of Beauvale', in W. Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Nottingham* (Vol. 2, London, 1910), pp. 105-109.

[143] Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness,* p. 27.

[144] A. I. Doyle, 'Book Production by the Monastic Orders in England (c.1375-1530): Assessing the Evidence', in L. L. Brownrigg (ed.), *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence, Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Seminar in the History of the Book to 1500* (Los Altos Hills, 1990), p. 13; D. Wakelin, *Scribal Correction and Literary Craft* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 78-9.

charterhouse.[145] The same might be said for the Carthusians' interests in death, miracles and prophecy.[146] Guigo I, the fifth prior of the Carthusians, in his *Consuetudines*, remarks on the importance of manuscript copying and editing because it allowed the brothers to 'preach with…[their] hands.'[147] For these reasons, it is possible that the Middle English version in Additional 37049 was a Carthusian translation, either copied from another Middle English copy or translated by them from a Latin exemplar. Carthusians had a history of translating mystical and devotional texts from Latin into Middle English such as the *Imitation of Christ*, and it may be possible that the *Apocalypse* was one of these.[148] In fact, some of the other works in this manuscript appear to also have been unique translations by the Carthusians, such as a prayer focusing on Mary's holy name.[149] As such, either scenario is a possibility for the production of this *Apocalypse.*

The copying of the Middle English *Apocalypse*, then, can be understood as a devotional act in itself, with the expectation that it would be used afterwards by other Carthusians and perhaps lay brothers. This use of the *Apocalypse* has been unacknowledged for the most part. The text places emphasis on more traditional verses and images that explicated Christ's sacrifice and the salvation of the soul after death. However, some suggestions can be made about its devotional purpose. The *Apocalypse* is positioned in the manuscript before several other texts on a similar theme, including a prayer on the Last Judgment (ff. 16v-18r), a short text on Doomsday (ff. 18r-v), and a dialogue between Soul, Death, the Devil, an Angel, Mary, Christ, and God the Father as a man lies on his death bed (f. 19r).[150] The close proximity of these texts suggest that this section was particularly concerned with salvation, redemption, death and judgment; with its aim to encourage the

[145] A. Taylor, 'Into his secret chamber: Reading and Privacy in Late Medieval England', in J. Raven, H. Small and N. Tadmor (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 49.

[146] M. V. Hennessy, 'Otherworldly Visions: Miracles and Prophecy among the English Carthusians, c.1300-1535', in J. N. Brown and N. R. Rice (eds.), *Manuscript Culture and Medieval Devotional Traditions: Essays in Honour of Michael G. Sargent* (York, 2021), p. 260.

[147] Hennessy, 'Otherworldly Visions', p. 267.

[148] J. Simpson, '1534-1550s Texts', in S. Fanous and V. Gillespie (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 255; J. Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness,* p. 53.

[149] M. V. Hennessy, 'Three Marian Texts, including a Prayer for a Lay-Brother, in London, British Library, MS Additional 37049', in A. S. G. Edwards (ed.), *Regional Manuscripts 1200-1700* (Vol. 14, London, 2008), p. 165.

[150] Add. MS 37049, ff. 16v-19r.

audience to reflect on their own mortal status and seek forgiveness for their sins.[151] Much like the *Ars Moriendi*, the *Apocalypse's* devotional aspect comes in the form of allowing the devotee to turn inwardly, to contemplate their spiritual and private self and to consider their own soul and salvation, as well as in acting as a protective aid against sin.[152] The adjacent material suggests that the significance of the *Apocalypse* lay in what it could offer the individual in helping them, and reflect on how one's own brief life fitted into the greater Christian historical tradition. Marlene Hennessy has described the Carthusians as possessing 'death-oriented piety', in which their devotion focused on death and the miraculous.[153] This context for the Middle English *Apocalypse* in Additional 37049 suggests that the text acted as a prophetic piece, which endorsed and encouraged a certain sort of Carthusian penitential piety.

This Middle English version differs from that of the 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse* in terms of the expression, language and phrasing used, with the 'Trevisan' *Apocalypse* around 200 words longer than this Middle English version, suggesting that these translations are distinctly separate.[154] For example, the Additional. MS 37049 text omits a reference to Jerome in the prologue, and provides the Latin from Recension 2 alongside the English when reciting the lines related to Chorazin and Bethsaida.[155] Moreover, the addition of images to this version appears distinctly unique, as there is currently no evidence to assume that the 'Trevisan' version ever had images, and to my knowledge is the only English *Apocalypse* that had images attached to it. It is these images that particularly make this version of the *Apocalypse* stand out among all others.

The creation of a separate Middle English *Apocalypse* from the 'Trevisan' version speaks first to the circulation of Latin Recension 2 copies in late-medieval England and its expansion past a Latinate audience. It also highlights an interest in the text among clerical and monastic communities in translating the text into Middle English. This is particularly the case for the Carthusians who appeared particularly enthusiastic in translating texts from Latin

[151] Gray, 'London, British Library, Additional 37049 – A Spiritual Encyclopedia', p. 103.

[152] M. V. Hennessy, 'The Remains of the Royal Dead in an English Carthusian Manuscript, London, British Library, MS Additional 37049,' *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 33 (2002), p. 317.

[153] Hennessy, 'Otherworldly Visions', p. 260.

[154] For a direct side-by-side comparison of the two texts, see: Perry, *Dialogus inter Militem et Clericum etc.*, pp. 94-112.

[155] Add. MS 37049, ff. 11r and 15v. Compare with Harley MS 1900, ff. 21v and 23v.

into Middle English. Michael G. Sargent highlights this transmission was part of the literary activity of the Carthusians, where small literary groups disproportionately produced many of the Middle English versions of texts that we have today.[156] The fact that the Carthusians chose to translate the *Apocalypse* highlights the importance and regard it must have had among its audiences. The translation likely also resulted in a change of audience perception in the text from something genuinely prophetic and apocalyptic, to something which was primarily sought out because of its devotional elements.

3. 3. 1. MS Additional 37049's *Apocalypse* Images

The images in this *Apocalypse* display what is happening throughout the text on the page, with the page being divided up so that the top half is an illustration of the text on the lower half. Several of the images depict Old Testament events, such as Adam and Eve in Eden (f. 11r) and Noah during the Flood (f. 11v), while multiple images depict the various wars between the different factions (ff. 12v-13v), and the subsequent images deal with the events that are yet to happen (ff. 14r-16v). These images provided focal points for devotional reading. Seeing the images as one read through the text may have aided in imagining the scenes in one's mind's eye, allowing a deeper connection with God through 'seeing beyond' the images inwardly.[157] St. Augustine outlined three modes of vision: corporeal (where one saw things physically using one's eyes), spiritual (where one saw things inwardly using mental images that were like physical ones) and intellectual (in which one knows the divine truth and love inwardly without need for images).[158] Images such as the ones presented in the *Apocalypse* would have helped the reader to move to the second level of vision, in which they could picture the apocalypse in their mind. This would encourage the reader to think inwardly and carry out acts of devotion within themselves, as well as to provoke emotional responses in imagining the end of the world.

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[156] M. G. Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27/3 (1976), pp. 239-40.

[157] C. Walker Bynum, 'Seeing and Seeing Beyond: The Mass of St. Gregory in the Fifteenth Century', J. E. Hamburger and A. Bouché (eds.), *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2006), p. 210; B. Williamson, 'Sensory Experience in Medieval Devotion: Sound and Vision, Invisibility and Silence', *Speculum* 88/4 (2013), pp. 41-2.

[158] Augustine, *On Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York, 2002), pp. 470-2 (XII:15-18).

Figure 3.1: The army of the 'Romans' fight off the Saracens. British Library, London, Add. MS 37049, f.13v. Copyright: British Library, London.[159]

The images on f. 13v and f. 15r both depict soldiers with St. George's Crosses on the front of their armour, fighting off the Ishmaelites. The implications from the text below on both of these pages is that these soldiers are supposed to be the 'kyngdom of the Romaynes' whose leader, the King of the Romans, would destroy the Ishmaelites.[160] Likewise, while f. 15r does not refer to them directly as such, it does make mention of the 'Cristen pepyl' who are fighting in the time of the 'kyng of Romaynes.'[161] It is hard to tell exactly whether the St. George's Cross would have been understood as a reference specifically to the English people, or more generally to crusading.[162] In the former case, it is a further example of the attempt to help locate its English audience in the apocalyptic timeline, whereby individuals could understand their own role in the greater historical narrative of all Christians. More importantly, however, is the implication that the English are God's 'chosen people', that they are a continuation of the Roman Empire, that is, the empire of Christ. This also establishes their own king as having particular spiritual significance in the greater history of the world, and this encouraged a sense of national spirit among those sharing and meditating on this particular image.

[159] https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_37049_fs001r

[160] Add. MS 37049, f. 13v.

[161] Add. MS 37049, f. 15r.

[162] J. Good, *The Cult of St George in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2009), p. 97; L. Manion, *Narrating the Crusades: Loss and Recovery in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 167.

More generally, however, if these crosses are to be understood as representing crusaders, then they are still important as an aspect of devotion and have implications for how the audience read this prophecy. For one, the emphasis on the Crusaders fighting against the heretics and unbelievers may have provided some form of joyous hope for the audience, as it showed that they, or their descendants, would be fighting alongside Christ against the hordes of unbelievers. The sense that this was a battle that would ultimately end as a victory for the Christians must have been a comfort for the audience, whose recent battles had been with other Christians closer to home, rather than a foreign, non-Christian enemy. English crusading had been curtailed by the fifteenth century, with only a few knights acting as ambassadors, involved in conflicts in the East.[163] This reference to the crusades may reflect the desire for the continuation of crusading efforts by some parts of English society, although it is arguable that the reference here was more to help embody the righteous spirit of the crusades, rather than an acting as a call for a new crusade to take place.[164] By calling on the crusades, the image reminds the audience of the supposed religious fervour and ecstasy created in the wake of the First Crusade, and this may have intensified their religious devotion in the face of a seemingly godless foe.[165]

3. 3. 2. Gog and Magog

The text has traditionally been seen through an apocalyptic lens, but the images offer a new focus on the human element of the apocalypse, rather than the more fantastical aspects as seen in the *Westminster Apocalypse.* Many of the apocalyptic beasts, such as the seven-headed dragon or the beast from the sea, are not shown in Additional 37049. The only ones portrayed are Gog and Magog who are shown as monstrous humans, having human anatomy, but standing out by being depicted with large teeth, a pointed nose and large rounded ears.[166] Above the image of Gog and Magog, the writer specifies, 'Gog and Magog cummes oute of the mountes of Caspy and etes mans flesche and drynks mans blode.'[167] Between the picture and the statement above, a visceral image is conjured up in one's mind in a similar way to images and texts describing Christ's passion, in that it emphasises the physical violence of

[163] T. Guard, *Chivalry, Kingship and Crusade: The English Experience in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 50.

[164] Guard, *Chivalry, Kingship and Crusade*, p. 115.

[165] P. Frankopan, *The First Crusade: The Call from the East* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 134.

[166] Add. MS 37049, ff. 15v-16v.

[167] Add. MS 37049, f. 15v.

the act and the suffering of those experiencing it.[168] The 'humanised' figures in this apocalypse, therefore, may speak to a belief in human evil, and anxieties over those who were human but 'other.' This is an example of the way in which many Christians saw themselves as being distinct and separate from, and superior to, those of other religions.[169] The reference to the eating and drinking of man's flesh harkens back to a comment made earlier in the *Apocalypse* that the Saracens ate the 'unclene bodys that is of camels and hors and thai dranke blode of bestes', conflating the Saracens to Gog and Magog in terms of their barbarity.[170] This also solidified the link between Gog and Magog and the Saracens, connecting their defeat with the end of the world, and thus encouraged Christians to see themselves as separate from the 'other' and the only ones worthy of salvation and redemption at the end of the world.

Figure 3.2: Christians making merry on the left, Gog and Magog kill and consume Christians on the right: British Library, London, Add. MS 37049, f. 15v. Copyright: British Library, London.[171]

The viciousness of the images of Gog and Magog in which they are eating people's limbs, and bodies are strewn around with splattered blood, speaks to the Carthusian's interest in violence and death, which can be found throughout the manuscript. Despite the fact that many wars and much violence between the characters in the *Apocalypse*, many of the

[168] T. H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1996), pp. 146-7.

[169] L. Ramey, 'Orientalism and the "Saracen"', in A. Bale (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the Crusades* (Cambridge, 2019), p.143.

[170] Add. MS 37049, f. 13r.

[171] https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_37049_fs001r

versions have not specifically focused on them as key to the narrative. However, Additional 37049 presents throughout its *Apocalypse* with a total of nine images depicting war and violence, suggesting that this was of keen interest to the Carthusian audience of the *Apocalypse* and that this was an important aspect of their devotional practices. Indeed, the meditation on the Last Judgment which follows the *Apocalypse* depicts Christ, bearing his five stigmata for the viewer, as well as an image of those having been judged as sinful descending into a hellmouth.[172] In both of these texts, the violence and blood actually accentuated meditative practice, by cultivating an emotional response in a similar manner to Christ's passion.[173] Amy Appleford argues that tribulation texts empowered the reader to cultivate their own asceticism, acting as both a private conversation and a spiritual withdrawal from the outside world, in order to see the world as a whole and complete.[174] These violent images, as well as the nature of the tribulations further emphasised the anxieties of the Christian reader, in order to aid them in deepening their relationship with God. Moreover, they create a shared pain between the reader and the text, much in the same way that the Last Judgment image in the *Apocalypse* on f. 17r created this connection with its audience.[175] The last page of the *Apocalypse* depicts the Antichrist on one side, watching over the murder of Enoch and Elijah; on the other side, Christ and his angels watch over the Antichrist having been brought low by their power. The juxtaposition of the violence of the murder with Christ's heavenly power exemplifies this interconnect between violence and devotion in Carthusian devotional and contemplative practices.

The *Apocalypse* in Additional 37049 is the only surviving copy of its kind, and provides an insight into how the Carthusians understood and portrayed apocalyptic thought. This version is emphasised through its images, which allow an exploration of death and violence, as well as highlighting the role of Gog and Magog in the end of the world. These images particularly were useful in connecting with the Carthusian and their lay brothers. Not only could the images help readers understand what was happening in the text, but they also allowed for readers to contemplate and meditate over them. As can be seen from this version, and to some extent the 'Trevisan' version, by the fifteenth century, the *Apocalypse* became part of a body of material deemed useful for devout and contemplative readers to use in their

[172] Add. MS 37049, f. 17r.

[173] Appleford, *Learning to Die in London,* p. 104.

[174] Appleford, *Learning to Die in London,* p. 104.

[175] Add. MS 37049, f. 17r.

daily worship. As such, less stock was placed directly in what the text could tell the reader about the end, than how it could prepare one spiritually through deepening one's relationship with Christ for when the end of the world did occur. Secondary to this, the creation of the text and images by the Carthusians would have been, in itself, a spiritual act, as well as potentially strengthening relationships with the Carthusians' patrons and the surrounding lay community. Finally, the creation of this copy, and the 'Trevisan' versions, points to a greater interest in both lay and clerical communities reading apocalyptic texts in Middle English during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Even though the requirement for Middle English language proficiency remained a barrier to apocalypticism, it did open the door for merchant and gentry families to learn more about the end of the world.

3. 4. London, British Library, Stowe MS 953

The final Middle English version of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* is a metrical version which exists in London, British Library, Stowe MS 953.[176] This one text makes up the entirety of Stowe MS 953 at 975 lines and 19 folios (although 3 folios at the front are blank), and there is a note on the back of the final leaf that states, 'This book belongs to William Gilberd of the Toft Monks.'[177] Toft Monks is a parish in the south of Norfolk and was home to the Church of St. Margaret's, which housed the Benedictine monks.[178] Given that the manuscript has been linked to Norfolk because of its 'southern Norfolk dialect', it is possible that the text was produced in Toft Monks or the region more widely.[179] While it is clear that this version is based on Latin Recension 2, it cannot be said if this text is a copy of another Middle English metrical translation or whether this was the first of its kind.[180] Many of the stanzas are missing lines and in some places the rhyming structure is broken, suggesting that the text is incomplete. Current scholarship has suggested a dating of the early fifteenth century.[181] It is unclear whether the text was produced for a clerical or lay audience.

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[176] E. J. L. Scott, *Catalogue of Stowe Manuscripts in the British Museum* (Vol. 1, London, 1895), p. 637. The Stowe manuscripts are now housed at the British Library.

[177] London, British Library, Stowe MS 953, f.19v. 'Iste liber pertinet William Gilberd de Toffet Monachorum.' There are a total of 34 lines per side of a folio.

[178] T. Colke, 'Twelfth-Century East Anglian Canons: A monastic life?', in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, 2005), p.215.

[179] Bunt, 'The Middle English Translations', p. 132.

[180] D'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version', p. 152.

[181] D'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version', p. 151; Bunt, 'The Middle English Translations', p. 134.

Much of the groundwork on the metrical Middle English version has been laid by Charlotte D'Evelyn, who identified many of the additions made from the Latin Recension 2 during translation.[182] These included an account of creation, several stanzas about astronomy, a section on the descendants of Cain, and the parentage of Antichrist and his dealings with Enoch and Elijah.[183] D'Evelyn argued that these changes had come primarily from the *Cursor Mundi*, while the additions on Cain's descendants and some linguistic changes came from Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle.*[184] Several references to biblical passages from Genesis and 2 Thessalonians are also made, as well as a reference to Gregory the Great.[185] Gerrit Bunt has rejected the claims that the metrical version is dependent on sections of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle* because of a lack of linguistic parallels, which are indeed sparse, but he does not provide an alternative to where the section of Cain's descendants came from.[186] It is clear, however, that some references from the *Cursor Mundi* were included in this text, and that the metrical version as a whole was not simply a straight translation from the Latin Recension 2. As such, the author would have used the Middle English *Cursor Mundi* alongside the Latin Recension 2, and so was likely well versed in both Latin and Middle English religious texts in order to produce this translation.

One such example of a direct reference to the *Cursor Mundi* is in the story of Enoch and Elijah. About Enoch and Elijah, it is written, 'And whan þey haue to dayys be dede, þey xall ryse vp to lyfe a-geyn', while Antichrist is said to, 'hathe reyned tweyne ȝere full & pleyn, and eke an half ȝere in þat stede.'[187] These differ from the traditional apocalyptic numbers; traditionally, Antichrist was expected to rule for three-and-a-half years, while Enoch and Elijah would lie dead for three days before being resurrected and lifted to Heaven.[188] However, the dates in the metrical version are the exact dates that are mentioned in the *Cursor Mundi* and so it is very likely this was the origin point for this particular

[182] For a transcription of the Middle English metrical version, see: D'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version', pp. 156-182.

[183] D'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version', pp. 152-3, 154.

[184] D'Evelyn, 'The Middle English Metrical Version', pp. 152-5.

[185] Bunt, 'The Middle English Translations', p. 134. The reference to Gregory the Great can be found on line 952-959 of D'Evelyn's article.

[186] Bunt, 'The Middle English Translations', p. 134.

[187] Stowe MS 953, f. 18v (D'Evelyn, 'The Middle English Metrical Version', p. 181, lines 937-941.)

[188] P. C. Almond, *The Antichrist: A New Biography* (Cambridge, 2020), p. 14, 118.

statement.[189] This suggests that the author was unfamiliar with specific apocalyptic dates. Rather, the author may have understood the significance of Antichrist's reign, without any in-depth knowledge of apocalyptic narratives. As such, it shows an attempt to use apocalypticism which was less concerned with specifics, but rather how they could be used to explain the events of the end of the world. It may also have been an attempt by the author to give more specificity regarding the text to make it more useful for its audience as both a prophetic and historical text.

