

Apocalyptic Outsiders and their Uses in the Early Medieval West

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People beyond salvation played pivotal roles in medieval apocalyptic scenarios. Revelation itself had Satan, beasts, sinners, enemies of the faithful, and of course Gog and Magog, primed to go into battle either leading up to or else upon the loosening of Satan's thousand-year bonds. The persecution of the faithful by enemies in the End Times figured prominently in the Little Apocalypse of Matthew 24-25. Old Testament prophecies inspired and reinforced many motifs, most notably in the appearance of Gog and Magog from the North in Ezekiel 38-39 to punish the sins of Israel. Medieval Christians found interpretation of these texts challenging because of the tensions between possible historical and symbolic readings. The spiritual truths suggested in ecclesiological interpretations of Revelation, for instance, still seemed to have tangible expressions when 'barbarians' or non-Christians attacked Christendom, or heretics challenged orthodoxy. At the same time, many commentators offered non-apocalyptic readings of the same threats to the coherence and stability of Christian worlds. The variability of possible response raises the question of why some people chose to describe outsiders in apocalyptic terms.

Analysing interest in apocalyptic outsiders can be fruitful because it takes us to the edges of the most common modern models used to understand apocalypticism.¹ Following Johannes Fried and Richard Landes, the first of these prioritises attitudes towards the date as an apocalyptic marker, such as the 6000th year of the world, or the millennial anniversary of Christ's Incarnation or Passion.² Individuals and groups would variously be moved to actions

¹ J. T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2014). Useful context set out also in J. T. Palmer, 'The Otherness of Non-Christians in the Early Middle Ages', *Studies in Church History*, 51 (2015), pp. 33-52.

² J. Fried, 'Endzeiterwartung um die Jahrtausendwende', *Deutsches Archiv*, 45 (1989), pp. 381-473; R. Landes, 'Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography, 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. 141-211; id., 'Millenarismus absconditus: L'historiographie augustiniennne et l'An Mil', *Le Moyen Age*, 98 (1992), pp. 355-77; id., 'Sur les traces du Millennium: La via negativa', *Le Moyen Age*, 99 (1993), pp. 5-26; R. Landes, A. Gow and D.C. van Meter, eds., *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050* (Oxford, 2003); W. Brandes, 'Anastasios ho dikoros: Endzeiterwartung und Kaiserkritik in Byzanz um 500 n. Chr.', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 90 (1997), 24-63; id., 'Liudprand von Cremona (Legatio Cap. 39-40) und eine bisher unbeachtete West-Östliche Korrespondenz über die bedeutung des Jahres 1000 A.D.', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 93 (2000), 435-63; P. Magdalino, 'The Year

driven by hope or anxiety, giving way to disappointment, relief and rationalisation when the End or a millennial kingdom failed to come. Outsiders may have seemed more portentous at these times but their relevance to apocalyptic tradition was by no means restricted to them – they could be unsettling whenever they came. The second model, which features in Landes’ work and also that of Norman Cohn, focuses on the reforming spirit of millennialism – the effort to create a heavenly kingdom on Earth.³ The application of this seems in particular relevant to instances of ‘popular’ piety with an eschatological edge, pitched against a more conservative or oppressive mainstream. Heretical outsiders may seem more relevant here as opponents of reform and order, or even as characterisations of those seeking change. Attitudes towards some other kinds of outsider (‘barbarians’ etc) are less readily accounted for here, however, not least because Gog and Magog – the apocalyptic outsiders par excellence – signalled the *end* of the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20,7). This was sometimes history imagined in the tragic mode, not the comic mode. Neither dominant framework, then, will quite suffice when it comes to explaining interest in outsiders, even if many insights can be retained.

In what follows, it will be suggested that a model adapted to analyse apocalyptic outsiders must focus on four aspects. First, following O’Leary’s tripartite analysis of apocalyptic rhetoric, we might consider that conceptualising outsiders pertains to the problem of evil in the world (as opposed to time or authority, O’Leary’s other pillars).⁴ Immediately this indicates what kind of discourse of otherness we are dealing with, because it leads us to observe a hostile dichotomy between good and bad which defines groups in conflict. Second, geography was crucial here because evil was often subject to ‘borealisation’ – which is to say that it became associated with a monstrous and barbaric north, cast as the antithesis of the civilised south but also as a rod of God’s wrath following the prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah.⁵ A third aspect is provided by the dynamic of conflict which we could label

1000 in Byzantium’, in P. Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 233-70.

³ R. Landes, *Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of Millennial Experience* (Oxford, 2011); N. Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millennarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (2nd edn., London, 1970).

⁴ S. O’Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1994).

⁵ The idea plays naturally on E. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978), brought importantly into discussions of medieval apocalypticism in A. Gow, ‘Gog and Magog on Mappaemundi and Early Printed World Maps: Orientalizing Ethnography in the Apocalyptic Tradition’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 2. 1 (1998), 61-88, esp. 64-5. See also D. Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden: Vorstellungen und Fremdkategorien bei Rimbart, Thietmar von Merseburg, Adam von Bremen und Helmold von Bosau, Orbis mediaevalis 5* (Berlin, 2005);

‘cultural dissonance’: when the confidence of a culture is challenged by outsiders, it triggers a process in which people have to rationalise out failed expectations – of superiority, say – and work through their new circumstances.⁶ Embedded in this dynamic is our fourth aspect, which is the way in which outsiders can inspire both ‘passive’ descriptive responses (e.g. the identification of a people as Gog) and ‘active’ ones which encourage people into some kind of action.⁷ Bearing these ideas in mind, we can turn to analysing the ways in which apocalyptic outsiders were defined and used within early medieval discourses.

