

András Kraft

**THE LAST ROMAN EMPEROR *TOPOS*
IN THE BYZANTINE APOCALYPTIC TRADITION**

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

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May 2011

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András Kraft

(Germany)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

Chair, Examination Committee

Thesis Supervisor

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I, the undersigned, **András Kraft**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 23 May 2011

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Andreas Salos Apocalypse* Rydén, Lennart. “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse. Greek Text, Translation, and Commentary.” *DOP* 28 (1974): 197–261 (at 201–214).
- Apocalypse* if followed by Roman numerals the reference is to the Syriac:
 (Syriac) Reinink, Gerrit J., ed. & tr. *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*. CSCO 540–541. Leuven: Peeters, 1993.
- if followed by Arabic numerals the reference is to the Greek:
 (Greek) Aerts, W. J., G. A. A. Kortekaas, ed. *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius: Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*. CSCO 569–570. Leuven: Peeters, 1998.
- BibHist Thomas, David, Barbara Roggema, ed. *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 1 (600-900)*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- BZ *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
- CSCO Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
- Daniel καὶ ἔσται* Schmoldt, Hans. “Die Schrift ‘Vom jungen Daniel’ und ‘Daniels letzte Vision.’” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hamburg, 1972: 202–218.
- Diegesis Danielis* Berger, Klaus. *Die griechische Daniel-Diegesis*. Leiden: Brill, 1976: 12–23.
- DOP *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
- Edessan Apocalypse* Martinez, Francisco Javier. “Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius.” Ph.D. dissertation. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1985: 222–8.
- Last Daniel* Schmoldt, Hans. “Die Schrift ‘Vom jungen Daniel’ und ‘Daniels letzte Vision.’” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hamburg, 1972: 122–144.

MPG	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologia graeca</i>
OC	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
ODB	Kazhdan, Alexander P., ed. chief. <i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> . 3 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
<i>Oracle of Baalbek</i>	Alexander, Paul. <i>The Oracle of Baalbek. The Tiburtine Sibyl in Greek Dress</i> . Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967: 9–22.
<i>Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse</i>	Schmoldt, Hans. “Die Schrift ‘Vom jungen Daniel’ und ‘Daniels letzte Vision.’” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hamburg, 1972: 220–236.
<i>Seven-Hilled Daniel</i>	Ibid., 190–198.
<i>Twelve Apostles</i>	Harris, James Rendel. <i>The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, Together with the Apocalypses of Each One of Them</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900.

PROLEGOMENA

Introduction

The Arab conquest of the seventh century and continued Arab rule over the Near East gave rise to a wave of apocalyptic writings across confessional and denominational borders. Apocalyptic sentiments thrived among Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Christian, as well as Muslim groups, all of which reacted to the sudden and unprecedented success of the Arab onslaught. In the context of this apocalyptic *Zeitgeist*, Christian circles introduced a new ideological figure which became one of the most influential literary *topoi* in medieval history, namely, the Last Roman Emperor. This Last Roman Emperor was said to be coming at a moment of great distress to liberate Christians from the yoke of the Arabs, pacify the world, and establish the *pax Christiana* that would endure until the emperor's abdication at the end of times.

The *topos* of the Last Roman Emperor originated in the late seventh-century composition, which today is referred to as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. It was composed in Syriac in northern Mesopotamia around 690. Within years of its composition the Syriac text was adapted into the so-called *Edessan Apocalypse* and shortly after, at the very beginning of the eighth century, was translated into Greek and subsequently into Latin, Old Church Slavonic,¹ Armenian,² Coptic,³ and Arabic.

¹ See Samuel H. Cross, "The Earliest Allusion in Slavic Literature to the Revelations of Pseudo-Methodius," *Speculum* 4, No. 3 (1929): 329–39 and Francis J. Thomson, "The Slavonic Translations of Pseudo-Methodius of Olympus' *Apokalypsis*," *Turnovka Knizhovna Škola* 4 (1985): 143–73.

² Michael E. Stone, "The Document called 'Question'," in *Apocrypha, Pseudoepigrapha and Armenian Studies. Collected Papers. Vol. 1.* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 239–42; see also Christopher MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2008), 27–8, who points to Matthew of Edessa, a twelve-century Armenian monk, who in his *Chronicle* uses the potent imagery of the Last Roman Emperor *topos*, that is, of a motif derived from Pseudo-Methodius.

³ See Francisco Javier Martinez, "The King of Rūm and the King of Ethiopia in Medieval Apocalyptic Texts from Egypt," in *Coptic Studies: Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies, Warsaw, 20-25 August, 1984*, ed. Włodzimierz Godlewski (Warsaw: Éditions Scientifiques de Pologne, 1990), 247–59 (esp. 254, n.37).

The impact of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* throughout the medieval period was tremendous. A first Greek translation was carried out at the very beginning of the eighth century.⁴ Shortly after, between 710 and 720 the first Latin translation was composed, possibly, in Southern France.⁵ A recension of this translation, which deemphasizes the narration of the four kingdoms and omits the idiosyncratic imperial genealogy,⁶ became a bestseller in the Latin West.⁷ More than a 150 manuscripts of this recension have come down to us. In all likelihood, it influenced the tenth-century monastic writer Adso of Montier-en-Der, who in his composition *Epistula de Ortu et Tempore Antichristi* transfers the role of the Last Emperor to the Frankish king.⁸ This motif of the Last Emperor came to play an essential role in the imperial propaganda of the Hohenstaufen.

Moreover, Pseudo-Methodian tradition prompted eschatological sentiments on the eve of the Crusades not only in the West but also in the East. Greek recensions and adaptations stimulated apocalyptic expectations at the court of Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081–1118)⁹ and Isaak II (r. 1185–1195, 1203–1204).¹⁰ Following the *halosis* of Constantinople, the last Roman emperor in the East, Constantine XI Palaiologos, came to be associated with the sleeping emperor, who would one day return and chase the Ottomans from the Queen of Cities.¹¹

⁴ W. J. Aerts, G. A. A. Kortekaas, ed. *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius: Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*. CSCO 569 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 16. See *infra* chapter 3.3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 30. Cf. Otto Prinz, “Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung der lateinischen Übersetzung des Pseudo-Methodios,” *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 41 (1985): 22.

⁶ See Figure 1 and *infra* p.17.

⁷ Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen* (CSCO 569), 31–5.

⁸ Daniel Verhelst, ed., Adso Dervensis, *De ortu et tempore antichristi*, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 45 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 26 (lines 112–23).

⁹ See Paul Magdalino, “The History of the Future and its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda,” in *The making of Byzantine history. Studies dedicated to Donald M. Nicol*, ed. Roderick Beaton and Charlotte Roueche (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), 26 and *idem*, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34.

¹⁰ See Niketas Choniates’ (d. 1217) account of Isaac II, who believed in the Pseudo-Methodian prophecy and ordered the Xylokerkos gate in Constantinople to be walled up in order to prevent crusading Germans from entering the city, see Jan L. van Dieten, ed. *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 404, 6–7. See further Cyril Mango, *Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome* (New York: Scribners, 1980), 212 and especially Paul Magdalino, “Isaac II, Saladin and Venice,” in *The Expansion of Orthodox Europe: Byzantium, the Balkans and Russia*, ed. Jonathan Shepard (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), 93–106.

¹¹ See Donald M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 100–8. What is more, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and its adaptations were being consulted in an attempt to make sense of the Ottoman triumph. See Mango, *Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome*, 213–4.

In 1497 a first German translation of the above mentioned Latin recension was printed.¹² Later, in the mid-sixteenth century, German pamphlets (*Türkenbüchlein*) were printed in order to incite military opposition against the encroaching Ottomans, who were by then identified with the eschatological peoples mentioned by Pseudo-Methodius.¹³ Eventually, such pamphlets served the purpose of bolstering the morale of the defenders at the siege of Vienna in 1683.¹⁴

During the Napoleonic wars the German Romantic movement revived various medieval legends. Yearning for national unification, German poets and scholars alike were eager to apply the themes of the Last Emperor to their own time. The idea of restoring the troubled and disintegrated German Empire had great appeal in the late nineteenth century, and gave rise to the first modern scholarship on the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.¹⁵

Out of this long-standing and wide-ranging tradition I will deal with the very beginning and the immediate afterlife of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, tracing its sources and evaluating the developments of its subsequent use down to the eve of the Crusades. In particular, I focus on the notion of the Last Roman Emperor in the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition. By means of conceptual comparison I map the use and the adaptations of this literary *topos*, thereby learning how this motif was accommodated to the Byzantine audience and how it became one of the most prominent motifs of Byzantine apocalyptic thought. The overall purpose of my study is to better appreciate the complexity of the motif of the Last Emperor, whose ubiquitous influence is frequently noted by modern scholars but rarely looked at in detail.¹⁶

¹² Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen* (CSCO 569), 35.

¹³ See John Wolfgang Bohnstedt, "The infidel Scourge of God: the Turkish Menace as Seen by German Pamphleteers of the Reformation Era," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series 58, No. 9 (1968): 46–50, esp. 50.

¹⁴ Michael Kmosko, "Das Rätsel des Pseudomethodius," *Byzantion* 6 (1931): 274; Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen* (CSCO 569), 35; Marc Laureys and Daniel Verhelst, "Pseudo-Methodius, Revelaciones: Textgeschichte und kritische Edition. Ein Leuven-Groninger Forschungsprojekt," in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. Werner Verbeke, et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 113.

¹⁵ In this context Ernst Sackur's critical edition of the four earliest Latin manuscripts needs to be highlighted; see Ernst Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen. Pseudomethodius, Adso und die tiburtinische Sibylle* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1898). For a brief overview of the development in late nineteenth-century Germany, see Paul J. Alexander, "Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs. The Legend of the Last Roman Emperor," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series 2 (1971): 48–54.

¹⁶ Hannes Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit: Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2000) provides an exception.

Characteristics of Byzantine apocalypses

Before I can formulate my concrete research goal I need to lay out my terminology and methodology. First of all, I need to clarify what I understand by the term apocalypse. Probably the most authoritative definition of apocalypse has been given by John Collins, who proposes that apocalypses form:

a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.¹⁷

That is, an apocalypse is first and foremost a literary genre. Its characteristics can be summed up under the following rubrics: apocalypses are (1) literary in form (as opposed to oral prophecy), (2) esoteric in nature,¹⁸ (3) deterministic in the sense that human life is seen as regulated by a cosmic plan,¹⁹ (4) pessimistic insofar as evil will persist until the end of the world, and (5) dualistic in supposing a constant fight between good and evil. Furthermore, apocalypses use (6) pseudonymity in order to lend authority to the text, (7) symbolic and stereotyped language,²⁰ and (8) *vaticinia ex eventu*, that is, prophecies after the event, which are historical narratives disguised as prophecies. Also, apocalypses show (9) a strong sense of imminence and (10) a marked interest in eschatology.²¹

Additionally, two types of apocalypses can be distinguished: (1) otherworldly apocalypses, characterized by an ascension into heaven, such as in the *Revelation of John*, and (2)

¹⁷ John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia 14: Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (1979): 9.

¹⁸ See John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postbiblical Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 2.

¹⁹ As a result, apocalypses generally promote ethical passivity, that is, the view that man is incapable of determining his own fate. Generally, what man can do is understand and agree with the cosmic plan. See *infra* p.34.

²⁰ See David S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200 BC–AD 100* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 122ff.