The *Cursor Mundi* was a fourteenth-century religious poem that detailed the beginning to the end of the world, and so could have been useful as a historical source for readers. In it the reader is led through a linear history of Christianity, providing a framework for readers to understand salvation.[190] The *Cursor Mundi* was produced primarily for those with little to no literacy skills, and who may not have had an in-depth knowledge of Christianity.[191] Ernest Mardon has argued that the *Cursor Mundi* was a didactic work to expound Christian teachings, which included an outline of salvation history from beginning to end, with the intention that this would inspire devotion in the hearts of its readers.[192] The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* can also be seen to perform a similar function as a history and a future prediction, laying out for readers the whole scope of Christian history from creation to the Last Judgment. The 'Trevisan' version, in particular, performed this same function for those who were unable to read Latin. As such, the combining of the metrical *Apocalypse* with elements from the *Cursor Mundi* allowed the author to detail as accurately as possible a universal salvation history to its audience.[193] In this way, the *Cursor Mundi* and the metrical *Apocalypse* may have had similar aims and possible audiences, in that they both acted as historical accounts of Christianity but also encouraged repentance by honing in on the defeat of the Antichrist ahead of the Last Judgment of the soul.

This is further highlighted through the multiple descriptions of the Antichrist's performing signs. For example, it is said, 'Gret wondyrs he xall schew þere, make defe to

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[189] *The Southern Version of the Cursor Mundi, Vol. 5,* eds. Laurence M. Eldridge and A. L. Klinch (Ottawa, 2000), lines 22373 and 22381-3.

[190] H. Phillips, 'Medieval Classical Romances: The Perils of Inheritance', in P. Hardman and M. Sweeney (eds.), *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 3-4.

[191] E. Mardon, *The Narrative Unity of the Cursor Mundi* (Alberta, 2012), p. 39.

[192] Mardon, *The Narrative Unity of the Cursor Mundi,* pp. 40-2.

[193] Emmerson, 'Apocalypse and/as History', p. 52.

here ȝefe blynd here syte.'[194] These descriptions of the signs provided a warning to avoid worshipping the Antichrist, who would carry out many evil actions, but under the disguise of being like Christ in deed and word. As such, it was up to individuals to understand the context in which Antichrist performed his actions in order to be able to separate good from evil.[195] Consequently, the metrical *Apocalypse's* use of Antichrist's signs could be understood as a warning to its audience to be able to pick out false teachers and preachers and a reminder to maintain their faith in Christianity through engagement with the Church and other mandated preachers. More generally, the presentation of the Antichrist and his signs warned readers about the coming end and reminded them about the peril of their souls before the Last Judgment. The metrical version states, 'the wykkyd men he xall chastise & deme to hell with wykkyd steuyn.'[196] As shown above, the emphasis on salvation history and the projection forward of what would happen to everyone following the defeat of the Antichrist may have been a warning to repent and carry out acts of devotion to avoid Hell and receive a favourable judgment at the end. This culmination at the end of the poem provided an endpoint in which to view humankind generally, but also for the reader to see themselves within this scheme, and thus lead history to its natural conclusion.

The metrical version is important in that it transfers a traditional prose prophetic piece into poetry. It is hard to say with any certainty why this may have occurred, although some possibilities may be raised. A possible reason for this may have been to highlight its political nature. Political verse was particularly prominent in late-medieval England, as it was felt to be a persuasive form that could have an impact on how politics and kingship were viewed by society.[197] As such, the metrical form may have given the coming apocalypse more weight for its readers and provided a new way of engaging with apocalyptic rhetoric. Similarly, metrical versions of texts could be used in lay devotion in that they increased contemplation and allowed for imaginative readings of certain texts. This type of devotional literature became popular among women but was also used by men in curating affective piety in their readers.[198] Devotional poetry such as this may have provided an accessible form of private devotion for laywomen and men to understand texts within a religious context, and the

[194] Stowe MS 953, f. 17v (D'Evelyn, 'The Middle English Metrical Version', p. 179, lines 881-2.)

[195] C. Hunt McNabb, 'Night of the Living Bread: Unstable Signs in Chester's "Antichrist"', *Early Theatre* 19/2 (2016), p. 9.

[196] Stowe MS 953, f. 19r (D'Evelyn, 'The Middle English Metrical Version', p. 181, lines 964-5.)

[197] V. J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the fifteenth century* (London, 1971), pp. 13-4.

[198] C. E. McIlroy, *The English Prose Treaties of Richard Rolle* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 50.

greater context of the Last Judgment.[199] As such, the manuscript may have been produced for a lay audience, or for clergymen with an interest in devotional poetry. Consequently, the act of transforming the *Apocalypse* from prose into poetry may have provided a new view on the *Apocalypse* for both its author and audience and allowed new avenues of exploration to be opened up.

Overall, the metrical version of the *Apocalypse* suggests an appetite for the text in the fifteenth century, and a want for it to reflect the tastes and interests of those audiences. Many religious, moral and didactic texts were in metrical form, and the transition across from prose may have widened the *Apocalypse's* appeal to a greater variety of audiences. It also highlights its use as a historical and religious text in late-medieval English society.[200] The additions made to the metrical *Apocalypse* can be seen to have strengthened its aim as a historical and didactic text to teach its audience about Christianity from beginning to end, and its emphasis on the Antichrist towards the end of the poem highlights both an interest in the events of the apocalypse, as well as an interest in stirring up emotions in its audience, in efforts to aid devotion. Some of the additions, such as a reference to the timings relating to the Antichrist, may highlight a continued interest in updating and spreading apocalyptic rhetoric so that its audience may become more aware of the end of the world. It therefore made an enduring contribution to the religious discourse of late-medieval England. Moreover, the Middle English metrical version is a testament to the continued significance and persuasion of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, and its ability to adapt to new circumstances to continue to reach people in the fifteenth century.

3. 5. Conclusions

Overall, the Pseudo-Methodius *Apocalypse* continued to have a fluid and long-lasting impact throughout the late-medieval period and retained its significance as a source of apocalyptic inspiration after its initial creation. However, the movement away from seeing it solely as 'apocalyptic' developed more as time went on; by the time of the production of the Middle English apocalypses, we find that the *Apocalypse* was sought out not so much for its apocalypse narrative, as for its devotional qualities. It is possible that the translation from the

[199] B. Quitslund, *The Reformation in Rhyme: Sternhold, Hopkins and the English Metrical Psalter, 1547-1603* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 12.

[200] J. P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: The Dialectical and Metrical Survey* (Manchester, 1930), p. 180.

Latin into Middle English marked the beginning of this development. The accessible nature of the Middle English versions meant that non-Latinates could now think about the *Apocalypse* without the need for an interpreter, and so could meditate on the text as they wished. While the text appears to have had few changes made to it overall, those that were made were done to westernise the text to appeal and relate to people in medieval England and contributed greatly to its continued circulation.

It has been shown also that the *Apocalypse* continued to have a variety of audiences who may have seen or interacted with the text. This suggests that the text could act as a medium by which its clerical and lay audience could communicate with each other, to come to a deeper understanding of their own history and religious beliefs. The Middle English copies may have had the potential to shape conceptions of English identity; many of its implications could be manipulated, even subconsciously, to fit with ideas already being espoused regarding how the English saw themselves. The idea of there being a 'King of the Christians', and 'new Israelites' matched with beliefs that the English were the 'chosen race' and allowed for the text to be repurposed for a new English audience, away from its Byzantine origins. The text's emphasis on the wars between the Israelites and the Ishmaelites could also be co-opted more generally to reflect a history that had already occurred when Muslims and Christians had been locked into battle over Jerusalem and other territories for hundreds of years. This was a concept which would continue to have an impact even towards the end of the Middle Ages with the rise of the Ottoman Empire in the East.[201] The history of the Crusades influenced the creation and expansion of both English and Christian identity in late-medieval society and altered how this apocalyptic text could be understood by a society which had been through these foreign, ideological wars.

It is important to note that the Latin Recension 2 copy was ultimately the most significant version circulating in England. It was the basis on which all other English copies were developed, but despite this, it still prevailed in late-medieval England, highlighting the importance of this version, particularly in clerical circles and those with access to a Latin education.[202] The text continued to have importance to these groups because of its elusive quality as a prophecy, allowing it to be applied to many in late-medieval England; the text matched with contemporary thought on the end of the world and perceptions of the Saracens,

[201] N. Malcolm, *Useful Enemies: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought 1450-1750,* (Oxford, 2019), p. 52.

[202] Laureys and Verhelst, 'Pseudo-Methodius, *Revelationes:* Textgeschichte und Kritsche Edition', pp. 119-129.

and could be updated at will to reflect new developments. The two prose Middle English versions, however, opened up the possibility for the text to be used for devotional purposes, to explore and deepen one's relationships with God, through viewing and imagining the end of the world. Similarly, the didactic role of the metrical version would have allowed a deeper understanding of the apocalypse, and this in turn may have encouraged penitent behaviour. Its translation from Latin to Middle English can be seen to have altered the purpose of the text to reflect the needs and desires of the late-medieval English audience.

As such, the *Apocalypse* continued to prove a popular prophecy among many levels of English society throughout the late-medieval period. The importance of the Latin Recension 2 led to multiple Middle English versions in order to continue dissemination among a wider audience. Despite its Eastern origins, the prophecy proved effective in England, where it was able to be adapted to new circumstances, contexts, and audiences. Its ability to do so at a time when other revelatory materials were being quashed accentuates the *Apocalypse's* multiplicity within late-medieval English society.

4. Material Culture and the Apocalypse

The Apocalypse was not only found in manuscripts but in the religious and social spaces of those living in late-medieval England. This material culture, the objects and visual media connected with the Apocalypse, included stained glass, wall paintings and stonework. Collected in this chapter is a group of these objects which will be examined to see how people in late-medieval England interacted with and understood the end of the world. The examples here represent a range of apocalyptic-inspired material objects that can be confidently linked to England from *c*. 1300 to *c*. 1425.[1] Sadly, much of the material that was produced in this period has not come down to us either due to the passing of time or because it was lost to the destruction of the monasteries or the whitewashing of churches during the Reformation.[2] This is important to keep in mind when drawing conclusions about the material under discussion, as it alone does not tell us the whole story about how the apocalypse was presented, understood and thought about in late-medieval England. However, this chapter will provide a survey of the range of material through detailed analysis of a breadth of different examples, to allow conclusions to be drawn regarding the visual representation of apocalyptic thought in late-medieval England beyond the folios of manuscript books.

The first three chapters have dealt specifically with textual sources that can be found in manuscripts. These sometimes contained images alongside the text but were used primarily to support the reading and comprehension of a text. The reading of manuscript texts saw the development of private, silent reading, in which people would read and contemplate manuscript texts and their images privately and individually. However, while this was on the rise, it did not necessarily dominate the late-medieval period, with people still carrying out a variety of public and private reading methods depending on the text and circumstances, such as reading and interacting with manuscripts as households.[3] Manuscripts, however, should not be considered the only ways in which medieval people interacted with word and image. Therefore, this fourth chapter deals with visual sources such as stained glass, wall paintings and stonework. These visual sources allowed greater access to the *illiterati* or *rustici*, as they

[1] These objects have been found through various catalogues or have been highlighted by other historians. These objects have been selected by me as a representative sample of the apocalyptic objects present in England during the late-medieval period.

[2] H. Beal, 'Visual and Material Culture', in U. Rublack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations* (Oxford, 2016), p. 601.

[3] Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public,* pp. 89-93.

were called throughout the Middle Ages, who could not read, and so interacted little, if at all, with manuscript textual sources.[4] These visual sources were often in communal areas such as churches and so were publicly open to many people to see in groups and discuss with each other. These visual sources could also contain words and sentences which were to be read by congregants individually or in groups, or discussed with their pastor. This highlights the blurred line between textual and visual sources, as well as practices of private reading and public engagement when examining visual sources. Such visual sources could be examined and contemplated on solitarily, as well as being engaged with in groups for discussion and debate. This open way of viewing visual sources, therefore, must be considered when examining them and seen in contrast to understandings of how medieval people viewed and engaged with manuscript material.[5]

A medieval audience may have viewed and interpreted images in ways that are hard to uncover in our day. Part of this came from the lack of literacy among large swathes of English society. As such, there was a reliance on images as being able to communicate stories and concepts to an audience which could not read about them. Gregory the Great (*c.* 540-604) was the first proponent of images as being 'books for the illiterate' in the sense that they provided a means by which to communicate biblical stories and truths to an audience which was unfamiliar with the text of the Bible.[6] These images would supplement sermons at Church to provide the laity with a greater understanding of religious teachings, and could performatively bring the Bible alive even for lay readers.[7] Moreover, these images may have added emotional weight to some of the biblical stories told. For example, images depicting Christ's Passion may have heightened a sense of empathy, and particularly, devotional texts and images concerning the apocalypse and Last Judgment, may have heightened a need for contrition among those viewing them. Finally, images could reinforce truths that they had been told at Church, providing further information and reminding viewers of knowledge they had learnt elsewhere. These arguments were often reflected in medieval discussions regarding

[4] M. Camille, 'Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', *Art History* 8 (1985), p. 3.

[5] Taylor, 'Into his secret chamber', p. 43.

[6] Gregory the Great, 'Letter 11.10: Gregory to Serenus, bishop of Marseilles', in *The Letters of Gregory the Great, Vol. 3: Books 10-14,* ed. and trans. J. R. C. Martyn (Toronto, 2004), p. 745.

[7] Eyal Poleg has written about the differences between preaching and liturgy when teaching about the Bible but the same could be said about images in providing a different ways of teaching the same truths and stories. E. Poleg, *Approaching the Bible in Medieval England* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 199-200.

the continued use of images in religious spaces and may explain their continued use throughout the late medieval period.[8] Still, they are not as useful when approaching how individuals and communities may have viewed and interacted with their own religious images, and how this may have been impacted by the contexts and circumstances of these audiences.

Michael Camille has offered a new way of looking at medieval people's understandings of texts and images, placing these people into three categories of 'literates', those who were literate, those who relied on the literacy of another to access 'texts' (here used to mean both images and texts), and those who had no means to access literacy.[9] While some would have come under the first category, the majority are likely to have come under the second, in which the images could be explained to them through the use of an intermediary, such as a parish priest, or a relative or friend who had some religious knowledge and literate competency. Apocalypse images which were painted on walls or seen in glass were likely pointed to and explained by those with more knowledge, especially given these images were in public spaces. As such, viewing images in a medieval context should be thought to be made up of both looking and hearing, as well as the use of memory in order to construct how images should be interpreted. It should also be considered a communal activity, in which debate and knowledge exchange was key to understanding and interacting with an image.[10] Considering this in relation to how medieval people understood visual sources is crucial to deciphering them today. We must mirror this practice in looking at medieval images if we are to come close to discovering what they meant to their contemporary audience, and what they may say about medieval English society.

The idea of 'reading' images can be seen within the context of images in medieval England itself. Bede, the first Englishman we know of to speak on this topic, similarly took up Gregory's idea:

> Why is it not permissible that the exaltation of the Lord our saviour on the cross whereby he conquered death be recalled to the minds of the faithful pictorially…since the sight of these

[8] See: W. R. Jones, 'Lollards and Image: The Defence of Religious Art in Later Medieval England', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 34/1 (1973), pp. 27-50.

[9] Camille, 'Seeing and Reading', p. 32.

[10] Camille, 'Seeing and Reading', pp. 32-4; Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public,* p. 98.

> things often tends to elicit great compunction in the beholders and also make available to those who are illiterate a living narrative of the story of the Lord.[11]

Here, Bede also refers to paintings as 'living writing', suggesting that he saw images as acting similarly to the written word, being able to teach, remind and embellish the stories told to congregations by their preachers.[12] It should be noted here that images, including those of the Apocalypse, decorated the church of St. Peter at Wearmouth, one of the chief churches in which Bede lived.[13] Evidently, Bede felt that these images added value to the lives of the religious in a way that could not be done justice solely by the spoken word, especially for those who could not adequately read the scripture itself. It is also possible that Bede had in mind the debates around iconoclasm that were raging for the first time in Byzantium throughout the eighth century. In *De Templo,* written around 731, Bede discussed the use of images in Soloman's temple in order to exemplify the glory of God and the martyrs and to provide aids of memorisation for audiences.[14] These debates, taking place in the Eastern Church between the eighth and ninth centuries, argued over whether it was acceptable to venerate icons and other religious art. An imperial policy of icon destruction was instituted by Emperor Leo III (717-41) sometime in the 720s, which saw religious art being destroyed under the belief that those who venerated icons were committing idolatry, rather than worshipping the figures that the idols represented.[15] Bede's stance in support of religious art was to remain prevalent in England, despite some criticism leading up to the fourteenth century.

The first concerted critique against images in England was by Wyclif before then being taken up by later communities, called Lollards, who shared heterodox teachings promoted by Wyclif and others.[16] Wyclif claimed that, while images could provide a method by which the mind could be roused to the adoration of God and Christ, people often mistook

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[11] Bede, *On the Temple,* trans. Seán Connolly (Liverpool, 1995), p. 91.

[12] Bede, *On the Temple,* trans. Seán Connolly, p. 91.

[13] P. Meyvaert, 'Bede and the Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', *Anglo-Saxon England,* 8 (1979), p. 66.

[14] Meyvaert, 'Bede and the Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', p. 68.

[15] M. Humphreys, 'Introduction: Contexts, Controversies, and Developing Perspectives', in M. Humphreys (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Leiden, 2021), pp. 5-6; A. Louth, 'The Theological Argument about Images in the 8th Century', in M. Humphreys (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Leiden, 2021), pp. 401-4.

[16] Patrick Hornbeck II, Bose and Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy,* p. 51.

this for the adoration of the object itself, and this was to be avoided.[17] Meanwhile, later responses by Lollard communities were more diverse. Some Lollards believed that one could learn to distinguish 'true' images from 'false' ones and so guard oneself against idolatry.[18] However, some took a more hard-line stance, believing at best that these images did nothing, or worst, that engaging with images was a form of devil worship and 'idolatry', a pagan sin condemned in the Bible.[19] One Lollard stated, 'Certis, these ymagis of hemselfe may do nouther gode ne yvel to mennis soulis, but thai mygttn warme a mannes body in colde, if thai were sette upon a fire.'[20]

The rhetoric of images as being useless, if not heretical, gained both supporters and detractors throughout late-medieval England, and led to the creation of many tracts discussing the virtues and purposes of images for parishioners who would come into contact with religious art throughout their lives. Many of those giving these defences were members of the clergy, who saw the images as improving the lives of them and their congregations. One such example is that of Roger Dymmock, a Dominican friar, who defended images based on their instructional and devotional value, and believed that they transcended the barriers between clergy and laity in allowing a greater understanding of Christianity.[21] Franciscan William Woodford similarly defended images on the basis that they could educate parishioners, honour Christ and other religious figures and provide comfort to those struggling. More interestingly, he also argued that these images may serve to reveal the future judgment and the Second Coming, thus highlighting the importance of apocalyptic images in devotion and education.[22] So, others may have learnt from and meditated on apocalyptic images to gain a greater understanding of Christ and find comfort in him. It may be possible, then, to reconstruct how medieval people used these images as devotional and instructional objects, to enhance their religious understandings and feelings, especially concerning their thoughts, fears and hopes about the end of the world.

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[17] M. Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984), p. 139.

[18] S. Gayk, *Image, Text and Religious Reform in Fifteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 15.

[19] M. Aston, *England's Iconoclasts, Vol. 1: Laws Against Images* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 97-8; Patrick Hornbeck II, Bose and Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy*, pp. 139-41.

[20] Anonymous, 'On the Twenty Five Articles', in *Select English Works of John Wyclif III*, ed. John Arnold (Oxford, 1971), p. 463.

[21] W. R. Jones, 'Lollards and Images: The Defence of Religious Art in Later Medieval England,' *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 34/1 (1973), pp. 37-8.

[22] Jones, 'Lollards and Images,' p. 41, 46.