The Internal Enemy

In terms of early medieval ‘theories’ about apocalyptic outsiders in the West, definition began within the ecclesiological framework of biblical exegesis on Revelation.⁸ Here apocalyptic scripture was read as a meditation on Ecclesia rather than as prophecy. This was not to say that the early medieval Church was committed to a ‘realised eschatology’ in which the teachings of the New Testament related only to present and not future experience, for it could not be.⁹ But neither could scripture be taken as a literal guide to the future. With regards to Gog and Magog, apocalyptic outsiders stood for secret enemies within the Church in general rather than definite historical characters to come in the End Times. St Jerome provided an etymology of their names in which the former meant ‘roof’ (*tectum*) or, in Greek, ‘dwelling’ (δομα); while the latter, he asserted, meant ‘from the roof’ (*de tecto*) or ‘uncovering’

T. Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität: Selbst- und Fremddeutung im Norden des hochmittelalterlichen Europa, Europa im Mittelalter*, 14 (Berlin, 2009).

⁶ I use the label ‘cultural dissonance’ here to refer to a general cultural dialectic and to distinguish the process from cognitive dissonance which specifically follows failed prophecies, first set out in L. Festinger, H. W. Riecken & S. Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Sociological and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (Minneapolis, 1956), with useful criticisms in J. G. Melton, ‘Spiritualization and reaffirmation: what really happens when prophecy fails’, *American Studies*, 26 (1985), 17-29 and D. Tumminia, ‘How prophecy never fails: interpretative reason in a flying-saucer group’, *Sociology of Religion*, 59.2 (1998), 157-70.

⁷ On the use of apocalyptic motifs in the active mode see also F. L. Borschardt, *Doomsday Speculation as a Strategy of Persuasion: A Study of Apocalypticism as Rhetoric* (Lewiston, 1990).

⁸ E. A. Matter, ‘The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis’, in R. Emmerson & B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London, 1992), 38-50; P. Fredriksen, ‘Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity: From John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo’, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 45 (1991), 151-83.

⁹ ‘Realised eschatology’ was first set out in C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom* (London, 1935) and so is not entirely relevant to medieval theology.

(*detecto*).¹⁰ This etymology was cited by Augustine in *De civitate Dei* and then by Primasius of Hadrumentum (fl. 550) in his commentary on Revelation, after which it became a stable part of exegetical tradition.¹¹ The roof stood for the enclosure of the (secret) enemies of Christianity, who would burst into the open, emerging ‘from the roof’. Stated so, Gog and Magog stood for heretics most of all, since they came from within rather than from without, and this was the preferred interpretation by Bede (d. 735), Haimo of Auxerre (c. 850), and others.¹² What Gog and Magog could not signify, most commentators agreed in theory, were specific and localisable peoples such as the Getae and Massagetae or the Huns.

The association between ‘secret enemies’ and Gog and Magog enjoyed little development despite the apparent victory of the idea in biblical commentaries. Drawing on Jerome’s Latinised Greek etymology of Magog, *de domate* (‘from the dwelling’), in 786 Beatus of Lièbana saw the opportunity to talk about those *de dogmate*, those who had strayed from correct interpretations of dogma – no doubt thinking about the growing Christological dispute in the Iberian peninsula at the time.¹³ The Irish exegetical compendium *Pauca problemsmata* preserved in ninth-century Regensburg made a strong association between Gog and heretics, but without direct Hieronymian influence or obvious heresies to combat.¹⁴ Heretics were discussed at length in relation to apocalyptic scripture as the enemies of Ecclesia, as is particularly notable in Haimo’s work even as he made different distinctions between internal and external forces.¹⁵ Rarely, however, does one find such discussion away

¹⁰ Jerome, In Ezekiel, XI, PL 25.354-7; Liber de nominibus Hebraicis, PL 23.781 (Gen), 837 (Eze) and 857-8 (Rev).

¹¹ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XX. 11, ed. Dombart, CCSL 48 (Turnhout, 1955), pp. 720-1; Primasius, *Commentarius in apocalypsin*, V, ed. A. W. Adams, CCSL 92 (Turnhout, 1985), pp. 278-9.

¹² Bede, *Expositio apocalypseos*, XXXV. 92-102, ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A (Turnhout, 2002), p. 511; Haimo of Auxerre, In *apocalypsin*, PL 117. 1186-7. Compare also the texts in *Commentaria minor in Apocalypsin Iohannis*, ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 107 (Turnhout, 2003).

¹³ Beatus, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, XI, ed. E. Romero-Pose, Rome 1985, II. 358. On the debate, J. C. Cavadini, *The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, 785-820* (Philadelphia, 1993).

¹⁴ Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14277, f. 339v (‘Gog tectum interpretatur, id est populus hereticorum’). On the *Pauca problemsmata* see B. Bischoff, ‘Wendepunkt in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter’, in his *Mittelalterliche Studien*, 1 (Stuttgart, 1966), pp. 205-272 at pp. 231-6.