²¹ For an introduction to these characteristics, see Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End. Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University, 1979), 3–7, 10–11. It should be added that apocalypses often contain an angelic messenger, who delivers and interprets the revelation. In contrast to Collins, though, I do not consider it an essential attribute of apocalypses. From among the apocalypses I deal with in this thesis only the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* contains an angelic messenger, who transmits the revelatory information. For characteristics specific to Syriac apocalypses, see Francisco Javier Martinez, "The Apocalyptic Genre in Syriac: the World of Pseudo-Methodius," in *IV Symposium Syriacum* 1984, ed. H.J.W. Drijvers, R. Lavenant, et al. (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 339–40.

historical apocalypses, which recount world history with particular interest in the political narrative and in periodizing world history using, for instance, the year-week scheme or the cosmic week motif from the *Book of Daniel*. All the apocalypses I will treat in this thesis belong to the latter category.

As will become apparent the scriptural background of the apocalypses I investigate is provided by the *Book of Ezekiel*,²² the *Book of Daniel*, few Psalms,²³ the synoptic apocalypse,²⁴ specific Pauline passages,²⁵ and the *Revelation of John*.²⁶ Of particular importance for the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition were chapter two and seven of the *Book of Daniel*. Both chapters contain apocalyptic visions that revolve around symbolic allusions to four consecutive world empires. Traditionally, the last empire came to be identified with the Roman Empire, thus implying that the Roman state would last until the end of times. This notion was imperative for Byzantine imperial ideology which required justification for establishing a worldly realm while knowing that the only everlasting kingdom was that of God.²⁷ However, the Roman or Byzantine Empire enjoyed an exceptional relationship to Christ considering that the foundation of the Augustan Empire coincides with Christ's life and given the fact that the latter lived and died under Roman rule. At first, the empire of Augustus was appreciated as a dominion that established peace and facilitated the spread of Christianity.²⁸ Later, with the conversion of Constantine, the fates of Christianity and the empire became intrinsically linked.²⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339) pioneered the legitimization of this fusion. He put Hellenistic notions of kingship within a Christian framework by translating the concept of the king being an image or

²² Particularly Ez 38–39, which elaborates on the notion of Gog and Magog.

²³ Notably, Ps 68:31 and Ps 78:65.

²⁴ I.e., Mk 13:1–37; Mt 24:1–51; Lk 21:5–36.

²⁵ Most notably, 1 Cor 15:24, 2 Thess 2:7–8, and 1 Tim 4:1.

²⁶ Initially, the Byzantines were reluctant to accept the *Revelation of John* as a canonical book. Its canonical status was an issue of debate until about the sixth century. See Wolfram Brandes, “Endzeitvorstellungen und Lebenstrost in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit (7.-9. Jahrhundert),” in *Varia III* (Poikila Bizantina 11) (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, 1991), 50–1, n.108. See also John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 7–8. However, its use in Byzantine apocalyptic literature is increasingly recognized. See Paul Magdalino, “The Year 1000 in Byzantium,” in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. idem (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 249–54. As to the increasingly important role of the *Revelation* I will argue, for instance, that the apocalyptic motif of the wicked woman was a literary adaptation of Rev 17; see chapter 3.4.1.

²⁷ On the tension between Christian eschatology and Byzantine imperial ideology, see the beginning section of chapter 3.4.

²⁸ See Gerhard Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie: die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Grossreichen (Daniel 2 u. 7) und der tausendjährigen Friedensreiche (Apok. 20); eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Munich: Fink, 1972), 10–2.

²⁹ See McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 33.

imitation of god into the notion that the emperor was divinely appointed and confirmed. Accordingly, the emperor was God's viceroy on earth reigning over an empire that was the reflection of the Kingdom of Heaven.³⁰ Moreover, there was the general understanding that there can be only one emperor due to the fact that there is but one God.³¹ This framework of Byzantine imperial ideology is all-pervasive throughout the apocalyptic literature studied here (including the Syriac sources).

Terminology

Regarding my terminology a few preliminary remarks seem necessary. I use the term Roman and Byzantine interchangeably. The apocalyptic sources I use persistently avoid using the term "Muslim." Instead they refer to Muslims as Arabs, Saracens, Ishmaelites, and Hagarenes.³² Despite their different connotations to the modern ear, hereafter I use the aforementioned terms synonymously. Generally, I employ the future tense to summarize the narrative parts of the apocalypses. I will distinguish between two motifs: the Last Roman Emperor and the Victorious Emperor. As will become clear, the initially unitary *topos* of a last Roman emperor became dissociated and fragmented into separate figures, most notably into the two related figures of the Victorious Emperor, who carries out a successful military campaign against the Arabs, and into the Last Roman Emperor, who abdicates at the end of time. Further, after I will have introduced the first Greek rescension of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* in the beginning of the third chapter, I will, by default, refer to the Greek rather than to the Syriac source, because it was the Greek version (and its later redactions) that was available to the Byzantine audience.

Usually it is important to distinguish between apocalypticism and eschatology. While eschatology is concerned with the end of the world and the last things in general, apocalypticism places eschatological thought into the literary genre described above. Thus, apocalypticism can

³⁰ See Donald M. Nicol, "Byzantine Political Thought," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350–c. 1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 52–5. See further Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966), Vol. 2, 611–22.

³¹ See Nicol, "Byzantine Political Thought," 52.

³² For a treatment of the term "Saracen," see David D. Grafton, "'The Arabs' in the Ecclesiastical Historians of the 4th/5th Centuries: Effects on Contemporary Christian-Muslim Relations," *HTS Theological Studies* 64, No.1 (2008): 178–84. For additional designations of Arabs, see Martinez, "The Apocalyptic Genre in Syriac," 342, n.13.

be regarded as a subcategory of eschatology.³³ As a result, I use these two terms synonymously on the basis of reasoning that whatever is considered to be apocalyptic is, at the same time, also eschatological.³⁴

Whenever given I follow the respective stichometry of the editor. However, it has to be kept in mind that dividing an apocalypse into chapters and subchapters is an auxiliary measure introduced by modern scholars to facilitate orientation in the text. No such division exists in the manuscripts. The stichometry serves the purpose of convenience for the modern reader and I use it in this way. In the case of the *Visions of Daniel* I indicate a chapter number with the symbol §. For the *Edessan Apocalypse* and the *Gospels of the Twelve Apostles*, I refer to the page number.

Concerning most of the apocalypses I use there is still no generally accepted consensus on the titles. In order to guide the reader smoothly through the often difficult text situation of the apocalypses, I will use Lorenzo DiTommaso's monograph on the apocryphal Daniel literature³⁵ and David Thomas' bibliographical compilation³⁶ as reference guides.

Methodology

My primary concern is the reconstruction and mapping of the Last Roman Emperor motif in the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition starting with the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* in the late seventh century down to the (probably) eleventh-century *Last Daniel*. I investigate how this eschatological motif developed. In doing so, I regard apocalyptic literature to be expressive and symbolic in character rather than referential and factual.³⁷ Furthermore, apocalyptic language is evocative, elusive, and often equivocal in meaning. A purely referential or historical understanding would not do justice to the literary nature of apocalyptic writing. Consequently, I consider the Last Emperor motif to be, first and foremost, a literary design which can be subjected to topical analysis. More to the point, the idea is to appreciate apocalyptic texts and

³³ McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 3–4.

³⁴ Of course, the reverse does not follow. However, I only deal with *topoi* taken from apocalyptic or oracular literature. Thus, all motifs are apocalyptic and, by definition, eschatological.

³⁵ Lorenzo DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature*. (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

³⁶ David Thomas, Barbara Roggema, ed. *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 1 (600-900)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

³⁷ See John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 14–7.

their *topoi* as generic literary devices that structure history by interpreting it in accordance with an eschatological framework. Apocalypses write the history of the future and thereby construct a theology of history that determines the present.

Apocalyptic texts are usually appreciated as historical sources. Despite the difficulty of dating and the use of obscure and vague language, apocalypses have been studied in order to gain new historical information.³⁸ Without denying the historical value of apocalypses, I concentrate on the adaptation, modification, and appropriation of *topoi*, which came from a shared pool of apocalyptic themes. This pool was trans-confessional, involved various literary genres (apocalyptic and oracular literature, oral prophecies, liturgies,³⁹ etc.), and drew its material from biblical and para-scriptural substrates. It is the identification and mapping of the para-scriptural substrate of the Last Roman Emperor motif in the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition that this thesis is devoted to.⁴⁰

Much scholarly attention has been devoted to the origin of the Last Roman Emperor motif. I will present the most important results of this inquiry in chapter two. Yet, my research question concerns less the origin than the subsequent development of this *topos*.⁴¹ I investigate its development in order to answer the question: What were the essential elements which ensured that the Pseudo-Methodian motif was adapted to and remained in the eschatological framework of the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition?

My source material will comprise the original Syriac *Apocalypse*, two Syriac apocalypses that are closely related to it, its first Greek redaction, five apocalypses from the *Visions of Daniel* group, and the *Andreas Salos Apoclypse*. I will not deal with Pseudo-Methodius' impact on the *Alexander Legend* corpus, which seems to have been primarily in respect to the notion of Gog and Magog. Neither will I consider the *Apocalypse's* influence on the apocryphal Johannine

³⁸ Most notably by Alexander, who extracted information, for instance, about the Muslim conquest of Sicily. See Paul Alexander, "Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources," *American Historical Review* 73, no. 4 (1978): 997–1018 (esp. 1010–7) and idem, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (ed. Dorothy deF. Abrahamse) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 62–72. Cf. Walter E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5–8.

³⁹ See Magdalino, "The History of the Future," 21–2.

⁴⁰ In this approach I agree with Reeves' program which he formulates as follows: "Discerning and identifying the biblical and parascriptural substrates governing their formation and shape could plausibly explain the contextual presence of particular motifs, themes, or characters." Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 22.

⁴¹ To the best of my knowledge no study has yet been devoted to the topical evolution of the Last Roman Emperor motif in the Byzantine Empire. Möhring's monograph focuses on the Latin West and has little to say about its development in the Christian East.

tradition.⁴² Also, I will not deal with Liudprand of Cremona's account of the *Visions of Daniel*. Much attention has already been paid to his testimony.⁴³ Moreover, I will leave out the *Oracles of Leo the Wise* due to its late date.⁴⁴ My choice of sources is determined by historical considerations. I investigate the immediate afterlife of the *Apocalypse* and its Last Roman Emperor motif. The various *Visions of Daniel* I selected and the *Andreas Salos Apoclypse* appear to have been composed before the eleventh century, which is the historical borderline of my thesis. With regard to the text editions I use Hans Schmoldt's and Klaus Berger's edition of altogether five versions of the *Visions of Daniel*.⁴⁵ Further, I consult Lennart Rydén's edition of the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse*.⁴⁶

As to the source material it needs to be emphasized that most apocalyptic texts have come down to us in late manuscripts which generally postdate the final fall of Constantinople in 1453.⁴⁷ This fact makes the dating of the original texts a precarious issue. I will propose a hypothetical timeline which tentatively advances a relative chronology of the sources. However, within my approach of topical analysis the dating is of secondary importance. It is not my primary concern to identify the interrelationship of particular apocalyptic texts. Rather, I employ structural analysis and conceptual comparison in order to identify the motifs that were essential

⁴² Recently, Alice Whealey has noticed that traces of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* can be found in an apocryphal apocalypse of John. See Alice Whealey, "The Apocryphal Apocalypse of John: A Byzantine Apocalypse from the Early Islamic Period," *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series 53 (2002): 533–40 (esp. 538–9). For the apocalypse in question, see John M. Court, *The Book of Revelation and the Johannine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 23–65 (esp. 36–8, §13).