As for the objects and images themselves, there was a wide variety of apocalyptic, and adjacent Doomsday and death-related visual media present in late-medieval England. Because of this, it is important to establish the criteria for what can be considered strictly 'apocalyptic', as opposed to other categories of visual media. This is to ensure that the conclusions drawn build on a diverse set of material, that is both visual and textual, and which can be representative of the many communities and societal groups coexisting in late-medieval England. This ensures that any conclusions drawn express the experiences and realities of those engaging with apocalyptic material. We know of at least 28 illuminated apocalypses made in England in the fourteenth century, not including other manuscripts depicting other apocalyptic traditions such as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.[23] To address every manuscript here is unfeasible given the scope of this thesis, and would not provide a diverse survey of apocalyptic material when viewed alone. As such, case studies depicting different apocalyptic traditions in manuscripts have been developed in the first three chapters, with this fourth chapter focusing on apocalyptic material culture. Secondly, items which depict the Last Judgment only, without reference to other parts of the Apocalypse, such as the tribulations, Antichrist or other apocalyptic tropes have not been considered here. The Last Judgment was depicted most often in Doom paintings, which had their own iconography and rhetoric that developed in tandem with, but was distinct from, apocalyptic images depicting the events of the end of the world.[24] The purpose of these paintings was often didactic and they were separated from conversations about the end of the world, due to their complex and confusing narratives.[25] Instead, Last Judgment narratives were more closely associated with the 'last things', speculation regarding the moments of death and judgment, which focused inwardly on the trajectory and transformation of the soul.[26] While important, these sources are less concerned with the end of the world as a concept within its own right, and so have not been included. Finally, images and objects

[23] R. K. Emmerson, *Apocalypse Illuminated: The Visual Exegesis of Revelation in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts* (Philadelphia, 2018), p. 111.

[24] P. Sheingorn, '"For God Is Such a Doomsman": Origins and Development of the Theme of the Last Judgment', in D. Bevington et al. (eds.), *Homo, Memento Finis: The Iconography of Just Judgment in Medieval Art and Drama* (Kalamazoo, 1985), p. 46.

[25] M. Gill, 'Monastic Murals and *Lectio* in the Later Middle Ages*',* in J. G. Clark (ed.), *The Culture of Medieval English Monasticism* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 66.

[26] C. Walker Bynum and P. Freedman, 'Introduction', in C. Walker Bynum and P. Freedman (eds.), *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 5-6.

depicting the author of Revelation, St. John the Evangelist, such as the Life of St. John are not included, unless they are used as part of a greater apocalyptic narrative, given the focus solely on the Apocalypse.

With these considerations in mind, the examples chosen fulfil these criteria, and were made and present in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The chosen objects display apocalyptic themes from Revelation as these intimately connect with the apocalyptic thought of the day. These objects have also been chosen on the basis that they were objects either in parish churches or placed in institutional spaces (e.g., monastic houses or guilds) and so open to a wider and more varied audience. Some of this material was made with specific religious spaces in mind, such as chapter houses, cloisters and for altars, which would affect how they were made and viewed. This material includes two apocalyptic stained glass windows in York Minster and All Saints' Church, York, wall paintings at both Westminster Abbey and St. Mary's Cathedral, Coventry, ceiling bosses in the cloister of Norwich Cathedral and several alabaster panels that may have been in various English churches and homes.[27] The objects which have been chosen were located in different settings, and are scattered throughout England, providing a reasonable geographic diversity. Together this material can suggest how a wide range of people and communities thought about the end of the world, alongside when and where they may have encountered these beliefs and thoughts in their everyday lives. Further, this material provides insight into how visual expressions of the apocalypse may have shaped engagement with ideas about the end of the world among different communities and people.

4. 1. The Great East Window, York Minster

One of the greatest apocalyptic treasures is the Great East Window in York Minster, considered one of the largest expanses of English medieval stained glass existing today.[28] This window is made up of glass panels depicting biblical scenes. These include various scenes of God the Father accompanied in Heaven, 27 depicting the Old Testament including images from Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Judges, 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, and 81 depicting Revelation (including four images depicting the life of St. John), with the bottom nine scenes

[27] It should be noted that St. Mary's Cathedral in Coventry was destroyed in the dissolution of the monasteries. Fragments from the wall paintings, however, still exist.

[28] For an easy navigation of the Great East window to see the glass panels in detail, see: York Glaziers Trust, <https://stainedglass-navigator.yorkglazierstrust.org/window/great-east-window> [accessed 23rd March 2023).

after this showcasing various historical and contemporary figures.[29] The window was paid for by Walter Skirlaw, the bishop of Durham, who contributed a total of £56 4s over three years to its creation.[30] Most notably, Skirlaw hired John Thornton, a master glazier from Coventry, to produce the work alongside many hired workhands, and Thornton likely designed much of the window himself with the help of either an apocalyptic manuscript or a series of sketches available to him.[31] Skirlaw himself can be seen in one of the bottom panels of the window, nestled between various kings, including the mythical King Ebrauk and Edward III, and saints, including St. Sampson and St. William, who were important to the history of the Minster and see of York.[32] Skirlaw had a history of building projects, having contributed to a new cloister, dormitory, and stained glass window in the chapel of Nine Altars, all at Durham Cathedral.[33]

The window has been dated to the years 1405 to 1408, based on a summary of a medieval contract which stipulated the start date, and that the work should be done within three years.[34] The window itself is located in the Lady Chapel, at the east end of York Minster. As such, it would have mainly been accessible to the religious community, such as the secular clergy and canons, who would have spent a significant amount of time at the Minster. Their guests including royalty and the nobility may also have been privy to the window, such as Henry IV, when he visited to see the window in progress in 1407.[35] Other visitors may have included local townsfolk, merchants, and the wider community

[29] S. Brown, *The Great East Window at York Minster: An English Masterpiece* (London, 2018), p. 63.

[30] R. K. Emmerson, 'Visualising the Apocalypse in Late Medieval England: The York Minster Great East Window', in D. J. B. Trim and P. J. Balderstone (eds.), *Cross, Crown and Community: Religion, Government and Culture in Early Modern England, 1400-1800* (Bern, 2004), p. 44; C. Norton, 'Richard II and York Minster' in S. Rees Jones (ed.), *The Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter* (York, 1997), p. 63.

[31] Emmerson, 'Visualising the Apocalypse in Late Medieval England', pp. 43-4.

[32] Brown, *The Great East Window at York Minster,* p. 62.

[33] C. D. Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham in the Late Middle Ages: Lordship, Community and the Cult of St Cuthbert* (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 104; Brown, *The Great East Window at York Minster,* p. 26.

[34] Norton, 'Richard II and York Minster', p. 63.

[35] Emmerson, 'Visualising the Apocalypse in Late Medieval England', pp. 50-1; D. Biggs, 'An Ill and Infirm King: Henry IV, Health and the Gloucester Parliament of 1407', in G. Dodd and D. Biggs (eds.), *The Reign of Henry IV: Rebellion and Survival 1403-13* (York, 2008), p. 186.

surrounding York.[36] Finally, pilgrims would have visited York Minster, especially after Scrope's tomb was erected in the lady chapel, near the *Great East Window*, which likely drew large crowds.[37] Richard Scrope, archbishop of York, had been executed in 1405 after a failed revolt against Henry IV, and despite attempts to curtail his cult, his tomb was visited regularly by his supporters.[38] In the year 1415, a total of £78 8s was raised at the site of Scrope's tomb, which increased to £150 in 1419, suggesting that a large number of pilgrims were drawn to it, and as a result, the *Great East Window* in the early fifteenth century was seen by many pilgrims from all around England.[39]

The secular clergy of the Minister were the ones who likely saw and interacted with it every day. These men were likely to be literate and would have had a good knowledge of the Bible, which would have been needed to fully comprehend the intricacies of the window images. The window itself has small bits of writing in some frames, often picking out key figures, or otherwise highlighting speech that characters in each image say. This is important to note due to the sheer scale of the window, which means that the scenes at the top cannot be viewed clearly with the naked eye. The text on these panels, placed inside scrolls would likely not have been read easily, if at all, by those below. As such, the scrolls on which the writing is placed would likely have been a reminder to the literate viewer of important phrases from Revelation if they were familiar with the text. For example, in the image of the opening of the first seal, a scroll is present, depicting the words, 'Veni et vide' ('Come and See'), referencing the words of one of the four living creatures (Rev. 6:1).[40] While the priestly viewer may not have been able to clearly read it, they would still likely have been reminded of the key important phrases of this part of the apocalypse, and these would come to mind on viewing the scene as a whole. For lay viewers, the Latin is also very basic, meaning that anyone with some literate skills or knowledge of the apocalypse may have

[36] R. B. Dobson, 'The Later Middle Ages, 1215-1500', in G. E. Aylmer and R. Cant (ed.), *A History of York Minster* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 84-5.

[37] C. Norton, 'Richard Scrope and York Minster', in P.J.P. Goldberg (ed.), *Richard Scrope: Archbishop, Rebel, Martyr* (Donnington, 2007), pp. 171-174.

[38] P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Introduction', in P. J. P. Goldberg (ed.), *Richard Scrope: Archbishop, Rebel, Martyr* (Donington, 2007), p. 15.

[39] L. D. Gelfand, '"I was blind and now I can see!" Sight and Revelation in the St William Window at York Minster', in E. A. Foster, J. Perratore and S. Rozenski (eds.), *Devotional Interaction in Medieval England and its Afterlives* (Leiden, 2018), p. 171.

[40] Douay-Rheims Bible, <https://www.drbo.org/chapter/73006.htm>, [accessed 26th April 2023].

understood it. The scrolls that the writing is on give the sense of a scene 'in action', the scene happening in the now and with a 'moving like' quality. The viewer may have been able to hear the voice of the scroll in their mind, and the vivid imagery may have encouraged the viewer to actively use their imagination in contemplating the scene.

The window situated the clergy and the Church in the life of York. The window connected actual people with the momentous events of the future and emphasised the theme of universal history, tying together the events of the past, present, and future. As such, it could provide a warning to viewers of the changes that were coming, and the effect that may have on contemporary life. For example, one of the images within the window depicts merchants mourning over the fall of Babylon because of the loss of their riches. Given that York was primarily a mercantile city, it was evidently felt that this part of the Apocalypse would have a particular impact on its viewers in understanding the sheer change the world would undergo, and a message to not become too entwined with wealth, exemplifying the importance of the salvation of the soul away from earthly endeavours.[41] These depictions also exemplified York's rich history and strengthened its growing importance in the ecclesiastical landscape of England. York had received a royal charter in 1396, giving the city and its people various privileges and liberties, and this signified the greater importance of the city, and the need to encourage an understanding of York's history, especially to set itself apart from the other archepiscopal see of Canterbury.[42] Skirlaw, as bishop of Durham, depicted himself in the window, highlighting not only his patronage of many northern churches but also, in this case, his interest in guiding the spiritual flourishment of the clergy and laity of York.[43]

The window reflected salvation history and God's hierarchy. God resides at the top of the window as its more important element. The Old Testament and New Testament scenes then tell the story of Christianity from past to future, situating the Old Testament first in the same order as it is presented in the Bible and then the apocalypse is placed below this. The window was expected to be read much in the same way as a page from a book, from top to bottom and left to right, setting the trajectory from the beginning of the world to its end and

[41] S. Brown, *Apocalypse: The Great East Window of York Minster* (York, 2014), p. 39.

[42] D. Piroyansky, *Martyrs in the Making: Political Martyrdom in Late Medieval England* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 70.

[43] Brown, *The Great East Window at York Minster,* p. 62; Norton, 'Richard Scrope and York Minster', pp. 146-7.

culminating in the judgment and salvation of the Christians as told in Revelation.[44] The window, however, makes clear the significance of the apocalypse over the Old Testament. This is achieved subtly, not only because the apocalypse scenes were more visible to its viewers, but also because there were three times the number of apocalypse scenes than Old Testament scenes. This likely stressed the prominence of the apocalypse as a time which was approaching and cast the viewer's thoughts towards their earthly end, and the transition to the Last Judgment, and hopefully, an eternity in God's presence.

Still, there must have been a sense of significance particular to the apocalyptic scenes that was not afforded to the same extent to the Old Testament material; this may have come from the apocalypse's particular devotional context, in which the end inspired repentance and a sense of individual spiritual responsibility which was important to foster in both the clerical and lay communities of York Minster and the city.[45] By contrast, the importance of the Old Testament material in the window was to provide a sense of continuity to the window as a whole, in which the apocalypse can be seen as the end point of the entirety of Christian history, and the Old Testament the beginning. This can be similarly seen in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* and to a smaller extent in *The Columbinus Prophecy,* which used Genesis and Old Testament imagery to begin their explanation of the end. Doing so highlighted the inevitable end of the apocalypse as having a strict role in the culmination of Christian history, as well as providing a point of reference for the medieval reader, who would be just as intimately familiar with Genesis and other Old Testament texts. The emphasis placed on the future and its link to the past in the form of the Old Testament would have provided a sense of continuity for the religious community whose job was to act as the glue between these two events. This is particularly important given the increase in the popularity of chantries in late-medieval England, in which priests acted as devotional mediators between the dead and the divine.[46]

These points highlight the importance that the apocalypse played more generally in the lives of both the religious and lay communities, with York being no exception, given the sheer number of chantries situated within the city walls.[47] The window, then, can be

[44] Brown, *The Great East Window of York Minster,* pp. 52-3.

[45] Camille, 'Visionary Perception and Images of the Apocalypse in the Later Middle Ages', p. 288.

[46] Burgess, 'For the Increase of Divine Service', p. 49.

[47] R. B. Dobson, *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England* (London and Rio Grande, 1996), pp. 254-5. Dobson states that there were approximately 140 different chantries within the city of York, and this

understood as demonstrating a preoccupation with the Last Judgment and the end. Furthermore, the sustained devotion it inspired became caught up with ideas about the apocalypse, both for priests who continued to provide daily masses for the dead and so would have reflected on their salvation, and for laypeople who may have seen the images and felt that their own salvation was dependant on strengthening their relationship to their local parish and, through this, to God.

Figure 4.1: The damned at the Last Judgment, Great East Window, York Minster. Copyright: The York Glaziers Trust, reproduced by kind permission of the Chapter of York.

The window deals directly with the Last Judgment and its connection more generally with the apocalypse. The last row of apocalypse panels, a total of nine, depicts the judgment, the final battle against Gog and Magog, and the fates of those after. These would have been closest to the eyes of the viewer, and so naturally most prominent in terms of being properly studied, affecting the messages that they would have come away with. In one panel, those that have been damned to Hell are herded towards the entrance by an angel (see Figure 4.1.) These figures are naked and, except for the two figures wearing crowns, indistinguishable from each other, so that the viewer could picture themselves as part of the crowd. This might have instilled fear in the viewer that this could be them and reminded them of the weight of their sins. What is also particularly interesting is that the two most foregrounded figures wear

number alone only accounts for perpetual chantries. However, it must be stated that this covers the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, and thus not all of these would have been active during the period in question. It does, however, highlight the interest and importance of chantries in late-medieval York society.

crowns atop their heads, one a more standard crown reminiscent of the sort a secular king might wear, and the other a papal crown. Here, the window makes the specific case that those in higher positions of authority could still sin, and this may have encouraged those viewing the image to have a more critical eye towards their authorities. Further, the figures placed at the front indicate that those who are imbued with authority from God are also to be held more accountable in the Last Judgement, as they were given their power and authority through God's divine will.[48]

The use of the papal crown suggests that while the pope was God's mouthpiece on Earth, he was not always a righteous or pious man. Such claims may have come from York's turbulent relationship with the papacy, especially in the mid-fourteenth century. During this time, York made numerous complaints to parliament concerning the number of foreigners holding prebends, and that, because of this, over half of the income of the Minster per year was going to absentees, causing a financial rift between the Minster and the papacy in Rome.[49] On a wider scale, the Great Schism, which was ongoing during the production of the Great East Window soured relations between the Avignon pope and English clergy. Therefore, the representation of the damned pope in the Last Judgment scene suggests a criticism of some who held the papal office, in contrast to the expectation that the pope was the ultimate spiritual authority.[50] Similar to Henry of Kirkstede's papal prophecies, the window is critical of the papacy, suggesting that, despite being ordained by God, the pope could still fall to sin and fail to reach salvation just like everyone else. Moreover, it suggests that some may have believed that the papacy was in a state of decline, as the pope was unable to distinguish himself from other Christians in the end times. As such, the window emphasised the role of the individual in achieving salvation, with each individual as responsible alone for their path, rather than a reliance on the role of the papacy or other officials to reach God.

Likewise, the use of a secular crown may have also had implications for kingship in England. If Henry IV had viewed the window as it was underway, it may have reminded him that his spiritual fortune was linked to his ability to be a good ruler.[51] This is particularly important given the location of Scrope's tomb in the lady chapel near the window, a reminder

[48] G. Hariss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360-1461* (Oxford, 2005), p. 3.

[49] Hariss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360-1461*, p. 327.

[50] Whalen, *The Medieval Papacy*, p. 159.

[51] Biggs, 'An Ill and Infirm King', p. 186.

to Henry IV of the precariousness of his position, and the importance of good kingship in keeping a pious life on both Earth and in Heaven. Relations between Henry IV and the citizens of York were poor immediately following Scrope's death in 1405, with property belonging to the rebels being placed into the king's hands, and the city of York was forced to pay 500 marks alongside carrying out a citywide act of contrition in the king's honour.[52] Attempts to mend this barrier came in 1406 when Henry IV gave instructions to the Minster to not stop those who came to pray at Scrope's tomb and shrine, and more generally the return of York's city liberties.[53] Still, concerns regarding the correct way to govern, and the impact that one's actions would have on the progression of one's soul to Heaven likely abounded when viewing the window in this period.

Figure 4.2: The adoration of the beast, Great East Window, York Minster. Copyright: The York Glaziers Trust, reproduced by kind permission of the Chapter of York.

Implications for Henry IV's reign can also be seen in Figure 4.2, which depicts the beast holding a sceptre given to him by the dragon and being worshipped by those still on Earth. Each of the heads of the beast is decorated with a crown, as referenced in Revelation 13:1, but the beast also holds a sceptre, here symbolising that, 'the dragon gave him his own

[52] C. D. Liddy, 'William Frost, the City of York and Scrope's Rebellion of 1405' in P.J.P. Goldberg (ed.), *Richard Scrope: Archbishop, Rebel, Martyr* (Donnington, 2007), p. 74.

[53] Norton, 'Richard Scrope and York Minster' pp. 172-3; Liddy, 'William Frost, the City of York and Scrope's Rebellion of 1405', p. 74.

strength, and great power' (Rev. 13:2) as shown in the previous image.[54] The choice to depict the giving of power in this way, symbolic of the same trappings of power that were given to a medieval king, shows that this was principally how medieval English people viewed this exchange of power within their society.[55] Similarly to how a king derived his authority and power through the grace of God, symbolised in the royal regalia, the beast derived his power and authority through the dragon and the hierarchy of evil, which is then shown to the viewer through its own 'royal regalia' such as the staff. The image of the adoration, then, can be seen as a perverse take on the medieval court, perhaps a symbolic representation of how the court might look if the king was weak, or did not uphold the values expected of him.

Moreover, the placement near Scrope's tomb may have impacted those viewing this scene, especially local pilgrims and devotees of Scrope, as it may have provided some form of vindication that the king's actions were not indisputable and that he could carry out actions contrary to God's will. Scrope's enduring cult and martyrdom would have further contrasted with the image of the damned king, confirming for its audience Scrope's martyrdom and guaranteeing God's righteousness to parse good from evil in the Last Judgment.[56] Further, it would have endorsed these political connotations, reminding the Lancastrians that their actions may have consequences for the fate of their soul, and endorsing rising against unfair or repressive kings. This is important, given that Scrope was instrumental in much of the glazing of the east end of the Minster, where the *Great East Window* is situated.[57] While the window was not itself designed by Scrope, Skirlaw placed his own arms alongside Scrope's in the south choir arcade, suggesting a sense of friendship or respect, given that it was likely that both were involved in the initial plans for the glazing of the east end of the Minster.[58] The existence of the *Great East Window* may have placed Scrope's death and martyrdom in the greater scheme of the apocalypse, endorsing his actions and putting them into the context of a battle between good and evil. This apocalyptic struggle may have been recognised by

[54] Douay-Rheims, <http://www.drbo.org/chapter/73013.htm>, [accessed 5th February 2023.]