¹⁵ Haimo of Auxerre, In *apoc.*, PL 117. 1007, 1028, 1047-60, 1068-9, 1073, 1077, 1083, 1085, 1093, 1100, 1114, 1129, 1137, 1159-60, 1184, 1217-18, 1220 – often extra Ecclesiam alongside pagans, Jews and false Christians. On Haimo and his more political commentary on Ezekiel see J. J. Contreni, ‘“By Lions, Bishops are Meant; By Wolves, Priests”’: History, Exegesis, and the Carolingian Church in Haimo of Auxerre’s Commentary on Ezekiel’, *Francia*, 29. 1 (2002), 29-56, esp. 35-6.

from exegetical works. One exception is the author of the *Vita Boniti*, an eighth-century Gaulish saint's Life, who characterised extreme ascetics in the Auvergne as Gog and Magog, explicitly citing Jerome to underpin the idea that they were enemies of the Church and perhaps ('forsitan') some of the heretics that would precede Antichrist.¹⁶ Other writers were slower to accuse their enemies of being Gog and Magog than they were even to label them 'Antichrist(s)'.¹⁷

Pseudo-prophets as apocalyptic outsiders (Matt. 24,11 and 24; Rev. 16;13; 19,20; 20,10), on the other hand, seemed real enough and caused unrest. They were often outsiders because they rejected institutional hierarchy, even if they tended to adopt many of the standard trappings of early medieval piety. Gregory of Tours described three such figures in his *Historiae* (written up to c. 593), the most dramatic being the messianic 'Christ' of Bourges – an 'antichrist', thought Gregory – who lived in the woods with his sister, 'Mary', and attracted an army of thousands through his false Second Coming.¹⁸ He was, the bishop of Tours was sure, a sign of the End's approach; but more than that, he was a challenge to the *ecclesia Dei* Gregory helped to lead, and therefore Gregory had to condemn his type to posterity.¹⁹ To attack such figures was to defend an orthodox eschatology, not to obscure belief in the End. Similar things can be seen 150 years later, when St Boniface led the condemnation of the unapproved holy man Aldebert, 'a precursor of Antichrist', who attracted people by offering quick absolution of sins, easily accessible relics (his hair and fingernail clippings), and dismissing the importance of pilgrimage or even going to proper churches.²⁰ This was the only time in a long career with many tribulations that Boniface employed apocalyptic rhetoric, highlighting the seriousness with which he regarded such an

¹⁶ *Vita Boniti*, c. 17, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM, 6 (Hanover, 1913), p. 129

¹⁷ See the examples of Antichrist rhetoric discussed in S. MacLean, 'Reform, Queenship and the End of the World in Tenth-Century France: Adso's "Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist" Reconsidered', *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 86 (2008), 645-75 at 653-6 and Palmer, *The Apocalypse*, pp. 216-19.

¹⁸ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, X. 25, ed. B. Krusch & W. Levison, MGH SRM, 1. 1 (Hanover, 1951), pp. 517-19. See also IX. 6, pp. 417-20. Discussed in M. Rouche, *L'Aquitaine des Wisigoths aux Arabes, 418-781* (Paris, 1979), pp. 409-14 and Landes, 'Millenarismus absconditus', 376-7; Landes, *Heaven on Earth*, pp. 63-4; Palmer, *The Apocalypse*, pp. 75-6.

¹⁹ M. Heinzemann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, trans. C. Carroll (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 78 and p. 83.

²⁰ Boniface, *Epistola*, no. 59, ed. M. Tangl, MGH Epp. sel. 1 (Berlin, 1916), pp. 110-13; Palmer, *The Apocalypse*, pp. 148-50.

alternative popular focus for worship.²¹ Again, the condemnation of an outsider, a not-so-secret enemy within, reinforced core values framed by an eschatological need to keep society in order for Judgement.

External Enemies

A livelier cluster of traditions developed in the early Middle Ages concerning apocalyptic invasion, perhaps where cultural dissonance was more keenly felt. It was the Goths' role in the unsettled early years of the fifth century which prompted both St Jerome and St Augustine to write against associating the attackers with Gog and Magog.²² The identification played on the names of the Gothic Getae and Masagetae but also represented an outgrowth of genealogical traditions in which all peoples had biblical ancestors – and in this case, the Scythians and Getae were widely considered to be the descendants of Japheth's son Magog.²³ There was nothing strictly prophetic about this association, at least when compared to the descendants of Sarah (*saraceni*; Arabs) who represented one branch which history had separated from salvation.²⁴ Sometimes, more rhetorical mileage could be teased from ambiguous identifications of otherness, labelling outsiders *barbari* for example, or in the ninth century embracing the literal *nordmanni* to describe the Scandinavian raiders who afflicted Latin Christendom. These could then be linked to something more concretely apocalyptic, as when Aethicus Ister used an imagined barbaric North as the location of Gog and Magog.²⁵ Often, however, labels could be emotive, even pejorative, but their resonance was left seemingly left open for the reader to understand.

Jews, in this context, were the 'outsiders' who played the least role in eschatological definitions of community. This was because, as Heil observed, 'conflict with the Jews was an

²¹ N. Zeddies, 'Bonifatius und zwei nützliche Rebellen: die Häretiker Aldebert und Clemens', in: Th. Fögen (ed.), *Ordnung und Aufruhr im Mittelalter. Historische und juristische Studien zur Rebellion, Ius commune. Sonderheft 70* (Frankfurt-am-Main 1995), pp. 232-251

²² See above, p. **.

²³ In the East this tradition naturally coalesced around the Huns: see W. Brandes, 'Gog, Magog und die Hunnen. Anmerkungen zur eschatologischen „Ethnographie“ der Völkerwanderungszeit', in: *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World. The West, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*, ed. by W. Pohl / Cl. Gantner / R. Payne. Aldershot 2012, 477-498, and V. Wieser, this volume.

²⁴ Emphasised in Pseudo-Methodius, [5], 2, eds. W. J. Aerts & G. A. A. Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten Griechischen und Lateinischen Übersetzungen* (2 vols., Leuven, 1998), p. 93. K. Scarfe Becket, *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World*, *Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England*, 33 (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 90-115.