⁴³ See Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 96–122; John Wortley, "The Literature of Catastrophe" *Byzantine Studies/Études byzantines* 4 (1977), 9–10; Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reicheschatologie*, 53; DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 89–90.

⁴⁴ Mango has shown that the *Oracles of Leo the Wise* were known by the mid-twelfth century; see Cyril Mango, "The Legend of Leo the Wise," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 6 (1960): 59–93 (esp. 62–3, 71–2). With the (possible) exception of *Last Daniel*, all the apocalypses I survey predate the era of the Crusades. On the Leonine oracles, see also Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 130–6.

⁴⁵ Hans Schmoldt, "Die Schrift 'Vom jungen Daniel' und 'Daniels letzte Vision.'" Ph.D. dissertation (University of Hamburg, 1972), 122–144, 190–198, 202–218, 220–236; Klaus Berger, *Die griechische Daniel-Diegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 12–23.

⁴⁶ Lennart Rydén, "The Andreas Salos Apocalypse. Greek Text, Translation, and Commentary," *DOP* 28 (1974): 201–14.

⁴⁷ Brandes has formulated an intriguing hypothesis that attempts to answer this curious fact. He convincingly shows that apocalyptic texts were used as media for expressing civil discontent and promoting political agitation against ruling emperors. The quality that Byzantine apocalypses address the regnal lengths of various emperors could be used in "prophesying" particular emperors' early demise. Consequently, apocalyptic texts might have been subjected to state censorship, which could explain why most Byzantine apocalypses that have come down to us originate in the time after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans. See Wolfram Brandes, "Kaiserprophetien und Hochverrat. Apokalyptische Schriften und Kaiservaticinien als Medium antikaiserlicher Propaganda," in *Endzeiten: Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen*, ed. Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 157–200 (esp. 198). Cf. McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 30–2.

in the appropriation process and subsequent reception history down to (roughly) the early eleventh century.

My analysis will be assisted by three methodological principles. First, I use the principle of *ultimum vaticinium ex eventu* for the approximate dating of the sources. This principle refers to a rule that Alexander laid down years ago according to which, “every apocalypse must have been written not long after the latest event to which it alludes.”⁴⁸ In other words, the last *vaticinium ex eventu* which an apocalypse provides indicates the estimated date of composition. The problem, of course, is how to identify genuine *vaticinia*. As a rule of thumb I define my second principle, the principle of particularity, which is based on the presumption that historical reviews tend to be more detailed than prophetic narratives.⁴⁹ Thus, if a *topos* is particularly rich in detail, then one has good reason to assume that it had a historical background. Third, I will make use of what I call the principle of *lectio brevior*, which I define as follows: a complex, unitary motif predates an assembly of multiple *topoi* which portray an obvious resemblance to the complex motif. Here, I presuppose that complex literary motifs have a tendency to fragment.

In chapter one I analyze the structure and content of my primary source, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. After situating the apocalypse in the context of literary responses to the Arab conquest I reconstruct the narrative of the *Apocalypse*, which is characterized by a bipartite structure: a historical and a typological scheme. The reconstruction shows that the *Apocalypse* revolves around two central typological motifs, notably the Ishmaelite-Midianite analogy and the Last Roman Emperor *topos* with its rich typological imagery.

In chapter two I examine various possible sources of the Last Roman Emperor motif. First, I consider the disputed issue of whether it has roots in Jewish or Syriac sources. Then I investigate the issue of Ethiopian provenance, focusing on the so-called *Kebra Nagast* and whether it inspired the notion of a Last Roman Emperor. The contextualization of the *Apocalypse* in the polemic atmosphere of Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik’s reforms follows next. Finally, I address the thesis that the *topos* derives from a now-lost fourth-century Sibylline prototype.

In the third chapter I investigate the reception history of the Last Emperor motif. I study two Syriac apocalypses closely related to the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, its first Greek

⁴⁸ Alexander, “Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources,” 999. See also Magdalino, “History of the Future,” 29.

⁴⁹ See DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 107, 138.

redaction, five versions of the *Visions of Daniel* group, and the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse*. My survey of the sources focuses on the reconstruction of the Last Emperor narration, the analysis of changes and particularities of this motif, as well as on the issue of dating the text. To provide a better overview, I supplement my analysis with a table in which I juxtapose the various motifs associated with Last Roman Emperor narrative. Finally, I draw conclusions regarding the latter's development and finish with the prospect for further research.

1. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE *APOCALYPSE*

1.1. Initial reactions to the Arab conquest

In the aftermath of the Muslim conquest of the Roman East in the first half of the seventh century CE, Eastern Christians were faced with the need to come to terms with the consequences of the Byzantine military debacle. Although there was no homogenous response from among the various Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian congregations, all Christians had to face the difficult task of accounting for their losses.⁵⁰ The essential question was: why did divine providence grant victory to the Arabs? While the Christian responses differed regarding the details, certain major themes can be identified. At first, notions of temporal chastisement and apocalyptic imagery were evoked, then, in time, doctrinal polemics were formulated identifying “the faith of the Ishmaelites” with earlier theological errors.⁵¹ In addition, new hagiographical accounts were penned, such as the life of St Anthony Ruwah, supporting the religious legitimacy of Christianity.⁵²

⁵⁰ Christian reactions to the Arab onslaught were manifold. For introductory literature on early Christian responses to Islam, see John Meyendorff, “Byzantine Views of Islam,” *DOP* 18 (1964): 115–32; Walter E. Kaegi, “Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab conquest,” *Church History* 38, No. 2 (1969): 139–49; Sebastian P. Brock, “Syriac Views on Emergent Islam,” in *Studies on the First Century of Islamic society*, ed. Gautier H. A. Juynboll (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 9–21, 199–203; Harald Suermann, “Orientalische Christen und der Islam. Christliche Texte aus der Zeit von 632–750” *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 67 (1983): 120–36; Sidney H. Griffith, “Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: from Patriarch John (d. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286),” in *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, ed. B. Lewis and F. Niewohner (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 251–73; Alan M. Guenther, “The Christian Experience and Interpretation of the Early Muslim Conquest and Rule,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10, No. 3 (1999): 363–78; John C. Lamoreaux, “Early Eastern Christian Responses to Islam,” in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: a Book of Essays*, ed. John V. Tolan (New York: Garland Publishing Inc.), 2000, 3–31; John V. Tolan, *Saracens. Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 40–67. For a comprehensive overview, see Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 53–335.

⁵¹ Its first proponent was John of Damascus (d. ca. 753), who in his *De haeresibus* chapter 100 identifies “the faith of the Ishmaelites” with a crypto-Arian sect that had recently developed out of a pagan cult of Aphrodite. See Bonifatius P. Kotter, ed. *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. Vol. 4. Liber de haeresibus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981), 60–7 (esp. 60 (lines 1–13)). For a good introductory study, see Andrew Louth, *Saint John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 52–83.

⁵² See Ignace Dick, “La Passion Arabe de S. Antoine Ruwah,” *Le Muséon* 74 (1961): 109–33.

When it comes to initial Christian reactions to the Arab invasion it is important to keep in mind that the Arab conquerors or Ishmaelites were by no means unknown to the Byzantines. Roman-Arab relations went back centuries before the rise of Islam. Arab mercenaries served in Emperor Julian's (r. 361–363) campaign against Sasanian Persia. During this war the Saracens earned themselves the stigma of being unreliable, even treacherous allies for deserting the Roman army after the emperor's death.⁵³ Arab contingents also fought for the Roman Emperor Valens (r. 364–378) at the Battle of Adrianople distinguishing themselves with their savage bravery, which was noted for striking terror into the Gothic opponents.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Arabs were notoriously known for raiding Christian monasteries, particularly in the Sinai.⁵⁵ Consequently, the Arab incursions into Syro-Palestine that intensified in the early 630s were initially understood as nothing more than an increase in raiding activity by the “robbers of Arabia.”⁵⁶ Accordingly, Maximus the Confessor, in a letter penned somewhere between the years 634 and 640, attributes the Arab military successes to a temporary divine retribution for Christian sins.⁵⁷ Similarly, Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem (d. 639), in his Christmas sermon of 634, sees nothing more than a passing divine chastisement for recent Christian wickedness in the Saracen occupation of the area surrounding Jerusalem.⁵⁸ Within a few years, however,

⁵³ See Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXV.6.8–10 in Wolfgang Seyfarth, ed., *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt. Volume 1* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1978), 368.

⁵⁴ See Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXXI.16.6 in Wolfgang Seyfarth, ed., *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt. Volume 2* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1978), 200. When speaking of Arabs Ammianus generally avoids distinguishing between the various Arab groups. Therefore, it is hard to tell what particular Arab tribes he is pointing at. It seems clear, though, that at least once he refers to the Tanūkhid *foederati*; see Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984), 83–5.

⁵⁵ See Alexander A. Vasiliev, “Notes on Some Episodes concerning the Relations between the Arabs and the Byzantine Empire from the Fourth to the Sixth Century,” *DOP* 9/10 (1956): 306–16, esp. 307–8.

⁵⁶ A term coined by Emperor Julian. See Julian, *First Oration: Panegyric in honor of Constantius* (21b) in W. C. Wright, ed., *The Works of the Emperor Julian. Vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library 13* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1913), 52: “ἐξ Ἀραβίας λησταί.” For a study of this expression, see Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 83, 85–6.

⁵⁷ See Maximus the Confessor, *Epistula* 14 (MPG 91, 541B–C). The passage in question has been translated by John C. Lamoreaux and reads as follows: “We have all acted like wild beasts towards one another, ignorant of the grace of God's love for humans, and the mystery of the sufferings of the God who became flesh for your sakes.” Lamoreaux, “Eastern Christian Responses,” 14–5.

⁵⁸ See Sophronius, *Oratio I. - In Christi Natalitia* (MPG 87/3, 3205D). This passage has been translated by Walter E. Kaegi's. It reads: “Because of countless sins and very serious faults, we have become unworthy of the sight of these things [the sights of Bethlehem] and are prevented from entering Bethlehem by way of the roads. Unwillingly, indeed contrary to our wishes, we are required to say at home, not bound closely by bodily bonds, but bound by fear of the Saracens, and we are prevented from experiencing such heavenly joy, and are engulfed by a grief suited to our wretchedness which is unworthy of blessings.” Kaegi, “Byzantine Reactions,” 139–40.

Sophronius is said to have started using apocalyptic imagery calling the Arabs the “abomination of desolation” as prophesized by Daniel 11:31.⁵⁹

The first references to apocalyptic sentiment can already be found in the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, which dates from the first years of the onset of the Arab invasion.⁶⁰ This work is primarily an anti-Jewish polemic which argues that Christ was the Messiah, since the fourth Empire of Daniel, i.e., Rome, has already fallen and the little horn has just arisen in the person of a deceitful prophet among the Saracens.⁶¹ That is to say, because the events following the arrival of the Messiah as predicted by Daniel have happened, the Christian claim that the Messiah has already appeared must be true. The importance of this source is that it appreciates the preaching of Muhammad and the rise of Islam as an eschatological event.