[55] K. Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval England* (Oxon and New York, 2013), p. 246.

[56] D. Piroyansky, '"Martyrio pulchro finitus": Archbishop Scrope's Martyrdom and the Creation of a Cult', in P. J. P. Goldberg (ed.), *Richard Scrope: Archbishop, Rebel, Martyr* (Donington, 2007), pp. 109-111.

[57] C. Norton, 'Sacred Space and Sacred History: The Glazing of the Eastern Arm of York Minster' in R. Becksmann (ed.), *Glasmalerei im Kontext: Bildprogramme und Raumfunktionen: Akten des XXII* (Nuremberg, 2005), p. 173. For a more extensive look at Scrope's involvement in York Minster, see: Norton, 'Richard Scrope and York Minster', pp. 138-213.

[58] Norton, 'Richard II and York Minster', p. 7; Norton, 'Richard Scrope and York Minster', pp. 149-50.

visitors to the tomb, ensuring that they viewed the history of England within this greater scheme of history and further reflected on his martyrdom through an apocalyptic lens.

4. 2. The Pricke of Conscience Window, All Saint's Church, North Street, York

The Pricke of Conscience window, another example of apocalyptic stained glass, can be found at All Saint's Church, North Street, York. The window, named after the Middle English poem of the same name, was inspired by the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* which were written about directly within Book V of the *Pricke of Conscience.*[59] The *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* themselves had come most notably from Luke 21:5-28, but are also seen in some semblance in Revelation too, which speaks about the coming signs before the apocalypse.[60] More specifically, however, it was believed that the fifteen signs had been adopted from the thought of St. Jerome, possibly because of Jerome's writings on the Book of Daniel, which spoke about the Antichrist. In actuality, they did not come into being in their more contemporary form until the writings of Peter Damian and Peter Comestor.[61] It is these fifteen signs which are shown in the window, in three columns of five images, alongside members of the family who commissioned the glass underneath in miniature portrait. These signs had been adapted into the *Pricke of Conscience* because they fitted well with the poem's themes of sin, death and salvation leading up to the end of the world. Written, most likely, in Northern Yorkshire between 1325 and 1350, it became incredibly popular throughout the later Middle Ages, surviving in 99 copies in a 'northern dialect' in various manuscripts.[62] The majority of these manuscripts date from 1375 to 1425, showing a continuous cycle of interaction with the *Pricke of Conscience*, although this popularity started to dip post-1425.[63] The poem even spawned a Latin translation, suggesting that it gathered

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[59] Prik of Conscience, ed. James H. Morey <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/morey-prik-of-conscience>, [last accessed 8th July 2023], part five, line 747-804; S. Rozenski, 'A Light to Lighten the Gentiles: Stained Glass, The Prick of Conscience, and Theological Double Vision in All Saints (North Street), York', in E.A. Foster, J. Perratore and S. Rozenski (eds.), *Devotional Interactions in Medieval England and its Afterlives* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 288-9.

[60] O'Mara, '"Go ȝe curselynges, to euerelasting fiere"', p. 282.

[61] S. Powell, 'All Saints' Church, North Street, York: Text and Image in the Pricke of Conscience Window', in N. Morgan (ed.), *Prophecy, Apocalypse and the Day of Doom: Proceedings of the 2000 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donnington, 2004), p. 293.

[62] Rozenski, 'A Light to Lighten the Gentiles', pp. 285-6.

[63] For a comprehensive breakdown of all *Pricke of Conscience Manuscripts,* please see: M. G. Sargent, 'What do the numbers mean? A Textual Critic's Observations on some Patterns of Middle English Manuscript

clerical as well as lay readers.[64] Despite its popularity, it was still very unusual to see this poem, or any others like it, depicted in a parish church and this window demonstrates an extraordinary interest in this specific piece of apocalypticism.

The window itself has also been attributed to John Thornton, in the years 1415-20, soon after the Great East Window had been completed at York Minster.[65] The window was commissioned and paid for by the Henryson and Hesyl families, who were named on an inscription under the window, but of whom little is known.[66] Given the expense of a window of this size and skill, and its use of Middle English, which was an unusual choice for stained glass, it is likely they could read Middle English and were among the urban elite of York.[67] Ellen Rentz has argued that the glazing of the window was, in essence, a bequeathment of part of the poem to their local parish church, in much the same way that people gave copies of the *Pricke of Conscience* to friends and relatives in their wills in the previous decades.[68] Indeed, depictions of both male and female members of the family can be seen along the bottom row of the window praying, suggesting that the remembrance of them as a family and as part of the greater parish community was caught up in the more apocalyptic elements of the window.

It must be noted that the window as it is present now was not how it exactly would have looked during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The window can be read from left to right, and interestingly, from the bottom to top, ending with the 15th panel in the top right. So, panels 1, 5, 7, 8, 13, and 15 seem unchanged, but the other panels have been changed

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Transmission', in M. Connolly and L. R. Mooney (eds.), *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England* (York, 2008), pp. 218-9.

[64] S. Gayk, 'The Present of Future Things: Medieval Media and the Signs of the End of the World', in J. Brantley, S. Perkinson and E. C. Treviotdale (eds.), *Reassessing Alabaster Sculpture in Medieval England* (Kalamazoo, 2021), p. 249.

[65] Rozenski, 'A Light to Lighten the Gentiles', p. 289.

[66] E. A. Gee, 'The Painted Glass of All Saints' Church, North Street, York', *Archaeologia* 102 (1969), pp. 161-2; S. Gayk, 'Apocalyptic Ecologies: Eschatology, the Ethics of Care, and the Fifteen Signs of Doom in Early England', *Speculum* 96/1 (2021), p. 1. This inscription no longer exists but was recorded in Johnston: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Top. Yorks. C.14, ff.94v, 99r. Some of the literature also refer to them as the Hessle family; I will be referring to them with the spelling Hesyl as this is preferred in the literature.

[67] J. Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture* (New York, 2010) p. 74; M. Johnston, 'Copying and Reading *the Prick of Conscience* in Late Medieval England', *Speculum* 95/3 (2020), p. 742.

[68] E. Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England* (Columbus, 2015), p. 125.

slightly in either pose or imagery from the originals.[69] With regards to this, both the window in its current state, especially the panels that are unchanged, alongside the text and images made by Henry Johnston in 1670 (the closest dated transcription of the window to the fifteenth century available) are used here in order to further understand the window as it existed in the late-medieval period.[70] It must be noted that Susan Powell believes that much of the window text is original because it does not match any of the extant manuscript versions of the *Pricke of Conscience* particularly well. Rather, the inscriptions correspond closely with the *Chester Play of Prophets,* suggesting a mixed heritage in which the *Pricke of Conscience* was used alongside other versions of the fifteen signs that were in circulation.[71]

Apocalyptic rhetoric was dramatic, in that it defined and refined the end times, depicting the battles and judgment before the eternal bliss of eternity after the end. Therefore, it was a comfortable fit for dramatic performance, in which the dramatic came to life to allow the audience to temporarily experience the end for themselves, and thus fully comprehend the apocalypse, and by extension the importance of their soul's salvation.[72] While the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* were likely never visualised on stage, they were described by an Expositor in the Chester cycle, suggesting their connection to the mystery plays more widely.[73] Moreover, a representation of the Last Judgment using trumpets and a wounded Christ in the York Mercers' play, shows that apocalyptic scenes were played out in religious dramas.[74] The transferral of this to stained glass suggests a desire to place this drama within the Church, to highlight the destructive nature of the apocalypse, as well as to encourage comprehension within the lives of the parish community. Medieval dramas, alongside talented preachers and teachers, were the most accessible ways in which medieval audiences may have accessed biblical stories. Consequently, stained glass provided a medium by which

[69] Powell, 'All Saints' Church, North Street, York', p. 304. A restoration took place in 1670, and an inscription and images were made alongside it by Henry Johnston, before more restorations were made in 1861 by John Ward Knowles, which was documented in the Shaw study of 1908. It is between 1670 and 1861 that these changes were evidently made, although likely this was out of ignorance rather than malice.

[70] Henry Johnston's transcription can be found in: MS Top. Yorks. C.14, f. 94v, 99r.

[71] Powell, 'All Saints' Church, North Street, York', p. 301.

[72] J. Stevenson, 'Poised at the Threatening Edge: Feeling the Future in Medieval Last Judgment Performances', *Theatre Journal,* 67/2 (2015), p. 274.

[73] C. Davidson, 'The Signs of Doomsday in Drama and Art', *Historical Reflections* 26/2 (2000), p. 237.

[74] Davidson, 'The Signs of Doomsday in Drama and Art', p. 227. Davidson notes that this was in an inventory in 1433.

to expand the accessibility of drama into the church and help its lay audience recognise and understand the apocalypse, and in this case the signs, for themselves. This is supported by the use of Middle English under the signs which allowed parishioners to read and comprehend the images of the *Pricke* window for themselves.[75]

The window sat in the northern wall of the church, and it is likely that the wealthy urban families, including Henryson and Hesyl, sat nearest the high altar, which would have been the closest that laypeople would have got to the window.[76] As such, they would have been able to enjoy and reflect on the images that they had placed there. While it is unlikely that there had initially been pews when the window was installed, the proximity between it and where the laity would have stood would have afforded a clear view for its audience.[77] This closeness would have allowed other parishioners to recall their physical attendance at services after their deaths by physically being able to see their depictions in the window. Further, the depictions of the family members were in the eye line of those that worshipped, putting their miniature figures alongside the actual parishioners, giving the impression as if they were actively worshipping alongside the rest of the parish.[78] This all embedded the family within the fabric of church life and connected them deeply within the community. The window, therefore, is both a reflection of contemporary apocalypticism, but also became an article of remembrance for the rest of the church, in which the fate of the family and the parish was inextricably linked with the end times.

As for the creation of the window, it makes sense that the Henryson and Hesyl families would have chosen parts from the *Pricke of Conscience* instead of explicit biblical passages. The *Pricke of Conscience* was exceedingly popular in late-medieval England and was likely known in at least some form by most parishioners. This could include a solitary reading of the text, reading the text in groups or during parish sermons, or having seen it represented in various mystery plays.[79] So, the representation of the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* on the parish windows of All Saint's church would have been easy for other

[75] Gayk, 'The Present of Future Things', p. 250.

[76] Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture,* p. 74.

[77] K. L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001), p. 162; Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture,* p. 74.

[78] Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture,* p. 75.

[79] Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness,* p. 147; P. M. King, *Reading Texts for Performance and Performances as Texts: Shifting Paradigms in Early English Drama Studies* (London and New York, 2021), p. 43.

parishioners to interpret, and many would have been able to fill in the context for themselves, especially given that the Middle English couplets were shown under each scene. Likewise, the addition of the fifteen signs to the windows in the northern aisle may have been used directly by some parish priests, who may have gestured to the images on the window in the same way that they did with wall paintings.[80] The interactivity of the windows allowed for them to, in turn, be used devotionally and connect with sermons that may have encouraged repentance and salvation. The multipurpose nature of the windows, in which they were used publicly, but could also be admired more privately, allowed for interactive devotion, and encouraged a sense of shared commonality between the different peoples in the parish as being linked by a shared Christian future.

Figure 4.3: The seventh day, Pricke of Conscience Window, All Saint's North Street. Copyright: Gordon Plumb, reproduced with his kind permission.

If this is the case, this further embedded the images in the community of the church and, in turn, may have made the parishioners more 'apocalyptically focused', meaning that mortality and salvation could have been given a greater community focus. Indeed, the *Pricke of Conscience* has been described as being used in devotional practices, so it would make sense for the text to have been adapted for visual display to aid in this manner.[81] While the part picked was not a typical choice when it came to medieval devotional practices, and images such as the Last Judgment may have proved better for this, the images still directed the viewer to imagine the suffering of the world, immersing the viewer in this new world.

[80] Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England*, p. 147.

[81] Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, p. 148.

This is emphasised through the images' use of local features. One of the images, for example, shows the destruction of a stone church with toppled spire (Figure 4.3), which is reminiscent of All Saint's Church itself, and linked the images more closely with the parish.[82] This allowed the community to imagine itself as physically present in the apocalypse, rather than its being a more abstract concept that appeared distant. This is especially poignant with images such as the destruction of the church, wherein the viewer can imagine this destruction as happening around them, providing a more personalised experience. The human figures around the images likewise appear to model devotional behaviour, presenting the best way for the viewers to react to the unfolding events.[83] For those viewing the seventh sign (Figure 4.3), there is a sense of shock, reflected on the faces of the two men stood either side of the destroyed church, while they point to the wreckage in the middle. This pointing directed the viewers' gaze centrally at the destruction, keeping this as the sole focal point, and so increasing the apocalyptic fervour of the viewer in imagining the apocalypse as something imminent.

The window focused on the tribulations as the key apocalyptic theme, rather than following a more traditional narrative based on Revelation, as can be seen in the *Great East Window*. The first ten signs deal directly with the ecological destruction of the world, and the impact of that on how the landscape would look. The tenth sign, for example, states, 'ye tend day for neven, erth sal be made playn and even,' with the windows image depicting a barren and flat land, the sky an uncomfortable blood red.[84] Images such as these were intended to strike fear into the hearts of the viewer, perhaps even to provide a comparison to the everyday world around them, whose perspective of the world would revolve intently around nature and the land. The intense imagery of the earth as a wasteland was likely frightening, and this fear may have pushed some to repentance and worship God, especially in terms of evoking God's power as the arbiter of this change. Moreover, it contrasted with the more supernatural nature of the apocalypse, in which events were more spiritual and situated within the physical realm. By doing this, the idea of salvation of one's soul became much less spiritual and more concrete, encouraging active participation and meditation on behalf of the viewer.

[82] Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England,* p. 134.

[83] Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England,* p. 138.

[84] The inscription here comes from Johnston 1670's survey given some discrepancies between how the text reads now and an earlier rendition of the text as it was shown in 1670. This has been chosen to be used as it's the closest we can get to the original medieval inscription; the text however has been checked against my own and Susan Powell's transcriptions.

Figure 4.4: The eleventh day, Pricke of Conscience Window, All Saint's North Street. Copyright: Gordon Plumb, reproduced with his kind permission.

Figure 4.5: Part of the Hesyl family, Pricke of Conscience Window, All Saint's North Street. Copyright: Gordon Plumb, reproduced with his kind permission.

By contrast, the last five images focus more on the human impact of the apocalypse and the impact that this has on human behaviour. In the eleventh sign, it records that 'ye xi day all men come out, of their holes & ren about', but the image specifically shows a small group gathered together on their knees, with their hands in prayer.[85] The decision to show this, rather than a more literal interpretation of the text, suggests that the key focus here was

[85] Powell, 'All Saints' Church, North Street, York', pp. 314-5. Yet again, there is some discrepancy between the text on the window and that in Johnston's translation, which has been chosen to be used because it is more complete.

on the need for prayer, devotion and salvation in approaching topics of the apocalypse. The figures are, by and large, robed, perhaps showing that these figures are members of the clergy. However, there is a woman shown further back suggesting more generally that this was an appropriate action for all of the parishioners to follow. After all, while the text suggests a flurry of movement and chaos, the image instead highlights the preferred action for people to take, as well as offering a moment of consolation for the viewer. While the apocalypse may be a fearful event, peace could still be found if one was willing to continue to honour and express devotion to God. Tentatively, it could also be argued that the figures in this image are those of the Henryson and Hesyl families, given the similarity of the figures in terms of hair and garb. It is hard, however, to argue this with any certainty, as these may simply be stylistic choices made by Thornton, rather than intentional in depicting the families in the coming end. If this is the case, it may be that the family saw themselves as modelling for their community, encouraging the correct Christian action in approaching the end. It may also suggest, more generally, that the families were well-liked by their community and were influential in curating the spiritual experience for their parish. Clearly, the apocalypse posed some importance to the Henryson and Hesyl families, and they wanted to share 'resources', as it were, with their fellow parishioners in the hope of supporting their journey through the end times, and encouraging a devotional response to apocalypticism.

Figure 4.6: The fourteenth day, Pricke of Conscience Window, All Saint's North Street. Copyright: Gordon Plumb, reproduced with his kind permission.

Finally, the sign of the fourteenth day reads, 'ye xiiii day all yat lives yan, sall dy bathe child man & woman', referencing the death of all before the Resurrection and Last

Judgment.[86] The image chosen is quite traditional in its depiction of death, with a woman and man lying in bed while the priest and others gather around the bodies, while death looks on. While the label emphasised the deaths of all people, the image reflects the more expected death of the average medieval person, as depicted in the *Ars Moriendi*.[87] The *Ars Moriendi* detailed a process of the 'right' way to die, and the image here was reminiscent of this encouragement to act in the best way, to ensure that each parishioner gave themselves the greatest chance of avoiding Hell and reaching Heaven. By favouring this image over that of a more traditional apocalyptic scene, it highlights the connection between the importance of death and the apocalypse. Christians believed in two points of judgment, one at the moment of death, and a second judgment, at the end of the world, the Last Judgment.[88] The immediate death would take place at the hands of archangel Michael, and it was expected that the dying had carried out many good works in life, in order to be sent to a favourable spiritual destination. It was also expected that Christians prepare well for death, and carry out appropriate funerary rites, to aid in a better judgment in front of God.[89] These 'good works' are represented in the 'Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy' and were intrinsically linked to dying and the 'first judgment', in that they protected the soul and brought the community further together, for example, through the giving of monetary gifts, or the clothing of the poor.[90]

[86] Powell, 'All Saints' Church, North Street, York', p. 316.

[87] Anonymous, 'The Art of Dying', in *Medieval Popular Religion 1000-1500: A Reader*, ed. John Shinners (2nd ed., Toronto, 2009), pp. 537-549.

[88] E. Tingle, 'Changing Western European Visions of Christian Afterlives, 1350-1700: Heaven, Hell and Purgatory', in P. Booth and E. Tingle (eds.), *A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, c.1300-1700* (Leiden, 2021), p. 34.

[89] E. Tingle, 'Changing Western European Visions of Christian Afterlives', p. 35.

[90] M. Gray, 'Deathbed and Burial Rituals in Late Medieval Catholic Europe', in P. Booth and E. Tingle (eds.), *A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, c.1300-1700* (Leiden, 2021), p. 126.

Figure 4.7: Visiting the sick, Acts of Mercy Window, All Saint's North Street. Copyright: Gordon Plumb, reproduced with his kind permission.

Interestingly, All Saint's Church also had a stained glass window specifically depicting the 'Acts of Mercy', also attributed to John Thornton in around 1410, paid for by the one-time mayor, Nicholas Blackburn Senior.[91] It is possible that, despite their differing patrons, the windows were linked, and were created to work in symbiosis with each other. While the *Acts of Mercy* window represented the first judgment, the *Pricke* window represented the second, thus bringing together the themes of death and apocalypticism. The rationale may have been to explicitly encourage penitence and repentance, by balancing the two judgments next to each other. Rentz believes that the *Acts of Mercy* window was also positioned in the northern wall during this period, so the viewer would likely have seen the two windows in tandem with each other.[92] Further, the *Acts of Mercy* window also shows the patrons of the windows praying in the bottom scenes and, similarly, a deathbed scene is located in one of the middle panels, mirroring the scene in the *Pricke* window. In both, those carrying out 'good works' are visiting the dying, while the dying themselves are preparing for their 'good death', in order to receive a favourable judgment. Both images cast the medieval mind into thinking about their salvation and judgment, and thus encourage a cycle of

[91] J. Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Practice,* p. 71. Ellen Rentz has given a wider dating for the window as between 1410-35 (pp. 138-9), placing the Acts of Mercy window a bit after the creation of the Pricke window. However, given the close dating between both, it is possible that the Acts of Mercy window came first.