²⁵ *The Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*, cc. 32-3, ed. and trans. M. Herren, *Publications of The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 8 (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 32-5.

intellectual, not a social, reality' – a point which underscores the importance of genuine conflict to interpretations of apocalyptic outsiders.²⁶ There just were not many Jewish communities in the West at this time, but where there were, they did provide some contrast with the *ecclesia Dei*. Gregory of Tours thought the Jews in Orléans to be deceitful heretics but afforded them no further role in his apocalyptic unfolding of history other than to show good king Guntramn resisting their calls for help rebuilding a synagogue.²⁷ In Carolingian Lyons, Agobard wrote to exhort Emperor Louis the Pious to provide order and direction during *tempora periculosa* characterised by Jews – associated with Antichrist – leading Christians astray.²⁸ Often this tapped into an apocalyptic anti-Judaism shaped equally by Jerome and Pseudo-Methodius in which Jews stood as the opponents of Christ.²⁹ Yet, seizing on Romans (11. 25-26), the conversion of Jews by a returning Enoch and Elijah was another essential part of the End Times narrative, as proclaimed more positively by Bede and Alcuin in the eighth century.³⁰ Perhaps this is why few felt the need for violence against them that could be witnessed after AD 1000 – and indeed why there are so many examples of forcible

²⁶ J. Heil, “‘Nos nescientes de hoc velle manere’ – ‘We Wish to Remain Ignorant About This’: Timeless End, or: Approaches to Reconceptualizing Eschatology after AD 800 (AM 6000)”, *Traditio*, 55 (2000), 73-103 at p. 98. Further context in Palmer, ‘The Otherness of Non-Christians’, pp. 39-41.

²⁷ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, VIII. 1, eds. Krusch & Levison, pp. 370-1. On Gregory’s attitudes towards the Jews see A. Keeley, ‘Arians and Jews in the Histories of Gregory of Tours’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 23. 2 (1997), 103-115 at 109-115.

²⁸ Agobard of Lyons, *De insolentia Iudeorum*, ed. L. van Acker, CCCM, 52 (Turnhout, 1981), p. 191; Heil, ‘Reconceptualizing Eschatology’, 99-101.

²⁹ Jerome, In *Danielem*, 3 (4), ed. F. Glorie, CCSL 75A (Turnhout, 1964), 917; Pseudo-Methodius, [14], 10, p. 195 (Antichrist descended from the tribe of Dan, just like Judas Iscariot). I cite here the Latin version as I am discussing the Western traditions. Aerts & Kortekaas’s edition now forms the basis of the texts in B. Garstad’s *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library*, 14 (Cambridge, MA, 2012).

³⁰ Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 69, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL, 123B (Turnhout, 1977), p. 532; Alcuin, *De fide sanctae et individuae trinitatis*, 3. 19, PL 101. 51A-B. Note also how Adso incorporates this into the Pseudo-Methodian end section of his *De ortu et tempore antichristo*, ed. D. Verhelst, CCCM, 45 (Turnhout, 1976), p. 28.

conversion.³¹ Anti-Judaism might not always have gone hand-in-hand with anti-apocalypticism if people actively wished to bring about the conditions for Judgement Day.³²

Often it was the instability of the world, rather than an interest in Gog and Magog per se, which moved people to write about outsiders. After Augustine's rejection of historical interpretations of Revelation, the intellectual landscape was complicated by Gregory the Great (590-604) – largely Augustinian but with a deeper sense of apocalyptic imminence – because of his portentous and widely-circulated interpretation of the Lombards.³³ Time and again, in sermons, letters, and the *Dialogi*, Lombard attacks were listed amongst signs of the End, largely because they were perpetrated by barbarians set against the civilised world – a *gens contra gentem* from Luke 21,10.³⁴ They were not beyond the pale for this, and Gregory worked actively to establish peace and to encourage the Lombards to renounce Arianism. Through such measures, and the ambiguity of his words, Gregory retained a level of agnosticism about the End by refusing to raise the Lombards up as an essential part of a set narrative of the End Times. It was nevertheless perhaps only a short distance in thought from Gregory's sketches to the appearance of Pseudo-Ephraim's *Sermo*, with its unspecific 'warlike peoples' – still not Gog and Magog – who would come in the Last Days to scatter

³¹ On anti-Judaism around the Year 1000, Fried, 'Endzeiterwartung', 468-9, and R. Landes, 'The Massacres of 101: On the Origins of Popular Anti-Jewish Violence in Western Europe', in J. Cohen (ed.), *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought* (Wolfenbüttel, 1996), 79-112. Examples of forced baptism: Gregory, *Historiae*, V. 11, pp. 205-6, and VI. 17, pp. 286-7 (but note the deliberate contrast in narrative); Isidore, *Historia*, c. 60, ed. C. Rodríguez Alonso (Léon, 1975), pp. 270-2. Peaceful conversion urged by Gregory the Great, *Registrum*, XIII. 13, ed. Norberg, II. 1013-14. See B. Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe* (Minneapolis, 1977).

³² Cf Heil, 'Reconceptualizing Eschatology', 101 (although I agree with his interpretation of the evidence he cites).

³³ On Gregory's eschatology: C. Dagens, 'La fin de temps et l'Église selon Saint Grégoire le Grand', *Recherches de science religieuse*, 58 (1970), 273-88; R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 51-67 and his 'Living within Sight of the End', in: C. Humphrey & M. Ormrod (eds.), *Time in the Medieval World* (York, 2001), 23-34; M. Meier, 'Eschatologie und Kommunikation im 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr. – oder: Wie Osten und Westen beständig aneinander vorbei redeten', in: W. Brandes & F. Schmieder (eds.), *Endzeiten. Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen* (Berlin & New York, 2008), pp. 41-73 at 56-63.