In sum, the earliest Christian explanations given for the military success of the Arabs developed along two lines of reasoning: (1) understanding the Saracen attacks as a temporary divine punishment insofar as attributing the increase of Arab raids into the Byzantine Empire to God’s retribution for Christian sinfulness and (2) referring to an eschatological framework in order to be assured that the present tribulations are nothing but just and benevolent elements of divine providence. Over the course of the seventh century apocalyptic language gained more and more prominence culminating in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.⁶²

1.2. A description of the *Apocalypse*

The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* is a late seventh-century composition which carries the *incipit*: “On the Succession of the Kings and the End of Times.” The literary genre of the text is a

⁵⁹ C. de Boor, ed. *Theophanis Chronographia*. Vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883), 339.

⁶⁰ For the latest edition of the *Doctrina Jacobi*, see G. Dagron and V. Déroche, ed., “Juifs et chrétiens dans l’Orient du VIIe siècle.” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 17–248.

⁶¹ Cf. Dan 7:8. See Kaegi, “Byzantine Reactions,” 141–2. Thus, the *Doctrina Jacobi* testifies that in certain Jewish circles Muhammad was appreciated as a prophet. This text denies this recognition.

⁶² Gerrit J. Reinink has reconstructed the Syriac original of *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and translated it into German. See Gerrit J. Reinink, ed. and tr., *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*. CSCO 540–541 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993). For an alternative German translation, see Harald Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion auf die einfallenden Muslime in der edessenischen Apokalypik des 7. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1985), 34–85. English translations can be found in Francisco Javier Martinez, “Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius,” Ph.D. dissertation (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1985), 122–201 and in Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 36–51. Sebastian Brock provides a partial translation in Andrew Palmer and Sebastian Brock, ed. and tr., *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 230–42.

homily (prose *mēmṛā*) that provides a moralizing and inspirational sermon addressing its audience directly.⁶³ The preamble of the text attributes the writing to Bishop Methodius of Patara, who died around 311 during the Diocletian Persecution.⁶⁴ It was originally composed by a Syriac-speaking Christian in northern Mesopotamia.⁶⁵ From this it is clear that Methodius cannot be the author, because he was a Greek speaker, a native Lycian. Moreover, in terms of content the *Apocalypse* is first and foremost a Christian polemic directed against Arab pretensions to political and religious superiority cautioning fellow Christians to abstain from conversion to Islam. An early fourth-century ecclesiastical writer would not have addressed such issues. It is likely that the genuine author of the *Apocalypse* attributed the work to Methodius because he was a martyr, which characterized him as a victim of pagan tyranny,⁶⁶ and because of his notion of millennialism as portrayed in his work *De resurrectione* (Ἀγλαοφῶν περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως).⁶⁷

The *Apocalypse* is structured in a chronological and a typological scheme. Both sections are equal in length. The chronological composition divides the work into a historical (I.1–X.6) and into a prophetic (XI.1–XIV.13-14) part. In the first part the timeline is organized into seven millennia following Methodius' account that the resurrection will take place in the seventh millennium.⁶⁸ In addition, the author employs the year-week counting of the *Book of Daniel*. Both are technical features which serve to support the authenticity. The typological scheme is prevalent throughout the work climaxing in chapter V, IX, and XIV.

⁶³ *Apocalypse* I.1, VI.1, VII.1, VIII.1, XII.2.

⁶⁴ More correctly, the earliest recensions of the *Apocalypse* attribute the work to Methodius, bishop of Patara. He is to be identified with Methodius, Bishop of Olympus, known from Jerome's entry in his catalogue of ecclesiastical writers. See Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, ed., *Hieronymus und Gennadius. De Viris Illustribus* (Freiburg: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J.C.B. Mohr, 1895), 44–5. See further Sarah Fawcett Thomas, ed., *Butler's Lives of the Saints*. New Ed. Vol. 9: *September* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 196.

⁶⁵ The preamble of the *Apocalypse* names Mount Sinjār as the place where the author received his revelation. Mount Sinjār is located 96 km south-east of Nisibis and 115 km west of Mosul. This reference is the only direct evidence for identifying the place of origin. Today this identification has been generally accepted. For an earlier view, see Kmosko, "Rätsel," 291–5.

⁶⁶ Cf. *infra* n.136.

⁶⁷ MPG 18, 265–329. Cf. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), vi–vii.

⁶⁸ See Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), vii. Pseudo-Methodius' historical narrative became one of the most widely used extra-biblical authorities in matters of Old Testament history. This can be seen, for instance, in the work of Michael the Syrian (d. 1199), who refers to Pseudo-Methodius as an authority on history. See Jan J. van Ginkel, "The End is Near! Some Remarks on the Relationship between Historiography, Eschatology, and Apocalyptic Literature in the West-Syrian Tradition," in *Syriac Polemics, Studies in Honour of Gerrit Jan Reinink*, ed. Wout Jac. Van Bekkum, Jan Willem Drijvers, Alex C. Klugkist (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 205–18 (esp. 213–6).

1.3. The narrative of the *Apocalypse*

In the following, I summarize the narrative of the Syriac *Apocalypse* in order to lay down its main themes and to show how the various historical and prophetic sections are linked together. What is more, I will pay close attention to the typological parallels that emerge throughout the narrative focusing on the all-pervasive role of the Last Roman Emperor. It will become clear that the Last Emperor's eschatological functions are meticulously constructed throughout the *Apocalypse*.

Pseudo-Methodius' historical account starts with Adam in paradise and portrays world history up until the Ishmaelite invasion, paying close attention to the political perspective of the rise and fall of world empires. Following the expulsion from paradise and the murder of Abel, Cain's sons gradually succumbed to sexual deviancies, which brought about the Great Flood (II.3) ending the second millennium of world history.⁶⁹ Following the story of the Tower of Babel and Nimrod's first kingship the narration gains momentum when the "sons of Ishmael" are introduced (V.2). These "sons of Ishmael" are said to have been driven out of their desert homeland before attacking and ultimately conquering the *oikoumenē*. These "sons of Ishmael" – identified with the Midianites⁷⁰ – ruled "all the kingdoms of the peoples" for 60 consecutive years (V.5), before Gideon, the Old Testament judge of the Hebrews, expelled them back into the desert. In this section Pseudo-Methodius introduces a typological relationship between Moses, Gideon, and the future Last Emperor. Just as Moses led the Hebrews out of their Egyptian exile, so did Gideon free the Hebrews from the Midianite oppression. Similarly, later in the *Apocalypse* (XIII.11–13), the Last Emperor, who is considered the typological counterpart of Gideon, will liberate the Christians from Arab rule.

The next sections of the *Apocalypse* are designed to validate Pseudo-Methodius' claim that the Roman Empire is the last of the four kingdoms of Daniel and will, therefore, never be superseded.⁷¹ One reads an enumeration of the rise and fall of numerous Old Testament

⁶⁹ It is worth noting that Pseudo-Methodius considers the Great Flood a divine punitive operation reacting to widespread sexual abuses. Similarly, the immediate cause for the Arab onslaught in Pseudo-Methodius' time is seen as a divine chastisement for Christian sexual misconduct (see *Apocalypse* XI.6–7). I will return to this point below.

⁷⁰ See Judg 6:1–8:35.

⁷¹ See Gerrit J. Reinink, "Pseudo-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam: Problems in the Literary Source Material," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Sources – Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 1*, ed. Averil Cameron, Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton: Darwin Press), 157–8, where Reinink observes Pseudo-Methodius' opposition to (Pseudo-)Sebeos' portrayal of the Arab dominion

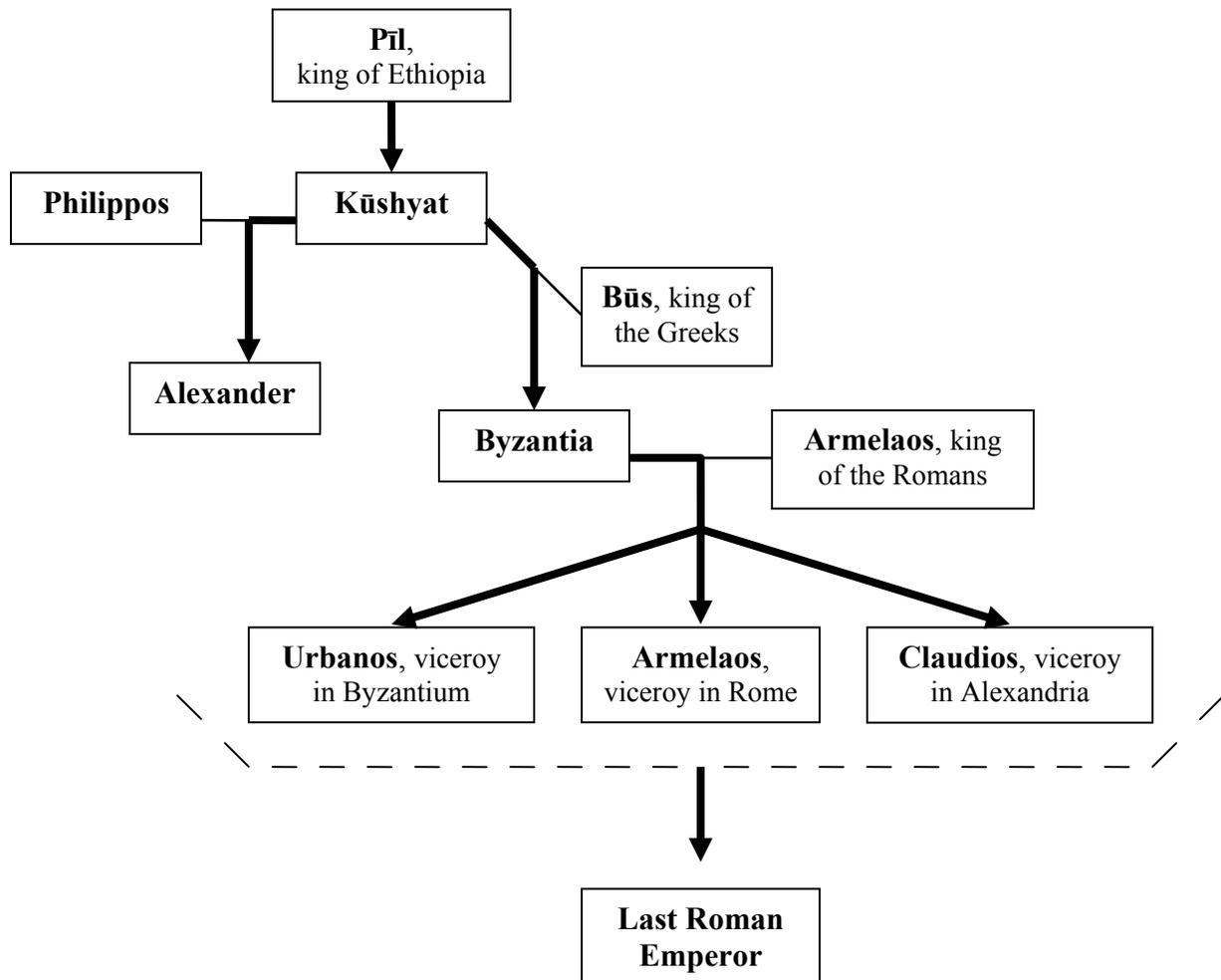
kingdoms starting with the reign of Nimrod and ending with the dominion of Cyrus (Chosroes) the Great (VI.1–6).⁷² After highlighting the constant fluctuation of earthly realms, the author stresses the continuous integrity of the Roman Empire, which is portrayed as the direct descendant of the Roman, Macedonian, and Kushite heritage and legitimacy (VIII.1). This proposition is substantiated by an innovative genealogy linking Alexander the Great to a Kushite (i.e., Ethiopian or Nubian) princess. This genealogy connects Alexander the Great with the Roman emperors, who are all descendents of the same Kushite mother, Kūshyat, who is the daughter of the Ethiopian King Pīl (VIII.1–3, IX.1–8).⁷³ That is, the fourth, and the last kingdom in world history begins with Alexander the Great’s heroic deeds, among which particular attention is paid to his dealing with the unclean peoples of the North, whom Alexander is said to have locked away behind the Caspian Gates. This very same kingdom – initiated by Alexander the Great – will last until the end of times when the representative of the Roman Empire, i.e., the Last Roman Emperor, will abdicate his earthly dominion to God (IX.7–9). Pseudo-Methodius emphasizes continuously the implication of this reasoning, which is the indestructibility of the Christian Roman Empire. The historiographical part of the *Apocalypse* ends with a brief reference to the destruction of the Second Temple (X.4) and the recent tribulations which the Romans had suffered at the beginning of the seventh century CE, alluding to the Avar siege of Constantinople in 626 and the subsequent Arab invasion (X.6).

as the fourth and final kingdom of Daniel. See Robert W. Thomson, tr. *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*. Part 1. Translation and Notes (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 105–6 (Chap 44). See further Kaegi, “Byzantine Reactions,” 146–7.