[92] Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England,* pp. 138-9.

penitence and bringing the community together in their shared Christian faith and action. The apocalypse is understood as fitting into this greater cycle and becomes the end goal for these actions and thoughts of repentance and devotion. Apocalypticism, then, was intimately linked with the community, creating a culture of death and repentance, which brought the community together as one.

4. 3. The Apocalypse Wall Paintings, Westminster Abbey, London

As discussed earlier in this thesis, one of the most important apocalyptic cycles available to us is the paintings on the walls of the chapter house of Westminster Abbey. The chapter house is octagonal, with the apocalypse paintings displayed in the northwest and north bays, the two western arches of the northeast bay, and then their corresponding sections on the south side. Entrants to the chapter house would have come through the doors on the western side of the room.[93] This meant that, directly in front of them, the viewer would have seen images of the Last Judgment painted on the eastern wall, and the apocalypse images would have enveloped them from the sides.[94] Noppen suggests that the paintings were produced between circa 1372 and 1404, and commissioned on behalf of John of Northampton, a monk of Westminster Abbey.[95] Hawkyard, however, argues that the paintings were likely not started until after 1379 when parliamentary sessions had moved out of the chapter house and into the refectory.[96] If so, the King's Great Council and the Commons may have been privy to the paintings upon their return to the chapter house for the parliament of November 1384, when the paintings would have surely impressed a certain vision upon those entering the space.[97] As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the images themselves were likely reproduced from manuscript B.10.2, a Latin Berengaudus commentary with accompanying images, which was produced for either a clerical or aristocratic audience. For those who sat in parliament, the images would have served as a reminder to act in a Christian manner, and that their worldly conversations would have had an impact on the spiritual refinement of their souls.

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[93] Noppen, 'The Westminster Apocalypse and its Source', p. 146.

[94] Dean and Chapter of Westminster, 'Chapter House', *Westminster Abbey*, <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/about-the-abbey/history/chapter-house>, [accessed 17th April 2022].

[95] Noppen, 'The Westminster Apocalypse and its Source', p. 146.

[96] A. Hawkyard, 'From Painted Chamber to St Stephen's Chapel: The Meeting Places of the House of Commons at Westminster until 1603', *Parliamentary History,* 22/1 (2002), p. 70.

[97] Hawkyard, 'From Painted Chamber to St Stephen's Chapel', p. 65.

Figure 4.8: Images from the Book of Revelation, north-west bay 2nd arch, Westminster Abbey, London. Taken by myself.

The primary audience for the paintings was the Benedictine monks of the abbey, who likely saw them daily. A lectern was situated at the centre of the space, in which a portion of the *Rule of St. Benedict* was read every morning, while the monks sat on the stairs around the room leading up to the paintings.[98] The *Rule of St. Benedict* set out how to live a good monastic life, both in terms of the practices and physical setting out of one's life, but also the necessary monastic and spiritual virtues needed to carry out a good life worthy of God's love.[99] The rule, then, was a guide for both inward and outward life. The adoption of the apocalypse cycle in the chapter house may have impacted how the *Rule* was to be understood by the monks. Here, the emphasis is placed on the importance of spiritual growth and salvation for the soul, with the apocalypse cycle acting as a reminder of heavenly judgment. After all, the epicentre of the apocalypse is the judgment, the tribulations reflecting the potential to descend into Hell, and the possible eternal future among those accepted by God. For these images to be added to the chapter house in the late-fourteenth century suggests the importance that was placed on these ideas for the continued growth and education of the monks. Similarly, to the windows discussed above, the abbot possibly used the images as an

[98] Hawkyard, 'From Painted Chamber to St Stephen's Chapel', p. 67.

[99] G. Melville, *The World of Medieval Monasticism: Its History and Forms of Life* (Collegeville, 2016), p. 36.

aid to his teachings, especially given that he would have stood at the lectern in the middle of the room, and been able to gesture to the images that surrounded him and his congregation.[100]

Figure 4.9: Images from the Book of Revelation, north-west bay 4th arch, Westminster Abbey, London. Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

Figure 4.10: Part of the Last Judgment scenes, eastern wall, Westminster Abbey, London. Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

[100] M. Gill, 'Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England', in C. A. Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2002), p. 175; B. Harvey, 'The monks of Westminster and their chapter house', in W. Rodwell and R. Mortimer (eds.), *Westminster Chapter House: the history, art and architecture of a 'chapter house beyond compare'* (London, 2010), p. 104.

After the *Rule* was read out, there was an expectation that confession and correction would take place.[101] This may be the key reason why the apocalypse and Last Judgment images were present on the walls of the chapter house. They would strongly exhort sorrowful and truthful confession by the monks, who would be reminded of the weight of their confession in the greater scheme of their Christian life. Some of these images, such as those in Figure 4.8, directly show Christ in their centre, sitting on his throne in judgment on the last day. While these images did not deal directly with the Last Judgment, the two lower panels depict John on the left, and the elders on the right, adoring Christ. The viewer would have similarly understood that their role was to act in a way similar to that of John and to commend themself to Christ as was expected at the end of the world. The images chosen to depict Christ were framed around his role as judge and warrior, so in Figure 4.9, he is depicted alongside the four horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:1-8). These images would have provided weight to the words spoken by the confessors in the chapter house and reminded them that, while Christ was loving, he was also just and mighty, and that their judgment lay in the pronouncing of their sins, and the cleansing of their punishment. Images more generally of the Last Judgment (see Figure 4.10), would have enhanced this view, although it is unfortunate that much of the Last Judgment images, which do not have comparative versions in B.10.2., have worn away with time. The images as a whole would have enveloped the monks as they gave a confession, impressing on them the weight of their sins in front of Christ.

Many of the Apocalyptic scenes were accompanied by a painted scroll underneath with text in both black and red paint which related to the image above it (see Figure 4.9 as example under the first horseman, and Figure 1.3 for an up close picture of part of one). The wall paintings mirror B.10.2 by also presenting the Latin scripture and the Berengaudus commentary underneath each image. This would have encouraged the Benedictine monks to get close to the walls to be able to read the text, and in turn, transform the wall paintings themselves into a form of manuscript. This would have provided the monks with another way to engage with Scripture, and theological ideas of the Apocalypse, without having to view the manuscript itself. This engagement may have allowed for a more communal aspect of Apocalypse reading, where all would be able to view the images together, as opposed to either reading silently alone or one monk reading aloud to others without the use of visuals. Possibly, the Scriptural quotations and even the commentary were read out to the monks

[101] Harvey, 'The monks of Westminster and their chapter house', p. 102.

during their gatherings, providing a chance for communal meditation and devotion over the mysteries of the future. Yet again, this apocalyptic material provides a point of interest for the community to come together to celebrate and express devotion together for salvation.

4. 4. Apocalyptic Wall Paintings, St. Mary's Priory, Coventry

As well as the apocalyptic cycle at Westminster, there were also apocalyptic wall paintings at the chapter house of St. Mary's Priory, a Benedictine monastery, in Coventry.[102] The paintings were produced in the second half of the fourteenth century, being added to the chapter house at a later date than the surrounding stonework and stained glass, which is dated to the early fourteenth century.[103] Unfortunately, very little of the paintwork survives meaning that it is hard to discern exactly what the apocalyptic paintings may have shown, and how much of the walls had been covered with these paintings. Because of this, there is a total of three fragments that we have available to us, one of which is simply a scraping of paint, while the other two depict the faces of old men. Miriam Gill has suggested that Fragment T698.1, featuring multiple figures in golden crowns and another haloed figure, probably St. John, is a portrayal of the adoration of the 24 elders (Rev. 6:7-8). Fragment T698.5 has two images on either side, with a central join in the middle, which portrays three men's faces on the left side and several faces in profile on the right, has possibly been identified as the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:7-8) and the adoration of the Lamb respectively (Rev. 7:9-11). Fragment T698.2 is particularly damaged, and a haloed face may perhaps be seen.[104] While Fragment T698.1 has enough distinguishing features to be possibly identified as the 24 elders, given their crowns, positioning and the scenery behind them, it is hard to accept with any certainty that Fragment T698.5 portrays either of the scenes identified by Gill, and some must be understood simply as apocalyptic scenes.

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[102] Gill, 'The Chapter House Apocalypse Panels', p. 83.

[103] M. Gill and R. K. Morris, 'A Wall Painting of the Apocalypse in Coventry Rediscovered', *The Burlington Magazine,* 143/1181 (2001), p. 470.

[104] Gill, 'The Chapter House Apocalypse Panels', pp. 84-85; Gill, 'Monastic Murals and *Lectio',* pp. 65-66. There is some confusion between labelling of the fragments by Gill and their current labelling. As such, it should be understood that Gill refers to T698.1 as fragment 2, T698.2 as fragment 1 and T698.5 as fragment 3. I will be using the T698 system to refer to each fragment as shown in Figure 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13 as this is the system used currently by the Herbert Collection who now house the fragments. t

Figure 4.11: Adoration by the 24 Elders (?), Fragment T698.1, The Herbert Gallery and Museum. Images taken and reproduced with kindness by the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry.

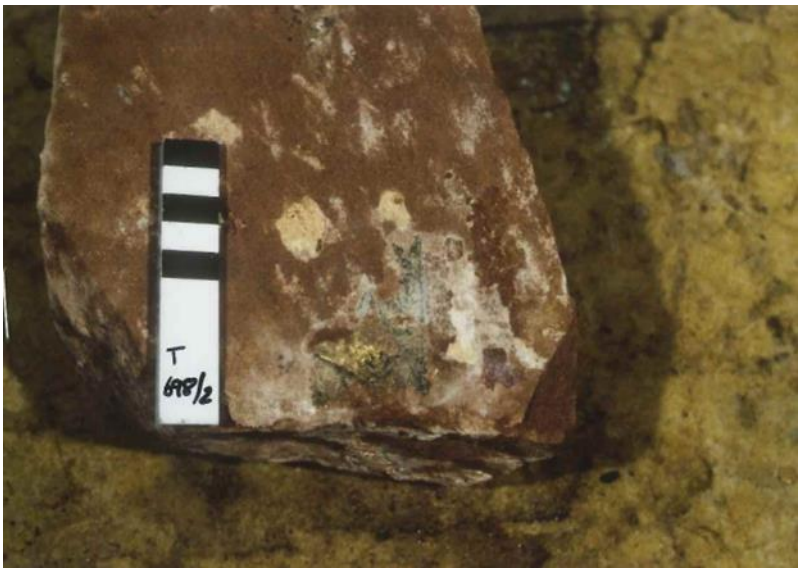

Figure 4.12: Haloed head (?), Fragment T698.2, The Herbert Gallery and Museum. Images taken and reproduced with kindness by the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry.

Figure 4.13: Scenes from the Fourth Horseman and Adoration of the Lamb(?), Fragment T698.5, The Herbert Gallery and Museum. Images taken and reproduced with kindness by the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry.

As such, very little can be said in terms of what St. Mary's apocalyptic wall paintings may have depicted exactly. If we accept that Fragment T698.1 is an image of the 24 elders, then it is likely that these images were part of a greater apocalypse cycle as it was only the Last Judgment was ever depicted alone in the late-medieval period. Instead, it seems that it was more fashionable to depict the apocalypse as part of a cycle of images, as can be seen from other examples from this period such as those at Westminster Abbey, St. Mary's Chapel in Karlštejn Castle, Czechia, and on the Padua Baptistry, Italy.[105] If so, the apocalypse images likely covered the walls of the chapter house, possibly interrupted with a Last Judgment scene as seen similarly at Westminster Abbey. Unlike Westminster, these images have not been identified as similar to any particular apocalypse manuscript, although one may yet be identified.[106] It is also possible that, similarly to the *Great East Window*, the paintings were inspired by illuminated Apocalypses but were ultimately imagined and produced by the painter or workshop themselves, giving the designers a greater degree of freedom regarding what the images depicted.

While very little can be said about the images themselves, the context of the images can further enhance what we can say about the paintings. As was the case with the

[105] Gill and Morris, 'A Wall Painting of the Apocalypse in Coventry Rediscovered', p. 473.

[106] Gill and Morris, 'A Wall Painting of the Apocalypse in Coventry Rediscovered', p. 471.

Westminster paintings, these were produced for a Benedictine house, where a similar routine of confession, contrition and reading from the *Rule* would have been practised. Likely then, the images acted as a site of devotion and meditation on the end of the world, reminding its audience about the role of salvation in the greater scheme of Christian history. The twelfth chapter of the *Rule* dictated that on the Sunday celebration of Lauds, a recital of a chapter of Revelation by heart should be read aloud.[107]

The Coventry wall paintings themselves were made, most likely, during the priorate of William de Greneburgh, who was elected in 1361, just over a decade after the Black Death had struck the monastery.[108] One of William's former priors, William Irreys, had died of plague in 1349, and the repeated visits of plague in the years 1364 and 1365 likely harmed the surrounding community of Coventry.[109] As such, this may have impacted the decision to place these images on the walls of the chapter house, as a reminder of salvation and destruction at a time when Coventry had undergone great distress. The images would remind the Benedictine community of their greater spiritual goals, as well as highlighting the necessity of destructive events in Christian history in order to reach salvation. If these images were patronised by members of the monastic community, as was the case for the Westminster cycle, then it may be that these were a direct reaction to the unfolding crises and a way of drawing the community together to worship in the face of hardship.[110] While we cannot know the full scope of the apocalypse wall paintings here, their existence speaks to the importance that the apocalypse had in the Benedictine community, as well as the continuing use of the apocalypse as a means of comprehending disease and disaster within contemporary society.

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[107] Gill, 'The Chapter House Apocalypse Panels', p.88. For a modern English translation of the *Rule,* see: St. Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict in English,* trans. Timothy Fry (Collegeville, 1980), p. 41.

[108] Gill, 'A Wall Painting of the Apocalypse in Coventry Rediscovered', p. 473.

[109] W. Page, 'Houses of Benedictine monks: Priory of Coventry' in W. Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Warwick, Volume 2* (London, 1908), pp. 52-59; Gill and Morris, 'A Wall Painting of the Apocalypse in Coventry Rediscovered', p. 473. See also: Rose, M., *The Norwich Apocalypse: The Cycle of Vault Carvings in the Cloisters of Norwich Cathedral* (Norwich, 1999).

[110] Gill, 'The Chapter House Apocalypse Panels', p. 88.

4. 5. Apocalyptic Bosses, Norwich Cathedral

The cloister of Norwich Cathedral is home to 102 apocalyptic ceiling bosses, 38 bosses in the south walk and 64 in the west walk.[111] The other two walks are home to bosses depicting scenes from the Passion, various Saints' Lives and various decorations and foliage. The building of cloisters themselves has been hotly debated, often based on differing sets of evidence. Because the dating for the cloisters, and by extension the bosses, is so varied, a discussion of only the south and west walks will be given as these are where the apocalypse bosses are placed. The earliest dating was proposed by Eric Fernie, based on the *First Register* of the Cathedral, written after 1430, alongside an examination of the fabric of the church, which places the majority of the south walk having been built in the years between 1314-30, while the west walk was erected later between 1330-56, under the assumption that the tracery and vaulting were produced about the same time.[112] An alternative view was proposed by Francis Woodman, who used the *Communar rolls* to propose that different bays in the same walk were constructed in different periods. He argued that the south walk bays to the east were built in 1320-3, while those on the western side were built slightly later in 1323-7. The west walk bays were built in the years of *c*. 1335-49.[113]

Veronica Sekules has proposed a third set of dates, based on the changing style of the bosses themselves, rather than using the architecture of the cloister itself. This dates the bosses later than originally thought and might suggest that they were produced later than the actual cloister. Sekules also points to the acquisition of an apocalypse manuscript by the cathedral in 1346, which may mark the start of the vaulting. So, she dates the south walk to 1346-64, with a possible extension in the southwest corner until *c*. 1380, while the west walk vaulting was erected in the years 1411-25.[114] A final dating has been proposed most recently

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[111] R. Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close: The Evolution of the English Cathedral Landscape* (Woodbridge, 2005) pp. 86-87; M. R. James, *The Sculpted Bosses in the Cloisters of Norwich Cathedral* (Norwich, 1911), p. 2; M. Rose, 'The Vault Bosses', in I. Atherton (ed.), *Norwich Cathedral: Church, City and Diocese, 1096-1996* (London and Rio Grande, 1996), pp. 363-368.

[112] E. Fernie, *An Architectural History of Norwich Cathedral* (Oxford, 1993), p. 170. See also p. 164 for an image documenting the dating of the cloister.

[113] F. Woodman, 'The Gothic Campaigns', in I. Atherton (ed.), *Norwich Cathedral: Church, City and Diocese, 1096-1996* (London and Rio Grande, 1996), pp. 165-171. A good map depicting the dates and designs for Woodman's interpretation of the cloister is shown in Figure 84, p. 166.

[114] V. Sekules, 'Religious Politics and the Cloister Bosses of Norwich Cathedral', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association,* 159/1 (2006), p. 289.

by Robert James Hawkins, who has argued that the south walk vaulting was put in place in *c.* 1325-30, while the west walk was not vaulted until *c.* 1425-30.[115] Given the variation in the dates for the bosses, and that the bosses were likely produced at a later stage than the bays or tracery, it is hard to narrow down the dates with any certainty. Given the variety of different dating models based on a range of different evidence, it will simply be stated that the south walk bosses were likely produced in the first half of the fourteenth century before the Black Death while the west walk bosses were produced likely in the latter half of the fourteenth century. It should also be noted that there must have been little, if any, sense of eschatological imminency, given that the bosses took over 100 years from start to completion, and that their use was moralistic, rather than focusing on the imminent end.[116]

Most of the construction of the bosses was financed primarily by John Salmon, bishop of Norwich until 1325, and Lord Chancellor of England between 1320-3.[117] Despite many bosses being made in the years after Salmon's death, Binski has suggested that it is likely that the scheme was picked out in advance before 1325, especially given that Salmon's family chantry was dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, and so these bosses were put in place as an act of dedication, as well as elevating his own, and his family's, prominence within Norwich.[118] There were, however, other contributors to the cloister more generally, with one such example being Richard Uphill, a landowner and layperson, whose financial contributions meant that he was depicted in the cloister itself.[119] The combination of the patronage of the cloister, alongside the dating of each part of the cloister, suggests that the apocalypse scheme, while haphazard in places, had been planned before the plague struck in the mid-fourteenth century, with Salmon leaving funds in his will for the completion of cloisters.[120] As such, it cannot be argued that these bosses were a response to the Black Death and that interest in the apocalypse for those at Norwich Cathedral was independent of the impending disaster. Evidently, it was felt that the apocalypse was a worthy event to depict on

[115] R. J. Hawkins, 'Questions of sculptural idiom in the later bosses from Norwich Cathedral cloister c.1411-1430', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2020), p. 1.

[116] Gay, *Monumental Apocalypse Cycles of the Fourteenth Century*, p. 129.

[117] P. Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style, 1290-1350* (New Haven and London, 2014), p. 104, 112-3.

[118] Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, p. 145; Binski, *Gothic Wonder,* p. 112.

[119] Binski, *Gothic Wonder,* p.114.