³⁴ Gregory, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, I. 1, ed. R. Étaix, CCSL, 141 (Turnhout, 1999), p. 6; *Registrum*, V. 37, II. 309; *Dialogi*, III. 38. 3, ed. A. de Vogüé, *Sources Chrétiennes*, 260, Paris 1979, p. 430; *Moralia in Job*, XIX. 9. 16, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL, 143 (3 vols, Turnhout, 1979-85), II. 968; Palmer, *The Apocalypse*, pp. 63-5.

people hither-and-thither, East and West.³⁵ As long as some things were left sufficiently open, barbarian attacks added important colour to a sense of imminence.

More than Gregory, Pseudo-Ephraim hinted that the people of the Endtime would be geographically locatable – something intensified once with the tradition of Alexander, the Caspian Gates, and ‘the Breasts of the North’ in the West.³⁶ In Julius Valerius’s *Res gestae Alexandri*, a fourth- or fifth-century translation of Pseudo-Callisthenes, the peoples Alexander locked behind the Caspian Gates were rendered as just *gentes plurimae*.³⁷ In Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* these were *gentes ferae* and associated with the Huns, just as they often were in the East.³⁸ Fredegar – writing later in the seventh century and perhaps with second-hand knowledge of Eastern tradition – adapted the legend so that Emperor Herakleios released *gentes suevissimae* from behind the Caspian Gates when seeking help against the Arabs.³⁹ It was then famously in Pseudo-Methodius’ *Sermo* that the legend was cast as part of an apocalyptic narrative: Gog and Magog were amongst those imprisoned by Alexander and much later, after persecutions by the Arabs ended only by a last *rex Grecorum sive Romanorum*, the *gentes ab Aquilone* would be released from the North to unleash a final persecution before Judgement Day.⁴⁰ With Petrus Monachus translating Pseudo-Methodius from Greek into Latin early in the eighth century, the West had the resources for a more developed historicising framework for interpreting apocalyptic outsiders.⁴¹

³⁵ Pseudo-Ephraim, Scarpsum, ed. D. Verhelst, in: R. Lievens, E. van Mingroot & W. Verbeke (eds.), *Pascua Mediaevalia, Historica Lovaniensia*, 155 (Leuven, 1983), 518-28 at 524-5. D. Verhelst, ‘La préhistoire des conceptions d’Adson concernant l’Antichrist’, *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 40 (1973), 52-103 at pp. 97-8; G. J. Reinink, ‘Pseudo-Methodius and the Pseudo-Ephremian *Sermo de fine mundi*’, in: R. Nip et al. (eds.), *Media Latinitas* (Turnhout, 1996), pp. 317-21; G. Kortekaas, ‘The Biblical Quotations in the Pseudo-Ephremian *Sermo de fine mundi*’, in: *Media Latinitas*, pp. 237-44.

³⁶ A. R. Anderson, *Alexander’s Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge, MA, 1932); A. B. Schmidt, ‘Die “Brüste des Norden” und Alexanders Mauer gegen Gog und Magog’, in Brandes & Schmieder, *Endzeiten*, pp. 89-99.

³⁷ Julius Valerius, *Res gestae Alexandri*, II.19, ed. M. Rosellini (Leipzig, 1993), p. 114.

³⁸ Isidore, *Etymologiae*, ix.2.66, ed. W. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911) [unpaginated]. Anderson, *Alexander’s Gate*, p. 12 and see again Brandes, ‘Gog, Magog und die Hunnen’, for the Eastern tradition.

³⁹ Fredegar, *Chronicae*, IV. 66, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 153-4.

⁴⁰ Pseudo-Methodius (Petrus Monachus), c. 13. 19-21, ed. Kortekaas & Aerts, pp. 183-5.

⁴¹ On Petrus see now H. Möhring, ‘Karl der Große und die Endkaiser-Weissagung: Der Sieger über den Islam kommt aus dem Westen’, in: B. Z. Kedar, J. Riley-Smith & R. Hiestand (eds.), *Montjoie: Studies in Crusade History in Honour of Hans Eberhard Mayer* (Aldershot, 1997), 1-20, elaborated in Möhring’s, *Der Weltkaiser*, pp. 136-43; R. M. Pollard, ‘One Other on Another: Petrus Monachus’ *Revelationes* and Islam’, in M. Cohen & J. Firnhaber-Baker

The fate of Pseudo-Methodius in the West is revealing of the anxiety of interpretation involved. For a start, Petrus's text was bound to the Latin text of Pseudo-Ephraim from an early date, meaning that two similar prophecies now sat together.⁴² Readers did not readily accept the relevance of the Alexander Legend, which was expunged from the second Latin recension (in Alemannia, perhaps around 793) and dismissed by the Gallo-Roman Ambrosius Autpertus at S. Vincenzo between 758 and 767 as pertaining to human rather than spiritual truths.⁴³ But at the same time, the resonance of Gog and Magog increased, as they were used to gloss the identity of the *gentes ab Aquilone* by Petrus's reviser. A third recension, also with a witness by Lake Constance by c. 800, both kept Alexander and added the clarifying references to Gog and Magog.⁴⁴ Yet another early witness, the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister, wove the Alexander legend and Gog and Magog of the North – 'borealised' further with the poem "mother of dragons, and nurse of scorpions, pit of vipers, and lake of demons" – into a slightly fantastical and barbed description of the world.⁴⁵ Here Gog and Magog, still to be led by Antichrist in the Last Days, were satirised as part of a wider array of barbarous and peculiar peoples in the North, many cannibalistic, the antithesis of civility. The most important feature of such apocalyptic outsiders, as we shall see further below, was their otherness as a moral lesson, not their historical reality.