⁷² For a useful chart mapping the succession of Old Testament rulers as recounted by Pseudo-Methodius, see Anastasios Lolos, *Die Apokalypse des Ps.-Methodius* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1976), 13.

⁷³ See Figure 1. Similar charts can be found in Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, 223 and Lutz Greisiger, “Ein nubischer Erlöser: Kūš in syrischen Apokalypsen des 7. Jahrhunderts,” in *Der Christliche Orient und seine Umwelt. Gesammelte Studien zu Ehren Jürgen Tubachs anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags*, ed. Sophie G. Vashalomidze, Lutz Greisiger (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 208.

Figure 1. Para-historical genealogy of Alexander the Great and the Last Roman Emperor



The second, prophetic, part begins with situating the subsequent events in seventh, that is, the last millennium of ecumenical history. It describes in great detail the devastation and misery which the invading Ishmaelites will bring about (XI.9–18), and attributes this misery to a just punishment for Christian sinfulness (XI.5–7).⁷⁴ The author notes the burdensome obligation of paying tribute to which Christians will be subjected (XI.14, XIII.3–4), the desolation caused by famine and plague (XI.13, XIII.2), and the ultimate meaning of these events, which is said to be a divine test of the faith (XI.18, XIII.4). In this context, Pseudo-Methodius addresses the issue of

⁷⁴ This sinfulness is identified with widespread sexual misbehavior among Christians.

apostasy (XII.1–8) and warns his audience of its grievous consequences (XIII.15), which will be executed by the impending arrival of the Last Roman Emperor. This Roman Emperor is predicted to descend upon the Arab dominion reacting to the blasphemous accusation that Christians have no savior (pārūqā) (XIII.6).⁷⁵ Consequently, the emperor will eradicate Arab power and drive the Ishmaelites back into the desert (XIII.11–13).⁷⁶ A short time of general prosperity will ensue, which will be terminated by the onslaught of the unclean peoples of the North, who will be annihilated by an angelic figure (XIII.19–21). Then, the Last Roman Emperor will ascend to Jerusalem awaiting the first signs of the appearance of the Antichrist. Upon these signs he will abdicate on Mount Golgotha, placing his crown on top of the Holy Cross (XIV.2–5),⁷⁷ transferring his earthly dominion to Christ and thereby removing the *katechōn*.⁷⁸ Finally, the Antichrist will enter Jerusalem and settle in the temple of God. At that time, Christ will descend from heaven, cast the Antichrist into hell, and award heavenly bliss to those who remained faithful amidst all the trying tribulations.

1.4. The eschatological *topos* of the Last Roman Emperor

It is noteworthy that Pseudo-Methodius leaves out certain essential events in Christian salvation history. He mentions neither the Babylonian captivity, nor Christ's incarnation.⁷⁹ Only a brief

⁷⁵ The Greek translation, with which I will deal below, uses the rather abstract term ἀνάρρσις (rescue), therefore reducing the polemical edge of the original proposition, which denies that Christ is the Messiah.

⁷⁶ Note the above mentioned typological connection with Gideon. Cf. Judg 8:1–28.

⁷⁷ Concerning the True Cross, Theophanes reports that Heraclius removed it from Jerusalem when he departed from Syria. Whether he did so prior to the defeat at the battle of Yarmuk (636) as Theophanes claims or after the defeat is not entirely clear. What is certain though is that the Romans were considered to have rescued the True Cross (or more precisely the fragment of the True Cross that was housed in Jerusalem). See C. de Boor, ed. *Theophanis Chronographia*, 337. Cf. Thomson, tr. *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, 91 (chap 41) and 98 (chap 42). Thus, Pseudo-Methodius could legitimately claim that the Roman emperor was in possession of the invincible Cross (*Apocalypse* IX.9) which he would use in his abdication (*Apocalypse* XIV.2–3). On Heraclius and the True Cross, see Bernard Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIe siècle*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1992), 293–327.

⁷⁸ See 2 Thess 2:7. The *katechōn*, i.e., the one who holds back, is universally understood as the impeding factor that hinders the revelation of the Antichrist. Generally, the *katechōn* is understood to refer to the Roman Empire. For references, see Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reicheschatologie*, 55, n.332. This interpretation is also shared by Pseudo-Methodius.

⁷⁹ Pseudo-Methodius' passing over the Babylonian captivity is peculiar, because one can easily read a typological relationship between the history of the 70-year Jewish captivity with the eventual Christian liberation from a likewise 70-year Arab captivity, which is followed by each captive's return to his respective homeland. See *Apocalypse* XIII.14. It appears that this typological connection was more appreciated by the Byzantine audience,

reference to Moses (V.6) accounts for the Egyptian exile and the Exodus. It appears that Pseudo-Methodius carefully selected and treated only those historical events which mattered for his most important typological schemes revolving around the Gideon story and the Last Roman Emperor motif.

The fact that three prophetic interludes are integrated into the historical account of the *Apocalypse* further strengthens the all-pervasive typological connection between the historical type and the eschatological antitype. The three interludes are: the prophecy of the seventy years (i.e., ten weeks of years) of Ishmaelite rule (V.9); the prophecy concerning the future invasion of the unclean peoples of the North (VIII.10); the prophecy foretelling the final abdication of the Last Roman Emperor (IX.7).⁸⁰ These interludes allow Pseudo-Methodius in the second part of the *Apocalypse* to fully develop his major typological themes, which center on (a) the conviction that the Arab rule is nothing but an eschatological repetition of the temporary chastisement which Christians suffered from the proto-Arabs called Midianites in the fifth millennium⁸¹ and on (b) the notion of the Last Roman Emperor, who will serve as a second Gideon in eradicating the Arab dominion. Additionally, the Last Emperor fulfills the functions of a second Jovian, a second Alexander and operates as Christ's ultimate deputy on earth.

These two typological schemes of the *Apocalypse* show a continuation and further elaboration of the two basic interpretive approaches mentioned above: understanding the Saracen subjugation in terms of (1) temporary divine punishment and in terms of (2) apocalyptic expectations. In the *Apocalypse* both approaches are combined to be complementary: Christian sins justify the tribulations endured at the end of times, while the final salvation guarantees the just and benevolent purpose of divine chastisement. The author of the *Apocalypse* confronts the reader with an intricately constructed providential scheme in which the present moment is a just, necessary, and ultimate "furnace of trial" (XI.18, XIII.4). On the one hand, the present sufferings are attributed to sinful Christians who committed themselves to sexually deviant behavior not

since the Greek recensions expand one Syriac passage (*Apocalypse* VII.2 cf. *Apocalypse* [7] 2) by referring to Cyrus the Great, who permitted the Jews to return to their "promised land" and rebuild the temple. In my opinion this addition promotes the typological link between the Babylonian captivity and the Arab captivity Christians considered themselves to be subjected to in the seventh century.

⁸⁰ These prophetic interludes as well as the second, prophetic part of the *Apocalypse* are easily distinguishable linguistically due to the fact that the Syriac narrative switches from a historical perfect tense to the tense of prophecy, that is, to the imperfect. See Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 17.

⁸¹ See *Apocalypse* V.1–7. Here Pseudo-Methodius presents the Midianites mentioned in Judg 6:1–8:35 as the typological counterpart of the seventh-century Arabs. That is, the Midianites are considered to be a proto-Arab people.

seen since the time prior to the Great Flood, which undid most of God's creation.⁸² On the other hand, the eschatological imagery of the Last Roman Emperor is worked out to portray the imminent end to this chastisement delivered by the Arabs.

Indeed, Pseudo-Methodius promotes the idea that the Arab subjugation will end very soon. If one considers the seventy years referred to in (V.5) as being more than a symbolic number and starts counting in 622 – in accordance with the Hijri calendar and counting in lunar or solar years – one arrives at the year 690 or 692 CE. Textual allusions in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* seem to support the date of its composition to the beginning of the 690s.⁸³ Gerrit Reinink dates the work to the end of the year 691.⁸⁴ That is to say, the author of the *Apocalypse* wrote towards the end of the last year-week of the Arab dominion, i.e., 685–692. He anticipated the arrival of the Last Roman Emperor at any time in the very near future. His message is clear: at most only a few years will pass until the Christians are liberated.

The emphases on perseverance and on the just nature of the present tribulations are all strategies directed against the ubiquitous danger of apostasy. Considering the fact that Islam persisted despite a second civil war, considering the increase of the poll-tax, and in particular the construction of the Dome of the Rock,⁸⁵ Christians were faced with a politically dominant faction on the one hand, and with a realm that started to openly claim religious superiority on the other. It was in order to deny this religious legitimacy to Islam that Pseudo-Methodius constructed the para-historical genealogy mentioned above, according to which the Byzantine emperors share the same maternal ancestor with his predecessors, that is, with the Romans, the Macedonians, the Greeks, and the Kushites. By means of this lineage, Pseudo-Methodius combines three eschatological notions: (1) Only Roman emperors have a legitimate claim to

⁸² Cf. *Apocalypse* II.2–3 with X.5–8. If one considers the punishment, that is the Great Flood, for the sexual sins committed at the end of the second millennium, one gets the impression that Pseudo-Methodius downplays the present-day chastisement, which is the Arab domination. As Tolan, *Saracens*, 47 puts it: "(...) in comparison, seventh-century Christians suffering under the yoke of the Ishmaelites could feel that they were getting off with a light sentence." However, it is possible that Pseudo-Methodius considered the Arab invasion to be a "flood of wars;" cf. Kmosko, "Rätsel," 281.

⁸³ The outbreak of the plague and the famine referred to in (XIII.2) probably allude to cataclysmic events in northern Mesopotamia in the year 686/687 CE; the burdensome taxation (XIII.3–4) might allude to 'Abd al-Malik's (685–705) tax reforms in the year 691/692 CE. Cf. Brock, "Syriac Views," 18–9. Furthermore, the rage and raving of the Midianites (V.5) might refer typologically to the second Arab civil war fought between ca. 680–692 CE. See Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), xiii.