[120] M. Rose and J. Hedgecoe, *Stories in Stone: The Medieval Roof Carvings of Norwich Cathedral* (London, 1997), p. 27.

the ceiling of the cloister, especially given that the monks of Norwich Cathedral were Benedictines, and therefore may have made use of the bosses in furthering their understandings of Revelation, as was repeated to them on Sundays. In particular, viewing the scenes of Christ's judgment, which was emphasised by some of the bosses of the west walk, would have imbued the walk to the chapter house with a sense of foreboding, and a reflection of the Benedictine lifestyle, as confession and 'judgment' took place within the chapter house.[121]

While the primary audience for the bosses was likely the Benedictines, who numbered about 60 monks in the early fourteenth century, it should still be considered that the wider community in Norwich may also have seen the apocalypse bosses.[122] As mentioned earlier, lay people could also be patrons of the cloister in order to both honour Christ and beautify the cathedral. In addition to the monks who lived at the cathedral, based on surviving obedientiary rolls it has been predicted that over 150 laymen and women were employed in or around the monastery at any one time, and so may have seen the bosses.[123] The cathedral was also responsible for appointing a large portion of parish priests in and around Norwich, and at some time or another, they may have seen the bosses through their contact with the monks.[124] Finally, the first half of the fourteenth century saw the expansion of the four friaries in Norwich, totalling approximately 190 friars during this period, who may have interacted with the cathedral priory.[125] As such, a great mixture of monastic, secular clergy and laypeople may have had, at some point, access to the cloister and would have viewed the bosses.

The apocalyptic ceiling bosses in the south walk aimed to tell the story of Revelation chapters 1 through 12, through moralising images that inspired the viewer to offer repentance.[126] Sekules, in particular, has commented on the importance of the cloister as a place of learning, both for the monks who would have daily interactions with the bosses

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[121] Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, p. 87.

[122] C. Harper-Bill and C. Rawcliffe, 'The Religious Houses', in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds.), *Medieval Norwich* (London and New York, 2004), p. 106.

[123] N. Tanner, 'The Cathedral and the City', in I. Atherton (ed.), *Norwich Cathedral: Church, City and Diocese, 1096-1996* (London and Rio Grande, 1996), p. 269.

[124] Tanner, 'The Cathedral and the City', p. 273.

[125] Harper-Bill and Rawcliffe, 'The Religious Houses', p. 106.

[126] Rose and Hedgecoe, *Stories in Stone*, p. 39.

through their constant use of the cloister, and the laypeople who may have visited the cloister and surrounding areas for both religious and commercial reasons.[127] One of the bosses, for example, depicts the 'war in Heaven' in which St. Michael fought against the armies of the devil, and was able to cast the devil into the pit for 1000 years. Here, hordes of enemies are depicted as savage beasts, while the army of Heaven is depicted with glittering golden wings, who thrust swords into their enemy. Even viewing this from a distance, it would not be hard to distinguish the implications of the image as a fight between good and evil, in which good is going to win. This simple message would encourage the viewer to commit fully to God and shun evil, as God's power would reign supreme in the end. Messages such as these may have influenced laypeople's views of the Norwich Benedictines as those favoured by God and protected by the spirit of St. Michael.

Figure 4.14: The War in Heaven, South Walk Cloisters, Norwich Cathedral. Taken from Rose, M., The Norwich Apocalypse: The Cycle of Vault Carvings in the Cloisters of Norwich Cathedral (Norwich, 1999), p. 92. Copyright: Ken Harvey.

The 'war in Heaven' boss marked the end of the Apocalypse bosses' chapters one to twelve and the end of the south walk. This boss also marked the entrance to the refectory, in which the monks would have taken meals and read in the winter months. Those entering the refectory would have been reminded of God's goodness and grace upon glancing at the boss, which may have fed into the monks' reading of biblical texts. Moreover, the image of St. Michael was also intimately connected with the act of both intercession and judgment, in

[127] Sekules, 'Religious Politics and the Cloister Bosses', pp. 289-90, 301.

which he sounds the trumpet to summon the dead to judgment.[128] It was believed that praying to St. Michael, or other saints, would allow them to intervene on behalf of the dying or the souls of the dead, and often masses would be paid for by laypeople in hopes of helping themselves or their relatives reach Heaven and limit their time in purgatory.[129] Michael was also known particularly for his role in protecting the souls of those faithful to God, just as he had protected the Virgin Mary, and helped reunite her body with her soul.[130] Those viewing the boss may have been reminded of the greater purpose of their worship of God, and a feeling of safety as a result of the image of St. Michael. As such, Michael became an emblem of salvation as he was able to protect the soul from Hell and fight against evil. Unlike the *Pricke of Conscience* window, in which it could be argued that the images invoked fear concerning the end of the world to encourage repentance, the image of St. Michael fighting against the devil may have inspired repentance through a sense of safety that St. Michael was protecting those passing through into and out of the refectory.

Further, St. Michael's role in leading souls out of Hell during the Harrowing, which is shown in one of the bosses on The Passion, and his role during judgment, linked together the different stories told through the bosses.[131] Michael's roles in both the Harrowing and the Judgment narrative ensure that the themes of salvation and repentance are central for those viewing the bosses, reminding the viewer of sin and salvation, and their need to repent. Moreover, elsewhere in the nave of Norwich Cathedral, there are several bosses depicting Creation and the fall of Adam and Eve.[132] This area, more generally, is home to bosses moving from the nave into the cloister, a similar outline of history from past to future appears, in much the same way as the *Great East Window*.[133] As such, the emphasis on the past and future of the human race, with the acknowledgement of the brevity of history

[128] R. F. Johnson, *Saint Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 87.

[129] F. C. Domínguez, 'Relics and Saints: Commemoration and Memorialisation of the Holy Dead', in P. Booth and E. Tingle (eds.) *A Companion to Death, Burial and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, c.1300-1700* (Leiden, 2021), p. 394.

[130] This story does not come from the Bible but rather came about as a result of a series of influential writings on Mary's passing in the early Middle Ages. An example can be found in Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs,* trans. Raymond Van Dam (Liverpool, 1988), pp. 21-2.

[131] It should be noted that St. Michael is not pictured in the Harrowing boss itself, but that his role in the Harrowing was understood by many throughout the medieval period, and was likely to come to mind for the viewer of the bosses. K. Tamburr, *The Harrowing of Hell in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 108-9.

[132] Rose and Hedgecoe, *Stories in Stone,* p. 59.

[133] Rose and Hedgecoe, *Stories in Stone,* p. 59.

through the apocalypse as an endpoint, highlights to the viewer the temporary nature of their own life. By accomplishing this, the viewer was led to contrasting their own bodily wants with the immortal nature of their soul and so was encouraged to perform acts of repentance. The Church's role in the community revolved around the cycle of sin, absolution and repentance, and this fit into the larger scheme of salvation history that could be found on the ceilings of Norwich Cathedrals.[134]

There is a number of apocalypse bosses on the west walk in comparison to the south. As has been established, these were produced later than those featured in the south walk. The west walk bosses deal with Revelation chapters 12 through 20 which are interspersed with a few extra-biblical stories. One of these stories depicted is the legend of the Christian of Constantinople, which is shown in three bosses. In this story, a Christian borrows money from a Jewish money lender before travelling abroad. On payment of the debt, the Christian sends the Jew an image of the Virgin Mary by sea, but the Jew refuses the accept the payment as legitimate. As a result, the Jew is condemned by the image of Mary.[135] Another four bosses are dedicated to the story of St. Basil, who appealed to the intercession of the Virgin Mary in order to raise his friend Mercurius from the dead in order to kill the apostate Emperor Julian.[136] Both stories highlight the power and authority of both Christ and Mary, especially in overcoming evil and fighting against non-Christians. Including such a response among apocalyptic images may suggest a reminder to the audience that non-Christian beliefs and practices would be punished at the Last Judgment. Norwich was subject to extensive investigations into heretical belief throughout the fourteenth century.[137] It had also been the site of repeated anti-Jewish attacks, including a ritual murder accusation of William of Norwich in 1144 and an alleged abduction and circumcision of Odard, a young Christian boy, in the 1230s.[138] As a result, there was a keen interest by Church officials to reaffirm the supremacy of the Church and the power of Christ and the Virgin Mary. Such bosses would have glorified the power of Christianity and reasserted the strength of Christ in overcoming non-Christians at the end of the world.

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[134] T. A. Fudge, *Medieval Religion and its Anxieties: History and Mystery in the Other Middle Ages* (New York, 2016), p. 230.

[135] Sekules, 'Religious Politics and the Cloister Bosses', pp. 297-9.

[136] Sekules, 'Religious Politics and the Cloister Bosses', pp. 297-8.

[137] Patrick Hornbeck II, Bose and Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy,* p. 53.

[138] V. D. Lipman, *The Jews of Medieval Norwich* (London, 1967), pp. 50-2, 57-8.

Figure 4.15: The ten kings surrounded by the beast, West Walk Cloisters, Norwich Cathedral. Taken from Rose, M., The Norwich Apocalypse: The Cycle of Vault Carvings in the Cloisters of Norwich Cathedral (Norwich, 1999), p. 167. Copyright: Ken Harvey.

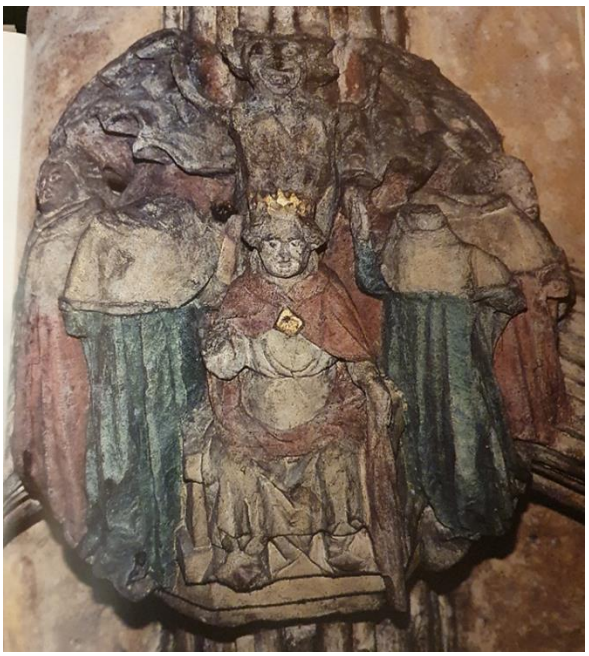

Figure 4.16: The devil performs miracles, West Walk Cloisters, Norwich Cathedral. Taken from Rose, M., The Norwich Apocalypse: The Cycle of Vault Carvings in the Cloisters of Norwich Cathedral (Norwich, 1999), p. 140. Copyright: Ken Harvey.

These bosses are also placed particularly near images depicting the beasts and they may have, in part, been placed here in order to take away from the evil power of the beasts, in favour of Christ and the Virgin Mary. In one of the nearby bosses, the ten kings are shown to give power to the beast to rage war against Christ (Figure 4.15). The kings, as such, may be

considered a reflection of secular authority, as opposed to the authority of the Virgin Mary, as is shown through the extra-biblical legends, which depict her as a spiritual authority and representative of good.[139] The meaning here could be in the importance of the spiritual authority of the Church over the secular authority of the Crown, or the implication that holding secular authority did not necessarily equal spiritual endorsement, as can be seen generally through the legend of St. Basil. The bosses depicting the Virgin's intercession may have been presented to rival the power of the beasts, who are shown in one boss to work their own miracles. In this boss, the kings look over to a devil, thus delineating the lines of authority and the power of the beasts in being able to win over secular authority (Figure 4.16.) As such, the viewer could contrast righteous miracles and righteous authority with those who sought to oppose God, and this may have inspired repentance and love of God in the heart of the audience.

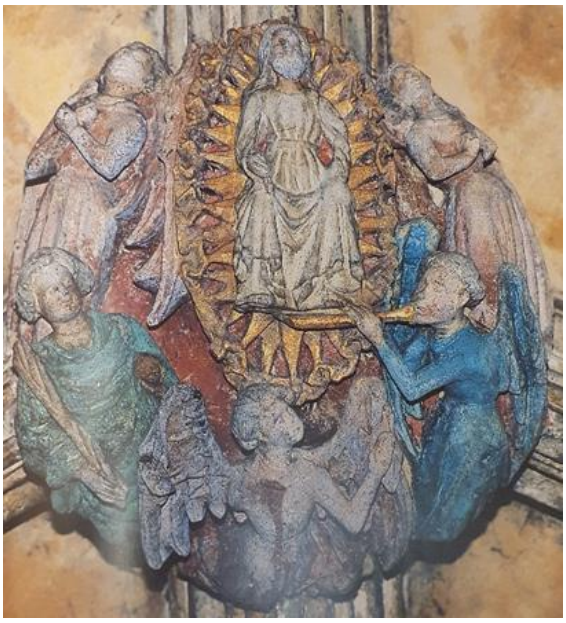

Figure 4.17: Christ giving salvation, West Walk Cloisters, Norwich Cathedral. Taken from Rose, M., The Norwich Apocalypse: The Cycle of Vault Carvings in the Cloisters of Norwich Cathedral (Norwich, 1999), p. 192. Copyright: Ken Harvey.

The idea of spiritual authority can finally be seen in the salvation bosses that appear in the northern part of the west walk. There is a total of five of them, and they each picture Christ in majesty, with various angels, elders and men surrounding him (see Figure 4.17 as an example). These images are inspired by Revelation (Rev. 19:1-5), which expounds the glory of Christ after the Last Judgment.[140] This collection demonstrates Christ's promise of

[139] D. Watts, 'Authorising Female Piety', in E. Treharne, G. Walker and W. Green (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English* (Oxford, 2010), p. 241.

[140] Douay-Rheims Bible, <https://www.drbo.org/> [accessed 30th March 2023.]

salvation, and the bosses after it depicts the defeat of the devil and the beasts, and the promise of a New Jerusalem, illuminating the final triumph of God over evil. Those moving from south to north on the west walk would pass under these bosses to arrive at the Monks' door, leading them to the nave of the church, and the monks would have passed through this door many times a day. The salvation bosses would have acted as a reminder of the glory of God, and his ever-watchful gaze over the said monks.[141] If a monk was to enter into the nave, especially for a mass or prayer, it would help put the monks in the right frame of mind towards emanating God's glory and praying in hopes of reaching salvation. The placement of these bosses here, before Monk's door, acted similarly to the Last Judgment scenes on the rood screens between the nave and high altar, as they encouraged thought about salvation and Christ's passion, and encouraged the creation of a holy space.[142]

The emphasis on Christ's glory and salvation shown in these bosses highlights Christ and the Church as the ultimate spiritual authorities, particularly within the space of the cloister. As such, the cloister became a space in which spiritual and religious crimes could be dealt with. The Lollard heresy trials at Norwich 1428-31 saw some people from the local community accused of Lollardy, a heresy which capitalised on apocalyptic and eschatological imagery as part of its discourse.[143] Public penance for the accused in Norwich often took the form of floggings in a ritual circle of the cloister; Thomas Wade, a tailor, in 1428 was made to walk the circuit of the cloister while being flogged on three consecutive Sundays.[144] It is likely that the apocalyptic bosses staring down at him, especially the ones depicting Christ's salvation, would have emphasised the authority of the Church in spiritual matters, and stressed the need for salvation and correct repentance if he were to achieve salvation at the Last Judgment. In this way, the apocalyptic cloister bosses became a symbol of authority and power against dissenters that were outside of the Church, as well as being a reminder of

[141] T. N. Kinder, *Cistercian Europe: Architecture of Contemplation* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, 2002), p. 218.

[142] N. Orme, *Going to Church in Medieval England* (New Haven and London, 2021), pp. 94-5.

[143] B. Hill II, 'Apocalyptic Lollards? The Conservative Use of the Book of Daniel in English Wycliffite Sermons', *Church History and Religious Culture,* 90/1 (2010), p. 21; J. Arnold, 'Lollard Trials and Inquisitorial Discourse', in C. Given-Wilson (ed.), *Fourteenth Century England II* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 81. For more information about the Norwich heresy trials, see: N. Tanner, *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-31* (London, 1977).

[144] Sekules, *Religious Politics and the Cloister Bosses,* p. 301.

salvation and community for those who lived within the Church community; a display of good versus evil for those who gazed upon them.

4. 6. The Signs of Doom Alabaster Panels

Alabasters were a popular form of stonework for religious depictions in England from to 1330s until the 1550s. The apocalyptic alabasters depicting the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* are no exception. We know of a total of ten alabasters depicting these signs, although it is likely more of them will be uncovered with time, and it is certain that many more have not survived throughout the ages.[145] Most of the alabaster mined for stonework projects such as the Signs alabaster came from the East Midlands, and was then carved in Nottingham, with other operations in areas such as Burton-on-Trent, and it is most likely that the Signs alabasters were made in one of these centres.[146] Alabasters generally could be placed in a variety of places, with Signs alabasters existing primarily in churches and other community spaces.[147] These alabaster carvings were about 30cm in height and could be hung up or placed on altars, providing a narrative or scene that audiences could view and contemplate. As such, their portability aided in their accessibility to a wide variety of audiences, allowing more people to understand and think about the end of the world.

Signs alabasters include one panel depicting the fifth sign, one panel depicting the sixth sign, two panels depicting the tenth sign, one panel depicting the thirteenth sign, and five panels depicting the fifteenth sign.[148] Unfortunately, no exact dates or locations can be

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[145] F. Cheetham, *Alabaster Images of Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 145.

[146] A. F. Harris, 'From Stone to Statue: The Geology and Art of English Alabaster Panels', in J. Brantley, S. Perkinson and E. C. Treviotdale (eds.), *Reassessing Alabaster Sculpture in Medieval England* (Kalamazoo, 2020), p. 45; Cheetham, *Alabaster Images of Medieval England,* p. 3; N. Ramsay, '"Burton-on-Trent not Nottingham." The Evolving Study of Medieval English Alabaster Sculpture', in Z. Murat (ed.), *English Alabasters and their Cultural Contexts* (Woodbridge, 2019), p. 45.

[147] K. Giles, '"A table of alabaster with the story of the Doom": The Religious Objects and Spaces of the Guild of Our Blessed Virgin, Boston (Lincs)', in T. Hamling and C. Richardson (eds.), *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 281-4.

[148] For catalogues entries which contain individual or group of these Signs of Doom alabasters, see: F. Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters: With a Catalogue of the Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (Oxford, 1984), no. 240-2; S. Boldrick, *Wonder: Painted Sculpture from Medieval England* (Leeds, 2002), no. 10, R. Marks and P. Williamson, *Gothic: Art for England 1400-1547* (London, 2003), no. 342; F. Cheetham, *Alabaster Men: Sacred Images from Medieval England* (London, 2001), no. 10; R. Blurton, *The Enduring Image: Treasures from the British Museum* (London, 1999), no. 217; J. Robinson, *Masterpieces: Medieval Art*

connected with the panels. Like the *Pricke of Conscience,* the alabaster panels depict the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday*. However, in this case, they are more likely a retelling of the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* from the *Legenda Aurea,* rather than the *Pricke of Conscience*.[149]

The Signs alabasters were likely used both as individual pieces, and together, to form a complete depiction of the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday*. There does not appear to be a consistent reason why some signs exist and others do not, and so, in all likelihood, panels depicting each and every sign existed at some point. It was a popular process to attach the alabasters to a wooden frame with latten wires which were inserted into holes made in the backs of the alabaster, allowing for multiple alabasters to be shown together.[150] This can, in fact, be seen in some of the alabasters that have survived; for example, the Fifth Sign of Doomsday alabaster has three lead-plugged holes in the back with wires attached, which shows that it would have been attached to a frame.[151] Further, there exists a record that the Guild of St. Mary in Boston, Lincolnshire, owned a 'table of alabasters with the storry of the dome [doom]' in 1534 and that this was up to two and a half yards long.[152] The reference to the 'storry' of Doomsday, rather than a sign of Doomsday, implies that there may have been many of them put together to showcase the 'story' of the *Fifteen signs before Doomsday.* Its large size may also imply that it was made up of a series of alabaster panels in a line for it to reach its impressive length. There are also examples of separate alabasters being used together to depict a story from the Bible, such as those depicting the Annunciation or the Passion, and saints' lives were also popular for this sort of retelling.[153]

(London, 2008); J. Jacob, *English Medieval Alabaster Carvings: York Festival Exhibition* (York, 1954), no. 60; W.L. Hildburgh, 'Some English Alabaster Tables', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries,* 32 (1920), pp. 121-2; L. Flavigny, *D'Angleterre en Normandie: Sculptures d'Albâtre du Moyen Âge, Musée des Antiquités* (Rouen, 1998), no. 79; J. Gardelles, Sculpture Médiévale de Bordeaux et du Bordelais (Bordeaux, 1976), no. 196; C. Prigent, *Les Sculptures Anglaises d'Albâtre au Musée National du Moyen Âge Thermes de Cluny* (Paris, 1998), no. 30.