The difficulty the 'debate' about Gog and Magog posed was how to deal with apocalyptic outsiders when they were, ultimately, just people. There was, for sure, trauma, conflict and general cultural dissonance surrounding the actions of some, but people were also interested in actively bringing that conflict back into harmony. Isidore of Seville pulled off a careful trick with his use of Gog and Magog in the formation of Visigothic identity in the *Historia Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum*, written in its expanded form for King Sisenand in 624.⁴⁶ At the beginning of his chronicle, he points to the association between Gog and Magog and the Getae, drawing attention to the importance of Ezekiel's prophecy but

(eds.), *Difference and Identity in Francia and Medieval France* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 25-42; Palmer, *The Apocalypse*, pp. 107-29.

⁴² Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 13348, 89r-111v (provenance Corbie, mid-eighth century).

⁴³ Ambrosius Autpertus, *Expositionis in Apocalypsin*, IX. 45-52, ed. R. Weber, CCCM 27A (Turnhout, 1975), p. 758. For the second recension of Pseudo-Methodius see O. Prinz, 'Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung der lateinischen Übersetzung des Pseudo-Methodius', *Deutsches Archiv*, 41 (1985), 1-23.

⁴⁴ Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. 254, ff. 206r-208r and f. 209r (provenance Reichenau, early ninth century).

⁴⁵ Gow, 'Gog and Magog', 64-5 (on apocalyptic geography and orientalisation).

⁴⁶ Isidore, *Historia*, 'De origine Gothorum', ed. Rodríguez Alonso, p. 172.

essentially undercutting it by not explaining the resonance. But by then quoting Orosius's explicitly de-eschatologising reputation of the Getae – Alexander said they should be shunned, Caesar never beat them – we are put on a straight historical footing. Indeed, this ties in with Isidore's discussion of the Goths in *Etymologiae*, which is a simple exercise in the genealogical tradition.⁴⁷ For Isidore, as for Orosius, there was a sense in which the Goths had taken over the dignity of the Roman Empire and in the process become insiders. Rome was the last of the four World Empires and perversely it was now run by the apocalyptic outsiders it stood up to. Gog and Magog in this case had not signalled the End of the world, but helped in its endurance.

Apocalyptic Outsiders as a Spur for Reform

Behind much of what we have seen so far was an interest in embracing the 'threat' of apocalyptic outsiders to encourage moral reform. This is in effect the 'active-focussed' side of cultural dissonance, because it was less about proclaiming the End and more about directing responses to the present. When people sought to understand why they had been attacked, reforming voices adopted a retrospective prophetic mood and quickly blamed the behaviour of the afflicted. Alcuin, for instance, used the viking Sack of Lindisfarne in 793 as an opportunity to write letters criticising drinking, hunting and other 'secular' pursuits in monasteries – addressing not only the shocked community in Lindisfarne, but also in Jarrow 80km away.⁴⁸ Famously he linked the attacks to Jeremiah's 'from the north an evil shall break forth' (1, 14).⁴⁹ Salvian of Marseilles in the mid-fifth century, targeting Roman society at large, naturally found a wider spectrum of sins to correct.⁵⁰ Sometimes these were 'imagined sins' drawn from reading, just as there were 'imagined paganisms'. Both Salvian and Pseudo-Methodius worried about unnatural sex acts, but both did so on the basis of Paul's Romans 1, 26-27 rather than because there were prostitutes outside their window as far as we can tell.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Pseudo-Methodius concluded: 'on account of this [the sinners] will be handed

⁴⁷ Isidore, *Etymologiae*, IX.2 (especially 27 on Magog).

⁴⁸ Alcuin, *Epistolae*, nos. 19, pp. 53-6, 20, pp. 56-8, 21, pp. 58-9, 22, pp. 59-60

⁴⁹ Alcuin, *Epistola*, no. 19, p. 55. On the intellectual context see S. Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath or the People of God's Wrath? The Carolingian Theology of the Viking Invasions', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42 (1991), 535-54..

⁵⁰ Salvian, *De gubernatione Dei*, ed. C. Halm, MGH AA, 1 (Berlin, 1877), 1-108.

⁵¹ Salvian, *De gubernatione Dei*, VII. 76, p. 97; Pseudo-Methodius (Petrus Monachus), *Sermo*, [11], 6-7, pp. 141-3.

by God into the hands of the barbarians'.⁵² The audience was left in no doubt what fate awaited them if they did not behave better.

There was something inessential about apocalyptic motifs in these contexts – something which helps to identify a repertoire of interpretation that goes beyond the apocalyptic. A single example might suffice: Gildas wrote his *De excidio Britanniae* perhaps in the late fifth or early sixth century as a layman resigning from public life in favour of the monastic, pouring scorn on the standards of the kings and nobles of Sub-Roman Britain.⁵³ Repeatedly, like Salvian of Marseilles, Gildas invoked a providential prophetic voice, both to explain why pagan Saxons and Picts had been so successful at invading Christian Britain, and to explain why moral correction was a necessary response. The striking feature for us is the lack of explicit apocalyptic rhetoric. Gildas had the ammunition: the barbaric, pagan Picts had come from the North, from beyond Hadrian's Wall, and with other 'barbarians' had persecuted Christians with severe failings in moral character, at least as far as Gildas was concerned.⁵⁴ Two things might have affected his response: first, we need to bear in mind that Gildas had access to a more limited repertoire of apocalyptic ideas, not least because he wrote before Pseudo-Methodius;⁵⁵ and, second, Gildas may simply have chosen not to push things in the direction of a Salvian or Quodvultdeus, content that what he wrote would be sufficient for his argumentative purposes. Context defined eschatological logic.