⁸⁴ Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), xviii. Reinink agrees here with Brock, "Syriac Views," 19, who puts the date of composition in the year 690 or 691. On the issue of dating, see further Martinez, "Eastern Christian Apocalyptic," 28–32 and Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 75–82.

⁸⁵ See *infra* pp.32–3.

Alexander the Great's heritage, a fact that will enable the Last Roman Emperor to restore Alexander's political-geographical realm.⁸⁶ (2) Furthermore, the fact that the Roman emperor is of Ethiopian kinship provides him with the unique eschatological function of turning over his worldly dominion to God during the final days, as alluded to in Psalm 68:31: "Kush (Ethiopia) will surrender to God." The author of the *Apocalypse* identifies the Kushite in this abdication scene with the Last Roman Emperor, who is, after all, a Kushite descendent. Thus this identification claims that the Roman emperor is the sole legitimate representative of Christ on earth, since it is his duty to return the political authority to its divine source. (3) Finally, in the ultimate abdication scene, the last Roman ruler is portrayed as the Emperor Jovian (r. 363–364), who restored Christianity after his predecessor, Julian (r. 361–363), had tried to reinstate pagan cults. Just as Jovian had done centuries before, so will the Last Roman Emperor, too, restore Christian worship and practice to the faithful.⁸⁷ By means of this typological framework Pseudo-Methodius proves that the Arab subjugation is a divinely orchestrated temporary "furnace of trial."

In fact, this "furnace of trial" is only one part of a chain of divine trials. After the Last Roman Emperor has liberated the East from the Saracens only a short period of peace will ensue, which will be shattered by the invasion of the peoples of the North (VIII.10, XIII.19–21). Yet, even after their ultimate defeat the tribulations will not end, since the Antichrist is still to come. It seems as if the author downplays to some extent the significance of the Saracen presence by emphasizing the future afflictions of the Christian community. Essentially, the image the author creates is that the latest Ishmaelite invasion is but one antecedent of the Antichrist and the subsequent Parousia.⁸⁸ Moreover, by describing the Arab conquest in terms of temporary discipline for sexual misbehavior, Pseudo-Methodius further negates the idea that the Arabs have

⁸⁶ Regarding the theme of the invincibility of the Byzantine Empire, see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 23.

⁸⁷ See Gerrit J. Reinik, "The Romance of Julian the Apostate as a Source for the Seventh-Century Syriac Apocalypses" in *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam, VII-VIII siècles*, ed. Pierre Canivet and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais (Damascus: Institut français de Damas), 75–86 and idem, "A Concept of History," 170–4.

⁸⁸ Of course, Pseudo-Methodius integrates the notion of the Arab threat into the already established eschatological scheme in which Gog and Magog are followed by the Antichrist. However, Pseudo-Methodius could have attempted to identify the Arabs with the unclean peoples. It is worth considering why he did not. I suppose that he intended to mitigate the significance of the Arab presence by postulating that it was only one among various forerunners of the Antichrist.

any religious significance of their own.⁸⁹ This fact fits well with the *Apocalypse*'s general intention to deny any enduring Arab legitimacy, be it religious or political.

In essence, the *Apocalypse* presents a polemic primarily directed against Arab political and religious aspirations. By constructing an intricate typological world history, Pseudo-Methodius promotes the idea of a liberating Last Roman Emperor, who, in the role of Christ's deputy on earth, will demonstrate through his actions that any Muslim claim to political or religious legitimacy is utterly erroneous. The essential elements of the Last Roman Emperor motif are: (1) he appears at a moment of great distress, (2) he leads a successful military campaign against the Arabs together with his son, (3) he restores churches, and (4) ushers in a time of peace and prosperity. Furthermore, (5) he endures the arrival of Gog and Magog (6) and moves subsequently to Jerusalem, where (7) he abdicates at the arrival of the Antichrist.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ The fact that Saracens are the divine penal instrument for sexual obscenities can be read – in turn – as an allusion to Saracen sexual deviancy, since it is by virtue of Arabs that Christian women “will be defiled” (*Apocalypse* XI.8). The accusation that denounced Muslim sexual customs gained great popularity in later Christian polemic writings.

⁹⁰ See Figure 2.

2. THE SOURCES OF THE LAST ROMAN EMPEROR MOTIF

In this chapter I examine the influence that Syriac, Jewish, and possibly Ethiopian sources had on Pseudo-Methodius' notion of the Last Roman Emperor. Further, I situate this motif in the polemic context of the late seventh century when the reforms of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik challenged Christians both financially and ideologically. Last, I consider the hypothesis that the Last Emperor *topos* has roots in the Sibylline tradition.

2.1. Syriac vs. Jewish sources?

In a 1978 article Paul Alexander argued that Jewish Messianic thought inspired Pseudo-Methodius' notion of the Last Roman Emperor.⁹¹ He advances four central characteristics which connect Jewish messianic motifs with attributes assigned to the Last Roman Emperor. These four are: (1) individual indistinction or the lack of personality, (2) appearance at a moment of great distress, (3) the significance given to Jerusalem, and (4) the concept of an interim worldly empire.⁹² Reinink has convincingly objected to this interpretation.⁹³ While he agrees that most of these motifs can be found in the *Apocalypse*, he considers them have roots in the Christian-Syriac rather than in the Jewish tradition. Accordingly, (1) the fact that the Last Roman Emperor is neither named nor individually characterized testifies to the formal function of his being Christ's viceroy on earth rather than pointing to Jewish messianic thought. Similarly, (2) the sudden appearance of the emperor can be derived from scriptural evidence such as Mt 24:44 and 1 Thess 5:2. Moreover, this motif should be seen in the polemical context of the apocalypse: that is, the sudden appearance is meant to heighten the audience's expectation of an imminent salvific

⁹¹ Paul Alexander, "The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor and Its Messianic Origin," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 1–15. He supports his argumentation in idem, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 174–84. He is followed by Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, 208–212.

⁹² Alexander, "Messianic Origin," 6–8.

⁹³ Gerrit J. Reinink, "Die syrischen Wurzeln der mittelalterlichen Legende zum römischen Endkaiser," in *Non Nova, sed Nove. Mélanges de civilisation médiévale dédiés à W. Noomen*, ed. M. Gosman, J. van Os (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1984), 195–209. In what follows, I summarize Reinink's argumentation from Reinink, "Die syrischen Wurzeln," 197–205.

liberation. According to Reinink, (3) the significance attributed to Jerusalem can be derived from the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*.⁹⁴ Finally, (4) the notion of an interim worldly realm prefiguring the messianic kingdom can not be found in the *Apocalypse*. In fact, Reinink is correct in stressing that instead of a messianic *Zwischenreich*, Pseudo-Methodius describes a period of imperial restoration and ultimate peace. While the latter might be derived from Mt 24:38 and 1 Thess 5:3,⁹⁵ the notion of imperial restoration can be found in the Syriac *Alexander Legend*.⁹⁶ In short, Reinink has demonstrated that the notion of the Last Roman Emperor who is styled as a second Alexander ultimately derives from Syriac sources.

What is more, the all-important abdication scene at the end of the *Apocalypse* is a reverse of the coronation scene narrated in the *Julian Romance*.⁹⁷ According to this legend, Jovian accepted his army's nomination for emperorship and ordered his men to place the imperial crown on top of a cross for spiritual cleansing. From there the crown miraculously descended onto Jovian's head, symbolizing Christ's approval of his rulership. Pseudo-Methodius employs this motif in almost the exact reverse, since the Last Roman Emperor is said to place his crown onto the True Cross on Mount Golgotha. Consequently, the crown and the cross will ascend together into heaven.⁹⁸

Although Reinink's argumentation is persuasive, it is hard to fully dismiss Alexander's thesis. That is why Harald Suermann proposed a compromise solution. He drew attention to the

⁹⁴ Reinink, "Die syrischen Wurzeln," 200–1. See also idem, "Der Verfassernamen 'Modios' der syrischen Schatzhöhle und die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodios," *OC* 67 (1983): 46–64. See further E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1927), 224–5. Pseudo-Methodius' use of motifs taken from the *Cave of Treasures* was also noticed by Alexander. He notes, for instance, the use of Ps 78:65; see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 167, n.59. See further Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures*, 120. The *Cave of Treasures*, together with Methodius' *De resurrectione*, also provided the chronological scheme of the seven millennia.

⁹⁵ Reinink, "The Romance of Julian," 77, n.11.

⁹⁶ In the Syriac *Alexander Legend* Emperor Heraclius is portrayed as a divinely appointed agent whose mission it was to repeat or rather to continue Alexander the Great's establishment of the last earthly realm. This – among others – implied a successful struggle against Persia, the archenemy of Christian Rome. In essence, the Syriac *Legend of Alexander* is a literary propaganda work which was designed to bolster Christian (in particular Miaphysite/non-Chalcedonian) opposition to Persian rule. Thus, it shares the same objective as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. Reinink dates the text to the year 629. On the Syriac *Alexander Legend*, see Károly Czeglédy, "The Syriac Legend Concerning Alexander the Great," *Acta Orientalia – Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 7 (1957): 231–49; Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, 206–7; Gerrit J. Reinink, "Die Entstehung der syrischen Alexanderlegende als politisch-religiöse Propagandaschrift für Herakleios' Kirchenpolitik," in *After Chalcedon. Studies in Theology and Church History Offered to Professor Albert van Roey for his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. C. Laga, J.A. Munitz, L. van Rompay (Louvain: Peeters, 1985), 263–81; idem, "Die syrischen Wurzeln," 203–5; idem, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), xxxiv–xxxviii. See further idem, *Das syrische Alexanderlied*. CSCO 455 (Leuven: Peeters, 1983), 1–15.

⁹⁷ Reinink, "The Romance of Julian," 75–7; idem, "A Concept of History," 170–4.

⁹⁸ *Apocalypse* XIV.4. See Reinink, "A Concept of History," 173–4.

fact that both, Reinink's and Alexander's insights are not mutually exclusive and they might both portray one possible aspect that underlined and motivated Pseudo-Methodius' composition.⁹⁹ Thus, I agree with Greisiger that "a comparative study of Pseudo-Methodius and contemporary Jewish apocalyptic texts is a desideratum."¹⁰⁰ In fact, Greisiger has already demonstrated that Christians (including Pseudo-Methodius) adopted the originally anti-Christian motif used in Jewish polemics which claimed that the false Messiah is conceived by an adulterous woman.¹⁰¹ He also showed how Jewish polemics reused the originally anti-pagan motif of Armelaos, who personifies Rome, and applied it against Christians.¹⁰² It becomes clear that it is increasingly difficult to suppose of any hermetic demarcation between Jewish and Christian polemics. In fact, the topical evidence attests a reciprocal adaptation process in which various *topoi* were taken over from the opponent, reattributed and reused to fit a new socio-historical context.¹⁰³ Thus, an appreciation of Jewish sources behind the Pseudo-Methodian Last Roman Emperor needs to be reconsidered.

2.2. The Ethiopian affiliation

The use of Ps 68:31 is one of the most characteristic features of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. Also, the para-historical genealogy of Alexander the Great and the Roman emperors shows a marked interest in the land of "Kush." Consequently, there has been some speculation about why Pseudo-Methodius put such stress on the Kushite origin of the Last Roman Emperor. Reinink argued that the association with Kush or Ethiopia was due to Ethiopia being a Miaphysite kingdom. Pseudo-Methodius' intent was to show that the Byzantine Empire was not

⁹⁹ Harald Suermann, "Der byzantinische Endkaiser bei Pseudo-Methodios." *OC* 71 (1987): 140–155 (esp. 145). Cf. Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 53 and Brandes, "Endzeitvorstellungen und Lebenstrost," 44.