[149] P. Nelson, 'A Doom Reredos', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire,* 70 (1918), pp. 67-8.

[150] Hourihane, *The Grove Encyclopaedia of Medieval Art and Architecture,* p. 20.

[151] Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters,* p. 314.

[152] P. Williamson, *Object of Devotion: Medieval English Alabaster Sculpture from the Victoria and Albert Museum* (Alexandria, 2010), p. 72; Giles, '"A table of alabaster with the story of the Doom"', pp. 281-2.

[153] Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters,* p. 43.

More alabasters exist of the fifteenth sign over any other signs, and this sign was possibly popular outside of the context of the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* as a whole. The fifteenth sign depicted, 'a new Heaven and a new Earth will come to be, and all the dead will rise again.'[154] Given that the fifteenth sign is a representation of the Last Judgment, it would not be surprising to find that there was some interest in this sign separate from its context, and a desire to have only it carved in alabaster, especially if individuals or communities could only afford to buy an alabaster of one of the signs. After all, wall paintings of the Last Judgment, stripped of their relation to the rest of Revelation, were especially popular by the later Middle Ages, and so could explain the greater number of alabasters relating to the fifteenth sign left to us.[155] This cannot be said, however, with any certainty, given that it may be by chance that five more of the Signs alabasters have been passed down through the ages than the others, rather than there simply being more of them in production throughout the Middle Ages. Still, it is worth emphasising the particular popularity of the fifteenth sign and the Last Judgment in late-medieval English thought.

Primarily, these alabasters likely existed in public social spaces such as churches, and other spaces where worship took place. For example, the table of alabasters in Boston existed in the Guildhall chapel near the hall that was used for feasting and socialisation.[156] Alabaster pieces were placed on altars as devotional objects, and given the subject matter, it would make sense for them to be primarily used for devotion and meditation.[157] More generally, these alabasters are also known to have existed in parish churches, such as the one in the Church of St. Mary the Great in Cambridge until 1550, and churches were likely where the majority of these alabasters resided.[158] It is known that some alabasters existed privately in people's homes, and may have been veiled by cloth or housed in wooden tabernacles while not in use, such as St. John the Baptist's heads.[159] It is possible that alabasters of the fifteenth sign specifically may have existed within this context, similarly to how alabasters depicting

[154] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* ed. and trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton and Oxford, 1993), p. 8.

[155] M. Jaoudi, *Medieval and Renaissance Spirituality: Discovering the Treasures of the Great Masters* (New York, 2010), p. 51.

[156] Giles, 'A table of alabaster with the story of the Doom', pp. 281-4.

[157] E. Gertsman and B. H. Rosenwein, *The Middle Ages in 50 Objects* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 48.

[158] Williamson, *Object of Devotion,* p. 72.

[159] K. Woods, *Cut in Alabaster: A Material of Sculpture and its European Traditions 1330-1530* (Turnhout, 2018), p. 331.

the Resurrection, a singular momentous occasion in Christianity, are known to have existed in the privacy of the medieval home.[160] However, it is unlikely that the entirety of the fifteen signs was held in homes given the scale and price of the alabasters and the context that we have proof of places them directly into religious and public spaces, allowing direct access to them by a wide variety of audiences.

Figure 4.18: Alabaster of the fifth sign of the Last Judgement, A.118-1946, Victoria and Albert Museum. Image reproduced with permission of the V&A.

In some ways, the Fifth Sign alabaster is the most interesting as it is currently the only surviving alabaster with its polychromy in very good condition. The fifth sign states in the *Legenda Aurea*,

> 'on the fifth the trees and grasses will exude a bloody dew…all the birds in the sky will gather together in the fields, each species in its place, not feeding or drinking but frightened by the imminent coming of the Judge.'[161]

This is depicted within the alabaster, in which the birds look up to the sky, with a few of the birds angled towards the angel in the sky, who is placed in the top-left corner. The angel

[160] A. Gardner, *English Medieval Sculpture* (Cambridge, 1951), p. 311.

[161] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* p. 8. The fifth sign has to be from the *Legenda Aurea* given that this description matches what is displayed on the alabaster. In the Pricke of Conscience, the fifth sign is the waters burning up see: Prik of Conscience, ed. James H. Morey, part five, line 765-8.

holds a scroll on which the fifth sign was likely written, but the writing has unfortunately not survived.[162] The panels place people at the forefront and centre of the alabaster, despite their noted absence from the description of this sign in the *Legenda Aurea*. This places humanity directly as the main recipient of the signs, rather than the emphasis being ecological, as is shown in the *Pricke of Conscience* window, where 13 out of the 15 signs do not depict people within the scenes themselves. In fact, the window instead depicts the burning of the sea, without depictions of people. This change does come from the fact that the two objects had different source materials but also shows what was considered important when viewing each of the objects. Stressing human suffering at the end of the world, rather than the destruction of the world, was therefore key to the creation of these alabasters.

This emphasis on the human aspect of the fifth sign, rather than the ecological aspect, places humanity, and by extension the viewer, into the forefront of the end of days. The viewer was able to easily transplant themselves into the image to imagine themselves surrounded by birds awaiting judgment. The ease in which the viewer was able to do this may also explain why the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* of the *Golden Legend* was chosen as the apocalyptic 'story' of choice to be depicted, rather than using biblical representations such as Revelation or the Synoptic Gospels. While the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* had been circulating in literate groups from the early Middle Ages, they saw an uptick in popularity in both the *Golden Legend* and the *Pricke of Conscience.* Depictions and references to the Fifteen Signs before Doomsday could also be found in several mystery plays.[163] This meant that they were common motifs understood and enjoyed by laypeople. So, the meanings behind the alabasters would have been easier to understand and their focus on one sign per alabaster may have drawn laypeople in, especially those untaught in reading letters, as well as children. The properties of the alabasters may have also allowed for greater teaching opportunities, especially for the groups stated above, who may have found it harder to engage with biblical materials.[164]

[162] Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters,* p. 315.

[163] B. W. Hawk, 'The Fifteen Signs before Judgment in Anglo-Saxon England: A Reassessment', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 117/4 (2018), pp. 443-4, 447-8.

[164] Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c.1215-1515,* p. 87.

Figure 4.19: Alabaster of the twelfth sign of the Last Judgement, 1910, 1208.2, British Museum. Image reproduced with permission of the British Museum.

The Twelfth Sign alabaster similarly acts as a focal point in which to understand the end of the world.[165] The twelfth sign in the *Golden Legend* states,

> 'the stars will fall: all the fixed and wandering stars will spread fiery trains, and then will again be generated from their substance. It is said that on that day, too, all the animals will come into the fields, growling and grunting, not feeding, not drinking.'[166]

On the alabaster, the image shows both men and women looking up to the sky, watching the stars fall as depicted by the streaks of gold still present. Above them, an angel holds a scroll which likely used to contain the words of the twelfth sign and a decorative banner across the

[165] Blurton refers to this sign as the tenth sign, which states that men would come out of their caves demented. The British Museum website states, however, that this alabaster is more likely to be a depiction of the thirteenth sign, which is the day when all the stars fall from Heaven. Given the descriptions of the two signs, the alabaster looks more likely to be a representation of when the stars fall from Heaven. However, in both the *Legenda Aurea* and the *Pricke of Conscience*, this sign's description comes under the twelfth sign, not thirteenth. As such, this alabaster will be referred to as the Twelfth Sign of Doom alabaster. See: Blurton, *The Enduring Image*, no. 217 and British Museum, 'panel, museum no. 1910,1208.2', <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1910-1208-2>, [last accessed 28th April 2023]. Also see: Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, p. 8 and Prik of Conscience, ed. James H. Morey, part 5, line 791-2.

[166] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, p. 8.

top. The figures in the image are simply dressed, most likely townsfolk, because of their simple robes with waist ties and the woman's headdress which is reminiscent of the fifteenth-century style.[167] The use of townsfolk here, rather than of richly dressed aristocrats, further suggests that the audience of these alabasters was other non-wealthy laypeople, in an effort to encourage a sense of personal connection with the scene being played out, whereby the medieval viewer could project themselves onto the figures. This may also suggest why both women and men were carved into the alabaster, in that it allowed for the alabaster to resonate with more people than it otherwise would have done, and impressed the importance of salvation and the apocalypse on every individual. The second half of the sign is not depicted here. As shown in the fifth sign, this may be because of the focus on the human aspect of the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday*, rather than on the ecological damage that it caused. Centring the people experiencing the twelfth sign may yet again have allowed the viewer to immerse and imagine themselves in the scene, encouraging contemplation and meditation. As such, the alabasters were important in creating a close connection between the viewer and the imminence of the end of the world, so that the salvation of one's soul would be brought to mind in the viewer in order to strengthen one's self against the tribulations signalling the end of the world.

The use of alabasters such as these in religious spaces until the Reformation suggests that these were a popular and uncontroversial image of the end of the world. This is probably because of the focus on the end of the world as a universal experience for all Christians, which each viewer could relate to even without having experienced it. The focus on the human nature of the tribulations allowed for each person to inwardly contemplate their own lives and the need for repentance if they were going to achieve salvation at the Last Judgment. As such, the connection with the destruction of nature is something that the audiences may have been able to imagine themselves, even if the apocalypse felt like a very distant event.[168] The sense of contemplation that these signs generated when viewing them provided a counterbalance to more dangerous images which questioned the authority of the Church or secular authorities. While examples such as the *Great East Window* may have viewed the apocalypse through a political lens, the alabasters were concerned with centring the human mind on the events of the future in order to inspire change in the now. As a result,

[167] M. G. Houston, *Medieval Costume in England and France: The 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries* (New York, 1996), pp. 163-5, 174-5.

[168] Gayk, 'The Present of Future Things', p. 233.

the audience is not asked to question the status quo but rather encouraged to seek personal change and growth. The apocalypse is shown in the alabasters as immutable and inevitable, and therefore they inspire the audience to reflect on their own fate and their chance to spiritually prepare for this.

4. 7. Conclusions

The objects analysed here show the variety of apocalypticism that was on offer for a wide variety of people in late-medieval England. Primarily, engagement with apocalyptic thought was through the lens of salvation, in which such objects encouraged devotion and meditation in the hopes of allowing the soul to be judged favourably during the Last Judgment. This is not to say that the apocalyptic aspect for its own sake was not important, but rather that the apocalypse needed to be approached in a practical manner so that one could achieve salvation. Many of the material objects were attached to surfaces or could be picked up and moved around, allowing a wide audience to see, understand and teach others about the end of the world. Many of them are also large in scale and depict the terrors of the end, thus impressing upon their audience a sense of importance and imminence in such a way as to inspire one to action through individualised prayer and the need for real contrition.[169] For example, both the *Great East Window* and apocalyptic wall paintings became focal points in which the viewer gazed up to view the object and thus were reminded about their mortality and the salvation of their soul. Similarly, the focus on the human aspect of the tribulations in the Signs of Doom alabasters allowed their viewers to immerse themselves in the narratives of the apocalypse and imagine it for themselves. Regardless of whether each piece was for a monastic or lay audience, the importance of these objects to teach and inspire was part of their draw.

However, these pieces of visual media also conjured a sense of community within the spaces in which they existed. The want to share the spaces that these were in, teach others and involve members of the community, especially those that may have been excluded from literate circles, was an important part of the audience's engagement with them. Moreover, the sense of a shared history and a shared future that these material objects create often engendered a feeling of community among those interacting with them. Some of these material objects depicted both Genesis and Revelation as the start and end points of Christian

[169] A. Reiss, 'Beyond "Books of the Illiterate": Understanding English Medieval Wall Paintings', *The British Art Journal,* 9/1 (2008) p. 8.

history, connecting Christian individuals through a shared love for Christ, and want for shared salvation. While the communities for these objects were different, the need for a shared community and a shared identity appears paramount to encouraging salvation. The *Pricke of Conscience Window* built specifically on York iconography and the importance of preparing for death in order to join the community together in the face of the apocalypse. Ensuring these communities, whether lay, clerical or a mixture, helped assert orthodox thinking and defended against heresy. An example of this can be seen in the *Apocalyptic Cloister Bosses,* where they could be seen by any heretics who were forced to be flogged around the cloister.[170] Their purpose of encouraging salvation indeed also dissuaded heresy through a focus on the inner sins and thoughts of each individual. As such, the objects both encouraged viewers to see themselves as part of a greater community, their local parish or monastic order all the way to belonging within Christian society, while still maintaining a sense of individuality in action, in order to save one's soul at the Last Judgment.

The breadth of the visual media shows that apocalypticism was largely varied and expressed in numerous ways. Revelation and the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* appear key to expressing apocalyptic thought for a variety of audiences, and there was evidently an overlap between audiences who viewed each of the objects. For example, both the apocalyptic bosses at Norwich Cathedral and the *Great East Window* would have been seen by a mixture of clerical and lay audiences, even if they may have been primarily made for a clerical audience. It is possible that both of these texts provided a variety of expressions of the apocalypse that could be understood and related to by audiences. While Revelation had always been important to the development of apocalyptic thought, given its importance in mapping out what would happen at the end of the world, the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* may have brought a more personal and spiritual dimension to the apocalypse that could encourage repentance and salvation by their lay and clerical audiences.

Some of the objects are shown to have encouraged viewing the apocalypse in a political dimension. The *Great East Window* questioned what made a good king or pope by placing them within an apocalyptic framework. In contrast, the Norwich apocalyptic bosses glorified the power of Christ and the Church, setting themselves against heretics and Jews. Such objects highlighted the dichotomy of good versus evil that was inherent in apocalyptic narratives and allowed them to be applied to contemporary events and people. For audiences,

[170] Sekules, *Religious Politics and the Cloister Bosses,* p. 301.

this could also provide some comfort as the apocalypse confirmed to them that the good would be rewarded and evil would be punished. Moreover, the objects could provide warnings to those its audiences to act in a Christian manner, whether this was in order to uphold the tenets of kingship as shown in the *Great East Window*, or more generally to repent of one's sins as shown in the Signs of Doom alabasters and the *Pricke of Conscience* window. These warnings may have provided some comfort to the audience's viewing these objects, as it was a reminder that salvation was always in reach if one altered one's actions. To this end, the objects prove that the apocalypse could provide the impetus for all to view their own lives within the greater conception of Christian history.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to answer the question of how apocalyptic thought was understood and used in late medieval England. To achieve this, I have surveyed a series of sources, comprising different audiences, authors and geographies, in order to catch the breadth of apocalyptic thought throughout as much of society as possible. In particular, the thesis spans the years c. 1350 to c. 1425, as this was a time of continuous unrest, as well as outbreaks of plague and famine and has been underexplored in comparison to the early medieval period and the Reformation onwards. This is a period that has been generally underutilised by other historians when discussing apocalyptic thought. While it cannot be completely comprehensive in its scope, I believe the thesis is broadly representative in terms of expressing the views and beliefs of a wide variety of people living in late medieval England.

The chapter on the *Westminster Apocalypse* examined the commentary tradition that aristocratic audiences typically engaged with, which highlighted the role of these manuscripts in producing historical and political narratives for the contemporary time. In a similar way, the prophecies examined in Henry of Kirkstede's *Prophetiae* also point towards the contemporary politics of the day but also show how a genuine belief in the end of the world might manifest itself. The producer and initial audience were likely to have been monastics, and the shared interests among members of this group can be seen. However, unlike the *Westminster Apocalypse,* the Joachite ideals expounded in these works were not generally shared by other apocalyptic texts and images in an explicit manner. For example, the use of prediction dates for the end of the world cannot be found in the other works examined in this thesis, in part because it straddled the line between orthodox and heretical belief. While this is not to say that chiliastic belief did not exist in this period, it is fair to assume that these were in the minority, given that predicting the end date tended to be socially unacceptable, and considered less important in thought regarding the end of the world.[1] Whether these groups showed the same conviction in the imminency of the end of the world cannot be answered, but apocalypticism can be seen to have been present among all levels of society in at least some capacity.

The chapter on *the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* likewise discussed apocalypticism's circulation throughout different societal groups. While circulating first in Latin, and mainly in clerical circles, both monastic and secular, the translation of the text into

[1] Boenig, 'The Apocalypse in Medieval England', p. 297.

multiple Middle English copies allowed for it to transcend boundaries between different audiences.[2] The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, the *Columbinus Prophecy* and the various papal prophecies both highlight the importance of alterations and erasures in the transmission of apocalyptic thought, as they allowed for these texts to be continuously applicable, and it speaks to how ingrained apocalyptic thought became embedded into the lives and beliefs of those living in late medieval England. Particularly, all three of these texts, alongside both the *Great East Window* and the *Pricke of Conscience* window (in chapter 4), highlight the role of apocalyptic thought in defining human history, often being a means of connecting the past (in the form of descriptions or images from Genesis) with the future, through the use of the apocalypse. This thereby allowed those in medieval England to make sense of themselves, their role in society, and their relationship with others outside of England. Even despite those living in late medieval England differing in social status, wealth, gender, literacy and other such characteristics, there was still an emergence of collective unity through their 'Englishness' and their Christianity.

The apocalypse, then, became one lens of many through which to view the world for those in late medieval England. By situating themselves within the framework of apocalypticism, people were able to better understand the world around them. As such, apocalyptic thought was important to both the understanding of religion but also was intrinsic to the very foundation of history, society and politics. As has been shown throughout this thesis, apocalyptic thought was important to the growth and flourishing of late medieval English life, as it allowed both for discussions of the future, as well as of the present and the past. The continued dissemination and circulation of these materials to a variety of audiences, with a variety of input from different scribes, illuminators, artisans, workers and other readers, allowed for the proliferation of apocalyptic works and thus contributed to their use and consumption throughout the late medieval period.[3]

Ultimately, this thesis has been centred around the apocalypse as a significant belief in medieval English life. In viewing each of the sources, it has been shown how they may have influenced the beliefs and thoughts of their readers, and vice versa. As such, each chapter has contributed to forming an image of how apocalyptic thought was perceived in late medieval England. However, viewing the sources as a collective whole also points to some

[2] C. Batt, 'Translation and Society', in P. Brown (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, c.1350 to c.1500* (Chichester, 2007), p. 124.

[3] L. H. Cooper, *Artisans and Narrative Craft in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 188.

greater narratives explored within apocalyptic material, and offers some reflection on the connection between apocalypticism and the anxieties and fears of late fourteenth and early fifteenth-century society.

Politics

Many of the texts had implications for the political reality of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Given the popularity of political prophecies during this era, it is not surprising that apocalyptic material similarly appealed to a variety of different social groups. Much like political prophecy, apocalyptic material often had symbolic or hidden meanings that could be parsed by the audience and had clear messages that could be interpreted and understood.[4] As such, the *Westminster Apocalypse*, the *Columbinus Prophecy*, and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* all allowed for this process to exist, in which characters and events could shine a light onto how medieval English people saw their society. Even the visual sources, such as the *Great East Window*, the *Westminster wall paintings* and the *Alabaster Dooms* were entrenched in symbolic meaning that could be extrapolated if the viewer knew what to look for.[5] This material often existed within communal spaces, allowing for natural discussion to flow and for people to make comparisons between their own lives and the material presented to them about the future. Moreover, apocalyptic material, in which the horrors of the future were envisioned, easily fitted within the audience's anxiety surrounding power and authority. As such, apocalypticism was politicised in late medieval England, and this became baked into the examination of much of the material by their audiences.