Seeking further evidence of prophetic or apocalyptic use of outsiders in reform sermons provides mixed results. Galician tradition urged use of Revelation in paschal liturgical settings, and in Spain it was enshrined in a decision at Isidore's Toledo IV, although in neither case are details provided.⁵⁶ Many early eschatologically-focused sermons were

⁵² Ps-Methodius, 11, 8, p. 143: 'propter hoc igitur tradentur a Deo in manus barbarorum'.

⁵³ Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae*, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH AA, 13 (Berlin, 1898), 1-85. The authenticity has recently been called into question on the basis of Bede's all-too-neat appropriation of Gildas's prophecy – see A. Woolf, 'An Interpolation into the Text of Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae*', *Peritia*, 16 (2002), 161-7 and K. Olbrich, 'Die Britannienprophezeiung des Gildas im Lichte der Säkularvorstellungen: Spuren einer politischen Fälschung des 8. Jahrhunderts?', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 44 (2011), 59-82. The pertinent section for my comparison may still be genuine.

⁵⁴ See especially Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae*, c. 21, pp. 36-7.

⁵⁵ It is worth noting that in Britain, where no copy of Pseudo-Methodius is known until the twelfth century, there was no strong tradition of analysing outsiders – even vikings – as Gog and Magog, even in the eschatological sermons of Wulfstan (<http://webpages.ursinus.edu/jlionarons/wulfstan/frameset1.html>).

⁵⁶ Pseudo-Germanus, *Expositio brevis antiquae liturgiae Gallicanae*, I. 7, ed. E. Ratcliff, Henry Bradshaw Society, 98 (Chichester, 1965), pp. 5-6. Toledo IV, c. 17, ed. K.-G. Schon (<http://www.pseudoisidor.mgh.de/html/108.htm>).

more interested in the struggles of the soul than the threats of outsiders.⁵⁷ But it was certainly Gregory the Great's intention to frighten the audience of his homilies into a state of penitence in response to things such as Lombard attacks. The texts of Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Ephraim were called *sermones*, even if they may have been reserved for private study in monasteries. Pseudo-Ephraim at least lamented that people should have been considering penance sooner. When in 789 Charlemagne's court issued an 'exemplar sermon' to help guard against the activities of (apocalyptic) pseudo-prophets and pseudo-teachers, however, the content of the sermon was more about abstract moral reflection rather than the evils of unorthodox preachers, and that was perhaps the more common strategy.⁵⁸ Agobard of Lyons provided one rare later Carolingian example when he quoted most of the first section of Rev. 20 in *De fidei veritate*. He passed little comment on Gog and Magog but did summarise a general truth: 'and so perfect Christians should not only not fear tribulations, but in truth glory in tribulations.' He recognised, as Gregory had done, that outsiders provided a test of faith and were therefore spiritually useful.⁵⁹

Reform legislation and canon law, surprisingly, carried little of the urgency proclaimed by sermons or attacks on charismatics.⁶⁰ Despite the ecclesiology in exegesis of Revelation, most church councils defined their enemy as slipping standards rather than apocalyptic evils. (Curiously, one might also note that church councils never condemned 'non-orthodox' views on apocalypticism, exposing the ambiguity in attitude further). When councils did make a stand, there were clear triggers. Charlemagne's concern about pseudo-prophets and pseudo-teachers in 789, for instance, was likely a response to the fiery arguments surrounding the Adoptionist Controversy. The Synod of Meaux-Paris in 845/6 under King Charles the Bald was notable for opening with a darker discussion of judgement, punishment and prophecy.⁶¹ Here the cause was made explicit: the Lord gave 'from North', so that according to the prophet, 'an evil will break forth'... namely the most brutal persecutors

⁵⁷ For one such collection see Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Clm 28135 (Freising, early s. ix) available online through www.europeanaregia.eu

⁵⁸ *Admonitio generalis*, c. 82, ed. A. Boretius, MGH Cap. 1 (Hanover, 1883), pp. 61-2; T. L. Amos, 'Preaching and the Sermon in the Carolingian World', in T. L. Amos, E. A. Green & B. M. Kienzle (eds.), *De ore domini: Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1989), pp. 41-60 at 43-4.

⁵⁹ Agobard, *De fidei veritate*, ed. van Acker, p. 275: *perfecti itaque Christiani non solum non timent tribulationes, uerum etiam gloriantur in tribulationibus, scientes quod tribulatio paciencia operatur, paciencia autem probacionem, probacio uero spem, spes autem non confundit.*

⁶⁰ One rare example is Chrodegang of Metz's *Vita canonicorum*, pref., ed. J. Bertram, *The Chrodegang Rules* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 27-8.

⁶¹ no. 11, ed. W. Hartmann, MGH Conc. 3 (Hanover, 1984), pp. 82-3.

of the Christians, the Northmen ('Nordmanni), who came to Paris...' – referring to the famous attack of the city in 845.⁶² The programme of emendation proposed at the synod drew its force from an actualisation of prophecy. Perhaps the report of an ominous vision about the vikings had heightened expectations.⁶³ Yet, as viking attacks increased in the second half of the ninth century, the response at Paris would turn out to be an exception rather than the rule.