¹⁰⁰ Lutz Greisiger, "The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (Syriac)," *BibHist*, 166.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Apocalypse* XIV.10.

¹⁰² Lutz Greisiger, "Die Geburt des Armilos und die Geburt des 'Sohnes des Verderbens'," in *Antichrist. Konstruktionen von Feindbildern*, ed. Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), 15–37 (esp. 23–37). Cf. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 17–21. It is noteworthy that Pseudo-Methodius also mentions Armelaos in connection with the city of Rome and the para-historical genealogy of the Last Roman Emperor. Cf. *Apocalypse* IX.4.6. See Figure 1.

¹⁰³ It is important to realize that Alexander's and Suermann's appreciation of the Jewish sources is based on the presupposition that Pseudo-Methodius' *topos* of the Last Roman Emperor was designed to counter Jewish messianic sentiments at the end of the seventh century. That is, their thesis proposes that in the context of polemic discourse Pseudo-Methodius appropriated Jewish messianic *topoi* in order to contest and refute the Jewish hope in the impending messianic age.

utterly anti-non-Chalcedonian and thus Syrian Miaphysites would do well to put their trust in the imperial government when it came to the liberation from the Arab foe. That is to say, the Miaphysite connotation of Ethiopia was designed to persuade Syrian non-Chalcedonians¹⁰⁴ to abstain from apostasy and wait for the liberating Roman emperor, who is said to descend from a non-Chalcedonian kingdom, thus proving that he is the *servus Christi*¹⁰⁵ of all Christians.¹⁰⁶

There is also the idea that the marked emphasis on Miaphysite Ethiopia points to Pseudo-Methodius' confessional background.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, the argument is also made that the *Apocalypse* portrays a hostile attitude towards (Miaphysite) Egypt when it mentions that "Egypt will be laid waste."¹⁰⁸ However, it has to be kept in mind that the destruction of Egypt is a *topos* which can also be found in the Sibylline literature.¹⁰⁹ Thus, Pseudo-Methodius' portrayal of Egypt being burnt does not necessarily reveal the author's anti-Miaphysite tendencies. Generally, the argument for Pseudo-Methodius' confessional identity is slippery ground on which virtually no consensus can be reached.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Concerning the possibility of a Nestorian context for the *Apocalypse*, see Gerrit J. Reinink, "Ismael, der Wildesel in der Wüste: Zur Typologie der Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius," *BZ* 75 (1982): 336–44 and idem, "Der Verfassername 'Modios,'" 60. However, Reinink later abandoned this interpretation; see idem, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), x.

¹⁰⁵ The title *servus Christi* was adopted on the coins of Justinian II (r. 685–695, 705–711). Justinian introduced a new iconography to the gold *solidus* replacing the symbol of the lamb with a figural representation of Christ and putting an image of a victorious emperor identified as *servus Christi* on the obverse. Breckenridge argues that this numismatic innovation dates to the early 690s, see James D. Breckenridge, *The Numismatic Iconography of Justinian II (A.D. 685–95, 705–711)* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1959), 78–88. See further Philip Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and the Whittemore Collection*, Vol. 2, part 2. *Heraclius Constantine to Theodosius III (641–717)* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1968), 568–609, 644–63 (esp. 570). If Breckenridge's dating and argument that this iconography emphasizes the emperor's apostleship to Christ is correct then there is good reason to consider a close connection between Justinian's imperial image and the Pseudo-Methodian Last Emperor *topos*. See John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century. The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 370–1 and Magdalino, "The Year 1000," 253.

¹⁰⁶ See Gerrit J. Reinink, "Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende vom römischen Endkaiser," in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst, Andries Welkenhuysen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 111; idem, "The Romance of Julian," 86; idem, "A Concept of History," 168–9, 185–6; idem, "Der edessenische 'Pseudo-Methodius,'" *BZ* 83 (1990): 44, n.96; idem, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), xxvi, 31, n.7.

¹⁰⁷ See Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 29; Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, 161.

¹⁰⁸ *Apocalypse* XIII.15.6. For the argument, see Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 95.

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, *Oracle of Baalbek* 22 (line 221).

¹¹⁰ This is so, because Pseudo-Methodius persistently avoids giving away his confessional credo. In contrast, the first Greek redaction, to which I will turn below, inserts a confessional statement in *Apocalypse* [14] 11,3: ὃν ἐξηγόρασεν τῷ οἰκεῖῳ αἵματι (whom he (i.e., Christ) redeemed with his own blood). This statement attests at least a Cyrillian (i.e., Chalcedonian or Miaphysite) confession. I thank Professor István Perczel for calling my attention to this statement.

Another argument proposes that the emphasis on Ethiopia might have been motivated by the fact that Ethiopia was the only Christian country which was Miaphysite in confession and had successfully fended off the Arab invaders.¹¹¹ Thus, Ethiopia was considered the only potent realm to protect the Miaphysite faith. However, the geopolitical situation of the seventh century did not favor Ethiopia being considered a real potent factor in driving back the Arabs. Thus, there must have been a tradition that was older than Pseudo-Methodius which claimed that an Ethiopian king would defend and protect the Miaphysite interests across the *oikoumenē*. Alexander notes that “Pseudo-Methodius saw the Roman Empire not as an alternative to Ethiopia as a source of hope, but as a historically proven successor to such ideas.”¹¹² Thus, Alexander seems to imply here that Ethiopia was, prior to the composition of the *Apocalypse*, considered a politically efficacious power which enjoyed considerable credit in Mesopotamia.¹¹³ This interpretation is supported by the phrase that “many brethren of the clergy supposed that the blessed David spoke this word (i.e., Ps 68:31) concerning the kingdom of the Ethiopians.”¹¹⁴

In a 1976 article, Irfan Shahid laid out a now-debated thesis in which he argues that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* reacts to a particular tradition that stressed the Ethiopian hegemony over the Christian *oikoumenē*. More to the point, Shahid argues that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* contests the political ideology of the *Kebra Nagast* an Ethiopian national epic which derives imperial Ethiopian sovereignty from the following claims: (1) The Ethiopian monarchy is of the Solomonid lineage, since the legendary first Ethiopian king, Menelik I, was Solomon’s first-born son. (2) The Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, and its Chariot were transferred from Jerusalem to Aksum, the imperial capital, thus portraying the exceptional divine favor that the Ethiopian monarchy enjoyed. (3) The Ethiopian *negus*, or king, is a baptized Israelite.¹¹⁵ On the basis of internal evidence Shahid dates this literary work to the sixth century.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 29. Cf. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), xxvi.

¹¹² Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 30, n.49.

¹¹³ Cf. Brock, “Syriac Views,” 18.

¹¹⁴ *Apocalypse IX.7*. I follow here Alexander’s revised translation. Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Thought*, 29, n.49. Alexander might be right in pointing out that the prospect of Ethiopian intervention amounted to postponing the liberation indefinitely and to accommodating the invaders for the time being. See Alexander, “Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works,” 58–9. On the disputed issue of Miaphysite collaboration with the Arab invaders, see John Moorhead, “The Monophysite Response to the Arab Invasions,” *Byzantion* 51 (1981): 579–91.

¹¹⁵ Irfan Shahid, “The Kebra Nagast in the Light of Recent Research,” *Le Museon* 89 (1976): 133–78 (here 146–150).

¹¹⁶ For Shahid’s arguments concerning the dating, see *ibid.*, 137–45.

The *Kebrā Nagast* shares certain central themes with the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, namely the motifs of (1) a war of liberation, (2) a royal abdication,¹¹⁷ (3) the Antichrist, (4) the Parousia, and (5) the journey of the king or his crown to Jerusalem.¹¹⁸ On the basis of these internal resemblances and relying on his dating of the *Kebrā Nagast* to the sixth century, Shahid argues that Pseudo-Methodius knew about this composition and contested its claims by substituting these motifs for the eschatological narrative that is centered on the Last Roman Emperor.¹¹⁹

Against this, Alexander supposed that the *Kebrā Nagast* postdates the *Apocalypse* and therefore shows the influence of the latter.¹²⁰ André Caquot and Francisco Martinez follow his lead. Caquot shows that the *Kebrā Nagast* uses the feminine designation *Mākādā*, i.e., the Macedonian (woman), to refer to Saba, the legendary mother of Menelik I, while Pseudo-Methodius uses the feminine designation *kūšat*, i.e., the Kushite (woman), in order to refer to the legendary mother of Alexander the Great and the Roman emperors. This resemblance, Caquot argues, shows that both writings drew on the same tradition, which probably originated in the Syriac exegesis of Ps 68:32, where the phrase “*kūš tašlem ’īdā*” was easily read as *kūšat*.¹²¹ Also, Caquot speculates whether a reference to Methodius has been preserved in a corrupted form under the name *Dēmātēyōs*.¹²²

Martinez advances further arguments against considering that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was predated and influenced by the *Kebrā Nagast*.¹²³ I consider his strongest argument to be based on the difficulty of imagining “a Copt writing a political theory for the Ethiopian monarchy in the sixth century.”¹²⁴ Martinez argues that a Copt was a Roman citizen for whom it was unthinkable to divide Ethiopia from the Roman Empire. Indeed, such a bipolar attitude might have seemed implausible for a sixth- or seventh-century Roman provincial. However, Shahid has shown no such bipolar opposition. Instead, he makes clear that the *Kebrā*

¹¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 169–71.

¹¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 171–2.

¹¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 174–6.

¹²⁰ Paul Alexander, “Pseudo-Mefodii i Etiopija [Pseudo-Methodius and Ethiopia],” *Antičnaja Drevnost i Srednie Veka* 10 (1973): 21–7. Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult this article.

¹²¹ André Caquot, “Le Kebrā Nagast et les Révélations du Pseudo-Méthode,” in *Études éthiopiennes, vol. I: Actes de la Xe conférence internationale des études éthiopiennes, Paris, 24-28 août 1988*, ed. Claude Lepage and Étienne Delage (Paris: Société française pour les études éthiopiennes, 1994), 334.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 334–5. Martinez uses the same argument. See Martinez, “The King of Rūm,” 258.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 257–8.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 257.

Nagast portrays the Ethiopian monarchy as having a hegemonic claim to the Christian *oikoumenē* together the Byzantine empire as its junior co-ruler.¹²⁵

Recently, Philip Wood has argued that over the course of the sixth and seventh centuries Syrian Miaphysite communities increasingly came to displace the Roman emperor as the sole leader of the Christian *oikoumenē* with alternative models of rulers such as holy men and non-Roman sovereigns.¹²⁶ Accordingly, it can be supposed that Syrian circles were looking for legitimate and potent Christian leadership outside the Roman Empire. Such leadership could have been found, for instance, in the once-potent Axumite kingdom,¹²⁷ which was acclaimed for its intervention in the Yemen putting an end to Christian persecutions.¹²⁸ What is more, Ethiopia enjoyed, in all likelihood, excellent ties to Syria due to the fact that it was Syrian monks who converted the country to Christianity starting from the fourth century.¹²⁹ Therefore, assuming that the notion of Kushite hegemony is of Ethiopian provenance, even if it is correct,¹³⁰ seems unnecessary. It is quite reasonable to suppose that there were Syrian speculations about a Kushite monarch who was an alternative to the emperor in Constantinople. Pseudo-Methodius seems to refer to such very speculations about which it is virtually impossible to assert from where they originated.