Key to much of the apocalyptic material discussed in this thesis is the continuation of the emphasis on history and time as concepts inextricably bound with the idea of the end of the world.[6] *The Columbinus Prophecy*, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, the *Great East Window*, and the Norwich cloister bosses all cover the story of Genesis alongside their discussions of the apocalypse. Genesis and Revelation are often seen working in tandem and suggest both a preordained world and a structure of history which is necessary and inevitable.[7] Harking back to what once was also provided an impetus to believe and

[4] Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 13.

[5] Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters*, p. 18.

[6] R. K. Emmerson, 'History and/as Apocalypse' in J. Jahner, E. Steiner and E. Tyler (eds.), *Medieval Historical Writing: Britain and Ireland, 500-1500* (Cambridge, 2020), p. 66.

[7] C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London, 2004), p. 46.

understand texts of the future, and thus gave legitimacy to apocalyptic views of the future. Sketching out a view of the past, which was accepted as true by its readers, thus gave legitimacy to the events of the proposed future; for example, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* is presented in a way that allowed the reader to believe in the future predictions espoused within it. Similarly, viewing the *Great East Window* set out the books of Genesis and Revelation as things which have and will happen, and thus signifies the preordained nature of history. Even the *Westminster Apocalypse* begins with a *Life of St. John,* highlighting the importance of early historical events in proving the significance of the apocalypse as a continuation of history. Much of this connection between the beginning and end of the world provides a structure by which Christians could understand the universe. The belief in 'salvation history', in which the events of the past, and the tribulations that were to come were a necessary by-product of the Last Judgment is present within much of the material.[8] Works such as the *Westminster Apocalypse,* the Norwich cloister bosses, and the Signs of Doomsday alabasters focus on the Last Judgment as its finale and the glory of God, encouraging repentance. The apocalypse became a bookend to history, providing an end goal for each and every Christian in late medieval England. As such, the apocalypse and history remained intertwined within this period, providing a backdrop for the events of the day.

Given the emphasis on history and structure in many apocalyptic works, this in turn allowed for ideas about hierarchy and power to come to the forefront of apocalyptic material. The *Westminster Apocalypse*, for example, emphasised the importance of maintaining the social and political hierarchical structures which medieval England was built upon. Much like the preordained historical plan that God had set out for mankind, the hierarchies and structures embedded within late medieval English society similarly were set out and preordained by God.[9] As such, the *Westminster Apocalypse's* portrayal of the apocalyptic beasts inverting this expectation stressed the belief that allowing the lower orders to have power and influence would lead to the collapse of society.[10] In contrast, the apocalyptic beasts as portrayed in the *Great East Window* similarly symbolised power, but instead, this was used to criticise the traditional exercisers of power and makes the case for the importance of ruling and acting fairly, regardless of where one was positioned in the hierarchy of society.

[8] J. Pathrapankal, *Time and History: Biblical and Theological Studies* (Eugene, 2002), p. 23.

[9] Black, 'European and Middle Eastern Views of Hierarchy and Order in the Middle Ages', p. 30.

[10] See Figure 1.8: B.10.2, f. 34v.

In either case, the apocalyptic beasts became a stand-in for the inversion of 'how things should be', and exemplified the fears and anxieties of the audiences that viewed them.

Other apocalyptic figures, such as the last popes, could also be found as subjects of criticism within apocalyptic material. In the papal prophecies, criticisms of the papacy and the Church more widely appealed to some who engaged with these sources. Part of this criticism stemmed directly from the Western Schism, where debates over different papal leaders led some to see this as part of the downward spiral of the Church.[11] For Kirkstede, the Western Schism provided evidence that he was living in the end times, as shown through the papal prophecies.[12] Some apocalyptic material, however, provided a more general criticism of the church that was common in late medieval English society. The *Great East Window,* for example, portrays popes descending into Hell and suggests that ecclesiastical pre-eminencediek did not guarantee being rewarded at the Last Judgment.[13] As such, the apocalypse is portrayed as an equaliser, where all would be judged regardless of status, wealth or power. The popularity of apocalypticism for all levels of English society may highlight the importance of both its fluidity and equity, given that anyone could be implicated in the apocalypse. As such, kings and popes, all the way down to the peasants and townsfolk, could see themselves and others as having a pivotal role to play in the end times.

In late-medieval English apocalypticism, this fluidity also placed outsiders or foreigners into the role of apocalyptic beasts or Gog and Magog, as they were distrusted by English people generally.[14] As such, apocalyptic material tended to be fuelled by current anxieties and fears that those in late medieval England had about people different from themselves. Principally, this can be seen within the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* where the Ishmaelites are a stand-in for Saracens, who were seen as a threat to Christendom, and thus made natural enemies of those in the end times.[15] Consequently, apocalypticism became a method by which one was able to assert one's Christian identity by putting oneself in

[11]C. Given-Wilson, 'Introduction: The Late Middle Ages in England', in C. Given-Wilson (ed.), *An Illustrated History of Late Medieval England* (Manchester, 1996), p. 3.

[12] Cotton MS Cleopatra C X, f. 157r; MS 404, f. 41r.

[13] Figure 4.1: *Great East Window,* York Minster.

[14] F. Grady, *Representing Righteous Heathens in Late Medieval England* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 89; E. Van Dorzel and A. Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall* (Leiden, 2010), p. 46.

[15] MS 59, f. 144v.

opposition to non-Christians. The *Westminster Apocalypse* further emphasised good practice for Christians, detailing the consequences for sinners and Jews at the end of the world.[16] Further, the Norwich cloister bosses include the story of the death of the Emperor of Julian, who was known as the last pagan emperor of Rome. Conversion narratives regarding the Jews also became popular in apocalyptic rhetoric, with the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* being an example of this, but it can be seen that this was not always the case, with the *Westminster Apocalypse* actively rejecting this narrative. As such, apocalyptic material often provided a framework for Christian identity by examining the role of the Christian in comparison to other figures shown during the last days. This 'us vs. them' narrative pervades many of the apocalyptic sources to different degrees, and encouraged its audiences to actively engage with their own role in the end of the world, thus providing inspiration for devotion and penance, and encouraging devotional practice.

Alongside the development of Christian identity, many apocalyptic sources also encouraged the audience to identify with a sense of 'Englishness.' This was yet again achieved through placing certain groups into the role of the 'enemy' in apocalyptic sources and thus allowed the audience to compare themselves to these groups. For example, the *Columbinus Prophecy* saw the French denigrated as the enemy, while the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* placed the Saracens into this role. While English identity in this period was still in development, these sources can be seen as contributing to this conversation and encouraging their audiences to view themselves as part of a distinct 'English people', in opposition to foreigners and outsiders.[17] As such, Christian identity and English identity within apocalyptic sources can be seen to be bound up with each other, such as in the *Westminster Apocalypse,* where engaging in 'sins of the tongue' was not only seen as an un-Christian behaviour but also frowned upon within wider English society. In this way, apocalypticism became part of the politics and the life of late medieval English society, with it providing a lens through which to understand the events of the contemporary time, as well as the identity of those living.[18] In turn, politics became integral to viewing the end of the world and was folded into how audiences may have viewed their identity and their place in society.

Religion

[16] B.10.2, f. 8v.

[17] Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture in the Fourteenth Century*, pp. 309-12.

[18] Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place in Medieval England*, p. 1.

Apocalypticism had been a fundamental feature of Christianity since its inception in the first century AD. However, developments in how apocalypticism was engaged with and understood religiously by its audiences changed and grew by the late medieval period. One of these developments was a greater interest in engaging with these sources inwardly as part of a meditative process.[19] The insistence to use manuscripts such as the Carthusian Middle English version of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* privately in order to meditate on the things that would happen at the end of the world allowed audiences to view and understand apocalyptic events. For the clergy and other high-status lay groups such as the aristocracy and the gentry, this was in the form of engaging mainly with Revelation through meditation on the text, and the images that were created from this text. The *Great East Window*, the Westminster wall paintings and the Norwich cloister bosses provide examples of the viewing of these images by those who were typically assumed to be better suited to engaging closely with the 'original' material. This does not mean that this material was not necessarily seen by those of the lower orders at times, but that the intended audience was those who were literate, and whose privileged position gave them the skills to engage with ideas. Even in these cases, there is a possibility that aristocrats engaged with Revelation through the help of individual clergymen or monastics.

In contrast, apocalyptic works which were inspired by more popular expressions of religion tended to demand less from their audiences in terms of theological and biblical understandings. As such, they tended to be used and interacted with by those with non-aristocratic, non-royal and non-clerical backgrounds. This apocalyptic material moved away from using Latin and tended to rely on either Middle English to engage its audience, or in some cases, no words at all. Such examples can be seen in the *Pricke of Conscience window* and the Signs of Doomsday alabasters, where the source interacted with the audience through engaging with texts and themes that were popular more generally with medieval audiences, such as the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday.* Even the Middle English copies of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* relied somewhat on popular texts, such as the metrical version using examples and snippets from the *Cursor Mundi.*[20] These texts evidently provided a greater basis of familiarity in order to discuss the apocalypse with ordinary people, as they allowed audiences to situate and imagine themselves to be present at the end of the world. Oftentimes, these sources focused on the trials and tribulations that were

[19] Bryan, *Looking Inward,* p. 11-2.

[20] D'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version of the *Revelationes* of Methodius', pp. 150-2.

expected to take place at the end of the world. Both the *Pricke of Conscience window* and the Signs of Doomsday alabasters singled out specific events at the heart of the apocalypse, rather than impressing on their audience the weight of the Last Judgment or the theological implications of the apocalyptic beasts. Many of these tribulations emphasised physical and environmental destruction, perhaps because this allowed audiences to directly relate to the events of the apocalypse, and to facilitate interaction with apocalyptic narratives.[21]

These two strands of apocalypticism, popular and elite, often converged in the later Middle Ages, and there would have been some overlap between audiences. This was especially the case when the clergy were called upon to help teach or discuss apocalyptic writings with their audience, or when they were used as physical items within Church sermons and services.[22] For example, the metrical version of the Apo*calypse of Pseudo-Methodius* may have been used to teach laypeople about the end of the world. Similarly, the Signs of Doom alabasters and the *Pricke of Conscience* window both existed in areas where a diverse audience may have gathered together and reflected on the apocalyptic pieces, drawing together views from throughout medieval English society. Even the *Westminster Apocalypse* that may have been used by an aristocratic audience would have relied on a priest or cleric to help interpret the text safety. As such, ideas from these different audiences cannot be cleanly separated from each other.

Much of the appeal of apocalyptic works lay in their ability to allow audiences to reflect and meditate on them in efforts of devotion to God. The *Westminster Apocalypse,* the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and many of the physical objects had some aspect of apocalyptic devotion attached to them. These materials allowed the audience to imagine themselves at the end of the world and reflect on their behaviour in order to ask for repentance and forgiveness from God. The texts tended to operate similarly to devotional literature, in which the reader interacted directly with the manuscripts by meditating on the text and images provided or imagining the scenarios that they were reading about, and thus would alter their behaviour in a manner befitting of their devotion.[23] For example, the reader could meditate on the position and role of the sinners in the *Westminster Apocalypse* and through this seek to rectify their own behaviour, as reflected to them in the form of the sinners descending into the hellmouths. Visual objects, such as the *Signs of Doomsday*

[21] Gayk, 'Apocalyptic Ecologies', p. 10.

[22] R. N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, C.1215- C.1515* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 87.

[23] Bryan, *Looking Inward,* p. 55.

alabasters, the *Great East Window,* the *Pricke of Conscience window,* the Westminster wall paintings and likely the Coventry wall paintings allowed the audience to identify with many of the figures in these sources, and this helped them to reflect and meditate on Christ and their own sinful selves. Such works encouraged contrition and penance on behalf of the audience in order to achieve grace and acceptance upon the Last Judgment.[24] This need for repentance had roots in apocalyptic material around the year 1000, but a movement towards more private devotion, and the further examination of each individual through meditation and reflection appears more widespread in late medieval England. This also generally shows that apocalypticism was enveloped within England's spiritual life, where apocalyptic thought became one aspect where individuals could examine their relationship with God and could strengthen their souls for salvation.

This need for salvation greatly drives apocalyptic material, with the majority of the works discussed in this thesis ending with the final focus on either the Last Judgment or the final salvation and joining with God in Heaven. Even the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* which does not follow Revelation in its story on the end of the world, still ends with the Last Judgement and the deliverance to Heaven.[25] The culmination of apocalyptic thought was in the salvation of the soul, and as such, became the goal and focus for those using apocalyptic thought. Sometimes, such as in the *Pricke of Conscience window, the Signs of Doomsday alabasters* and the Carthusian copy of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius,* this emphasis was manifested in a focus on the physicality of death, and the tribulations of the end. In others, the battle between good and evil, such as in the Norwich cloister bosses, indicated the need for the salvation of the soul at the end of the world. In all, the want for redemption and the need for contrition manifested themselves in the apocalypticism of late medieval England.

Finally, it should be noted that many of the apocalyptic texts and objects engaged within this thesis were connected with groups of Benedictines. Much of this material, although not all of it, presented the apocalypse in a similar vein as that written in Revelation. In this thesis, examples produced and circulated by Benedictine monks included Henry of Kirkstede's *Prophetiae,* the apocalyptic wall paintings at both Westminster Abbey and Coventry Cathedral, and the Norwich apocalypse bosses. Further, the *Westminster Apocalypse* contained a commentary written by the Benedictine monk Berengaudus, which

[24] Hackbarth, 'Apocalyptic Mentalities in Late-Medieval England*',* pp. 97-8.

[25] MS 59, f. 146v.

may have been in possession of the Benedictines at Westminster Abbey. Meanwhile, the metrical version of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* may have been produced by a Benedictine from Toft Monks. From the range of material, it is clear that the Benedictines had an interest in apocalyptic thought in late-medieval England, and that the apocalypse was a concern when thinking about the salvation of the soul. It highlights the fact that apocalyptic material was not solely on the fringes nor always radical, but rather engaged with through a diverse set of viewpoints by both conservative and zealous groups alike. As such, it could be suggested that the Benedictines may have had a specific focus on the apocalypse, although this thesis engages with a select set of sources, and therefore further work on different religious orders and their engagement with apocalyptic thought would need to be done in order to confirm this.

Society

Apocalypticism within late medieval English society appears to have drawn in a wide variety of different people. Apocalypticism was evidently important within a private meditative context, as mentioned above, but it should also be noted that many apocalyptic sources had public uses. Moreover, despite the differences in content within medieval apocalyptic sources, it appears that many were able to draw together these different groups and create a sense of community among these people. The visual sources, such as the *Pricke of Conscience window* and the Signs of Doomsday alabasters were particularly important in drawing together audiences, as they were likely to have been regularly used and admired by their local congregations, and could be utilised for teaching and prayer. The attachment that audiences might have felt towards apocalyptic objects that resided within their own parish or monastic church may have allowed for a sense of shared anxiety and hope about the end of the world. Further, the Middle English copies of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* may have been read out to an audience, and the *Westminster Apocalypse* may have relied on a clergyman to help with interpretation, hence drawing together different groups and creating a sense of community among those who interacted with apocalyptic material.

Some apocalyptic sources also drew together particular clerical audiences, such as can be seen with regards to the *Great East Window*, the Westminster wall paintings and the Coventry wall paintings. In the cases of the wall paintings, they assisted with communal activities such as confession, and to add to the effect of reading the *Rule* to the congregation

of Benedictine monks.[26] As such, the mind could more easily be drawn to the act of devotion and the genuine desire for forgiveness and redemption. It is likely that the *Great East Window* may have conjured up the apocalypse in the minds of its viewers and allowed them to reflect more clearly on the end. It is possible that these objects also doubled up as effecting fear or anxiety in the minds of their clerical audiences, in order for them to be more easily swayed to contrition. It is likely that the Norwich cloister bosses also did a similar job given that it is known these were present in the cloister where heretics were punished.[27] As such, these objects, both textual and visual, encouraged the performance of acts of devotion, as well as likely creating lasting changes in the mind of how one should view God and the Church.

Finally, it should be noted that with regard to the visual objects and the *Westminster Apocalypse* that these were highly decorative and emotive pieces in their own right. As such, they would have been enjoyed by their audiences because of their importance as artistic pieces as well as their meanings and contexts.[28] In a similar vein, the textual material may have entertained as well as informed. This is particularly the case with some of the Middle English texts, as their being written in the common tongue meant they could be understood and enjoyed by all.[29] As such, many of the apocalyptic materials were multi-purpose and provided an outlet for entertainment as well as devotion in late medieval England.

Final Remarks

This thesis has made a twofold contribution to the scholarship on late medieval England. Firstly, it has attempted to draw together a variety of different audiences who engaged in apocalyptic thought, through the use of both textual and visual sources, to examine how these groups viewed the end of the world. Secondly, it has investigated the multifaceted nature of apocalyptic thought in late medieval England, a topic which has been vastly understudied in its own right. While this thesis is not exhaustive in its coverage, its scope has been large enough to capture a variety of different people and sources and, as such can be said to be broadly representative of the ideas of those living in late medieval English society. The apocalypse was broached in a number of ways, and it evidently emerged as part of a greater

[26] Gill, 'The Chapter House Apocalypse Panels', p. 88

[27] Seukles, 'Religious Politics and the Cloister Bosses', p. 301.

[28] K. Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England, 1350-1500* (New York, 2002), pp. 72-3.

[29] R. N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 328.

flourishing of religiosity. As such, it became linked with many other topics and anxieties and became one discourse or lens through which late medieval English people could view their own society. The examination of apocalyptic thought, as I hope I have shown, is an important study in its own right, and is significant to our greater understanding of late medieval England. As such, this thesis fills an important historiographical gap in current understandings of medieval apocalyptic thought.

While the history of apocalyptic thought can never be fully recovered, there is still more to be done in order to better understand late medieval English apocalypticism. Greater examinations of Wycliffite and Joachite thought with regards to their understandings of apocalyptic thought, and their effects more widely on how apocalyptic thought was understood in late medieval England would further benefit the field. Moreover, with such a wide range of sources available, especially in terms of apocalyptic commentaries and prophecies, it would be beneficial to examine these sources further. Routes for doing this include examining them individually within their own rights or bringing them together by source type to examine them further. Doing so would allow us to see what themes, motivations and arguments are most influential within these sources, and this would allow a greater understanding of apocalypticism within the late medieval field. Finally, fitting this discourse within a greater examination of apocalypticism more broadly throughout late medieval Europe would allow for comparisons to be drawn, as well as drawing clearer lines between how English apocalypticism was affected by the continent, and vice versa. While this thesis has considered the continental origins of the sources it examines, and the effect these origins had on their integration into English traditions of apocalypticism, there is still much to be done in this area in terms of mapping out the landscape for apocalyptic beliefs in late medieval Europe as a whole. Finally, further research on how different monastic groups may have interacted with apocalyptic thought is necessary in order to clarify to what extent the Benedictines were unique in their engagement with apocalyptic thought.

With this in mind, this thesis has contributed to the engrossing study of apocalyptic thought in late medieval England and has made a case for its multifaceted and flexible nature within late medieval English society. It is clear that it had an important impact both on how people viewed the future and the present, and how people of different social, economic and geographic backgrounds understood the world around them. Further, apocalypticism could often be used by groups to explore potential political and social implications for their own society, as well as becoming a model by which they could explore their anxieties and fears

safely. However, there is still a great deal more to be uncovered about the development of the flourishing apocalypticism in late medieval England. It is my hope that I have been able to contribute to this topic's fruition into an important area of historical analysis.

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