With the Northmen, we come back to the issue of apocalyptic geography. While Gog and Magog lurked, ominously, on the peripheries of the known world, were they to inspire people to take up the missionary life? Matt 24.14 explicitly linked the consummation of the world to the preaching of the Gospels to all kingdoms and nations, and 28.19-20 sent the disciples forth to fulfil this work. Pascasius Radbertus of Corbie recognised here that the building of churches in Scandinavia went some way to completing the task of evangelisation, although he noted that 'all peoples are promised to come to the faith, not all men of all peoples'.⁶⁴ Here too lived cynocephali according to Aethicus Ister, the same ones imprisoned by Alexander alongside Gog and Magog according to Pseudo-Methodius.⁶⁵ Rimbart of Hamburg-Bremen worried over whether these monstrous figures were humans and were therefore in need of mission, presumably because of his apocalyptic evangelical drive.⁶⁶ Again that which was external and unusual had to be normalised, brought 'inside', so that prophecy could be fulfilled. But it had been so since the days of Gregory the Great, when he had written to Eulogios of Alexandria to inform him that Christianity had been preached unto the ends of the Earth now that the English had converted under his influence.⁶⁷

⁶² *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 845, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SRG, 6 (Hanover, 1883), p. 32; *Annales Fuldenses*, s.a. 845, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SRG, 7 (Hanover, 1891), p. 35; Palmer, 'The Otherness of Non-Christians', p. 39.

⁶³ *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 839, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SRG, 5 (Hanover, 1883), pp. 18-19.

⁶⁴ Pascasius Radbertus, In Matheum, XI, ed. Beda Paulus, CCCM, 56 (3 vols., Turnhout, 1984), II. 1165: 'omnes gentes promissae sunt ad fidem venire, non omnes homines omnium gentium'. Palmer, *The Apocalypse*, pp. 181-2.

⁶⁵ *The Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*, c. 28, ed. Herren, p. 26; Pseudo-Methodius (Petrus Monachus), *Sermo*, [8],10, ed. Kortekaas & Aerts, p. 117. On traditions about cynocephali in the period see I. N. Wood, 'Categorising the Cynocephali', in R. Corradini, M. Gillis, R. McKitterick & I. van Renswoude (eds.), *Ego Trouble: Authors and their Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2010), pp. 125-36.

⁶⁶ Only the reply to Rimbart's worries has survived: Ratramnus of Corbie, *Epistolae variorum inde a saeculo non medio usque ad mortem Karoli II. (Cavli) imperatoris collectae*, no. 12, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epp. 5 (Berlin, 1925), pp. 155-6.

⁶⁷ Gregory the Great, *Registrum*, VIII. 29, ed. D. Norberg, CCSL, 140A (Turnhout, 1982), pp. 551-2. Gregory had also seen praedictores – missionary or not – to be essential in the End Times: see C. Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000), p. 157.

Were, then, opponents of mission ‘anti-apocalyptic’ for obstructing actions which some people considered to be a fulfilment of prophecy?⁶⁸ It is, of course, a matter of perspective. When Gregory was active, the idea of universal mission was just in its infancy so difficulties in garnering support exposed contrasts between models of Christendom and its duties. Over a century later Gregory’s view, bolstered by similar ideas spreading from Ireland, still failed to motivate bishops and priests whose priorities simply lay elsewhere. Into the Viking Age, Hincmar of Rheims in many ways stood opposed to the evangelisation work launched from Rimbart’s see, but did so because he had a dim view of the Danes and politically needed to distance himself from Ebbo, his predecessor as archbishop. Haimo of Auxerre dismissed the relevance of Gog and Magog to the Northmen on the basis of exegetical tradition.⁶⁹ Removed from the politics, but not the prejudice, in 883-5 Notker the Stammer of St Gall openly mocked cynocephali and the ‘faked’ conversions of the Northmen – yet he opened his *Gesta Karoli* by announcing that the Carolingian Empire, as the successor to Rome, was the last world empire from the Book of Daniel.⁷⁰ Engagement with apocalyptic traditions was often dictated by what an individual hoped to achieve in the world. There were many ways in which eschatology and reform could combine.

In the final reckoning, apocalyptic outsiders presented a spectrum of factors which both encouraged and constrained use. Contingent historical circumstance (invasion, heresy) and chosen genres of writing (exegesis, sermons etc) clearly made references to apocalyptic outsiders potentially more attractive, depending on the purpose of the rhetoric. A repertoire developed accordingly and rarely stood still, absorbing ecclesiastical symbolism, moralising exhortations, fear of the North and a shifting geographical framework for Gog and Magog, and different kinds of expectations for the future, both spiritual and temporal. The uses to which the motifs were put are instructive as writers were rarely interested in proclaiming that the End Times was near as an end in itself. Writers designed their products to shape discourse about recent events, but more specifically to dramatise the need for reform and encourage genuine response rather than to present mere commentary. The obvious result of this is that

⁶⁸ On opposition to mission to Scandinavia see J. T. Palmer, ‘Rimbart’s Vita Anskarii and Scandinavian Mission in the Ninth Century’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 55. 2 (2004), 235-56.

⁶⁹ Haimo of Auxerre, In apocalypsin PL 117. 1186-7, possibly with a text such as Frechulf, *Historiae*, I. 2. 25, ed. M. Allen, CCCM, 169A (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 134-5, as well as Ambrosius Autpertus (as n. 43).

⁷⁰ Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, I. 1, ed. H. F. Haefele, MGH SRG, n.s. 12 (Berlin, 1959), p. 1 (Charlemagne’s empire as the successor to Rome); II. 13, p. 76 (cynocephali); II. 19, pp. 89-90 (faked conversions). Palmer, *The Apocalypse*, p. 159.

discussion of apocalyptic outsiders became an exercise in internal reflection – not surprising, perhaps, given the building blocks provided in the spiritual readings of exegetical texts, but it meant that even historical readings could be turned towards the same desired outcome. The emphasis on reform is natural if we step back and consider apocalyptic in general as a response to ‘cultural dissonance’ – not just as an expression of displacement and uncertainty, but as a strategy of resolution in which the veracity of both the problem and the solution could be grasped.