¹²⁵ Shahid, “The Kebra Nagast,” 160–5.

¹²⁶ See Philip Wood, *‘We have no king but Christ’: Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c. 400–585)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18–20, 210f, 261–4. See, for instance, John of Tella’s (d. 538) attitude towards establishing a counter-church hierarchy and opposing the imperial church together with the Roman emperor, see Volker Menze and Akalin Kutlu, *John of Tella’s Profession of Faith. The Legacy of a Sixth-Century Syrian Orthodox Bishop* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), esp. 51–4.

¹²⁷ Concerning the terminology pertaining to Ethiopia, Axum, Kush and Nubia, see Siegfried G. Richter, *Studien zur Christianisierung Nubiens* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2002), 14–7 (esp. 16) and Greisiger, “Ein nubischer Erlöser,” 195–201. Greisiger argues that Pseudo-Methodius’ reference to Kush is not meant to designate Ethiopia but rather Nubia. For the present argument, however, this thesis bears no weight since Greisiger himself proposes that Nubia usurped the prestige previously assigned to the Axumite kingdom. See *ibid.*, 211.

¹²⁸ On the Axumite-Himyarite war (c. 517–537), see James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 396–8.

¹²⁹ See Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36–7. For more detail, see Richter, *Studien zur Christianisierung Nubiens*, who carefully reconstructs the Christianization of Nubia in the sixth century on the basis of John of Ephesus’ (d. 586) account in his *Church History*, which he collated with archeological and epigraphic evidence.

¹³⁰ Cf. Wood, *‘We have no king but Christ,’* 220–4.

2.3. The historical context of the *Apocalypse*

The historical context of the *Apocalypse* is determined by the events of the Second *Fitna*, the Second Arab Civil War, which was fought out in the 680s and early 690s. Impressions about the devastation and great suffering which this war caused can be found in Pseudo-Methodius where he describes the hardships that would occur during the last year-week, notably famines, plagues, and oppressive taxation.¹³¹ The plague and famine probably refer to the cataclysmic events in northern Mesopotamia in the year 686/687 CE which John bar Penkāyē depicts vividly in his *Rīš Mellē* or *Summary of World History*.¹³²

The burdensome taxation probably refers to ‘Abd al-Malik’s tax reforms of the year 691/692.¹³³ The reform determined a fixed tax of four dinars *per capita*. The move to a monetary tax was an additional burden for the non-urban population, which earlier had paid their taxes in kind. What is more, the poll tax increased by 400 per cent.¹³⁴ All this put great pressure on the non-Muslim population of Mesopotamia, so much so that Pseudo-Methodius claims – apparently through a *vaticinium ex eventu* – that Christians would sell their children to meet their financial obligations.¹³⁵ High taxation increased the probability of Christians converting to Islam, since conversion resulted in specific tax exemptions. The fear of widespread apostasy most certainly preoccupied Pseudo-Methodius. That is why he markedly seeks to convince his

¹³¹ *Apocalypse* XIII.2–4. Furthermore, Reinink proposes that in the rage and raving of the Midianites in *Apocalypse* V.5 might refer typologically to the unrest of the Second Arab Civil War; see Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), xiii.

¹³² Sebastian Brock, “North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century: Book XV of John Bar Penkāyē’s *Rīš Mellē*,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987): 51–74 (at 68–71). For a dated but still useful overview of the *Rīš Mellē*, see Anton Baumstark, “Eine syrische Weltgeschichte des siebten Jahrh.s,” *Römische Quartalschrift* 15 (1901), 273–80.

¹³³ See Brock, “Syriac Views,” 19; idem, Sebastian P. Brock, “Syriac Sources for Seventh-Century History,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 2 (1976): 34; Reinink, “A Concept of History,” 181.

¹³⁴ See Daniel C. Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 46–7.

¹³⁵ *Apocalypse* XIII.4.

audience that conversion to Islam amounts to a relapse into paganism¹³⁶ and to a failure to resist the eschatological temptation to apostatize, as foretold in 2 Thess 2:3.¹³⁷

Taxation was only one of various reforms that ‘Abd al-Malik carried out. In order to consolidate his power as sole caliph, he designed a religious rhetoric that was centered around the notion of politico-religious legitimacy. This rhetoric, which advanced Islamic proclamations through various media, entailed a shift in the caliphate’s attitude towards Christianity. Such media were, first and foremost, coinage, epigraphy, and architecture. Howard-Johnston has recently emphasized how revolutionary the monetary reform that ‘Abd al-Malik initiated later in his reign was. He instituted a purely epigraphic, aniconic coinage that broke with the long-standing tradition of figural imagery.¹³⁸ This coinage was decorated with inscriptions about the prophetic mission (Qur’an 9:33) and divine unity (Qur’an 112) containing the phrase that “God does not beget and He is not begotten.” This statement unambiguously denies the Christian concept of the begetting Father.¹³⁹ Pseudo-Methodius relates a similarly aggressive proposition in his *Apocalypse*. This proposition is located at the very heart of the dramatic narrative, right before the Last Roman Emperor is to awake. This claim, which states that “the Christians have no savior,”¹⁴⁰ needs to be understood in the polemic context of ‘Abd al-Malik’s religio-political reforms.¹⁴¹

Moreover, the Dome of the Rock was constructed during his reign.¹⁴² There are various theses concerning ‘Abd al-Malik’s intentions to build this edifice on the ideologically charged

¹³⁶ See *Apocalypse* IX.9, where Arabs are considered to be pagan tyrants. See Gerrit J. Reinink, “Tyrrannen und Muslime. Die Gestaltung einer symbolischen Metapher bei Pseudo-Methodios,” in *Scripta signa vocis: Studies about Scripts, Scriptures and Languages in the Near East, presented to J.H. Hoppers by his Pupils, Colleagues and Friends*, ed. H.L.J. Vanstiphout, K. Jongeling, F. Leemhuis, G.J. Reinink (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1986), 163–175 (esp. 165). On the subsequent development of this polemic *topos*, see Barbara Roggema, “Muslims as Crypto-Idolaters – A Theme in the Christian Portrayal of Islam in the Near East,” in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule. Church Life and Scholarship in ‘Abbasid Iraq*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1–18.

¹³⁷ On the issue of apostasy in Pseudo-Methodius, see Gerrit J. Reinink, “Following the Doctrine of the Demons. Early Christian Fear of Conversion to Islam,” in *Cultures of Conversion*, ed. J.N. Bremmer, W.J. van Bekkum, A.L. Molendijk (Louvain: Peeters, 2005), 127–38. See also idem, “Die syrischen Wurzeln der mittelalterlichen Legende,” 104 and idem, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), 53–4, n.XII,1(1).

¹³⁸ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 505–7. Previously, ‘Abd al-Malik had imitated Justinian II’s new figural iconography of the gold *solidus*. See *supra* n.105.

¹³⁹ See Reinink, “Legende zum römischen Endkaiser,” 106.

¹⁴⁰ *Apocalypse* XIII.6.4.

¹⁴¹ See Holyand, *Seeing Islam*, 551–9, where he considers the background and quality of ‘Abd al-Malik’s shift in religious policy. See further Reinink, “Legende zum römischen Endkaiser,” 105.

¹⁴² For an analysis of the decorative arts and for an argument dating the Dome of the Rock to the 692, see Sheila Blair, “What is the Date of the Dome of the Rock?” in *Bayt al-Maqdis. ‘Abd al-Malik’s Jerusalem*. Vol. 1, ed. Julian Raby, Jeremy Johns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 59–87.

location of the Temple Mount. He might have attempted to divert the *hajj* from Mecca to Jerusalem in order to strengthen his political authority over his south Arabian competitors.¹⁴³ At the same time, the temple might have functioned as a symbolic claim to supersede both the Jewish and the Christian faiths by building a Muslim temple on the top of the place where the Temple of Solomon had once stood and by positioning it so that it rose higher than the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁴⁴ It is important to recognize that these two major interpretations do not contradict each other. The anti-Christian polemic behind the Dome of the Rock probably correlated with political intentions directed against Muslim rivals.¹⁴⁵

Thus, I agree with Reinink, who has persuasively argued that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was a response to the construction of this temple and its anti-Christian challenge.¹⁴⁶ Pseudo-Methodius' use of the motif of Mount Golgotha being the center of the world¹⁴⁷ and the site of Christ's crucifixion disputes the Muslim attempt to appropriate this hill. Apart from apocalyptic literature associated with Pseudo-Methodius one finds another witness to the Christian reproach in the writings of Anastasius of Sinai.¹⁴⁸ It is little surprising that Anastasius regarded the construction on the Temple Mount the work of demons, since the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple was considered to be one of the deeds of the Antichrist.¹⁴⁹

In sum, Christians in the conquered territories were hard pressed during 'Abd al-Malik's restoration period. His various reforms challenged Chalcedonians as well as non-Chalcedonians

¹⁴³ This interpretation was originally proposed by Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*. Vol. 2., ed., S.M. Stern, tr. idem, C.R. Barber (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 44–6 and tentatively supported with a reexamination of the Arabic literary sources by Amikam Elad, "Why Did 'Abd al-Malik Build the Dome of the Rock? A Re-Examination of the Muslim Sources," in *Bayt al-Maqdis. 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*. Vol. 1, ed. Julian Raby, Jeremy Johns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 33–58.

¹⁴⁴ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 498. Regarding the symbolic potential of the Temple Mount, see Cyril Mango, "The Temple Mount AD 614–638," in *Bayt al-Maqdis. 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*. Vol. 1, ed. Julian Raby, Jeremy Johns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1–16.

¹⁴⁵ See Elad, "Why Did 'Abd al-Malik," 48–52 and idem, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship. Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 147–163.

¹⁴⁶ See Reinink, "The Romance of Julian," 78–81; idem, Reinink, "Der edessenische 'Pseudo-Methodius,'" 39; idem, "A Concept of History," 181–6; idem, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), xxiii–xxiv; Reinink, "Following the Doctrine of the Demons," 131. See also Magdalino, "The Year 1000," 246–7 and Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 498, 512.

¹⁴⁷ *Apocalypse IX.9*. Reinink shows how this motif depends on the *Cave of Treasures* and how Pseudo-Methodius links it to his exegesis of 2 Thess 2:7, see Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), 32, n.IX,8(2).

¹⁴⁸ See Reinink, "Following the Doctrine of the Demons," 133 and idem, "Early Christian Reactions to the Building of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Xristianskij Vostok* 2, No. 8 (2001): 227–41.

¹⁴⁹ See Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 204–6. Cf. 2 Thess 2:4. Additionally, the attempt to rebuild the Jewish temple was associated with the pagan Emperor Julian. In all likelihood, Pseudo-Methodius considered Julian's paganism to be the typological antecedent of the Ishmaelites' idolatry. Accordingly, Ishmaelite paganism would be overruled by the Last Roman Emperor just as Julian's anti-Christian policies were overturned by Emperor Jovian.

both fiscally and ideologically. As a result, Pseudo-Methodius composed a Syriac apocalypse in which he repels the ideological provocation by foretelling the impending end of Arab oppression and announcing the liberation through the Roman emperor. In effect, what Pseudo-Methodius does is to place contemporary tribulations into an eschatological scheme which demands nothing more from its audience than its consent.¹⁵⁰ Pseudo-Methodius does not incite rebellion. He rather propagates passive consent for the notion of a Roman reconquest.

2.4. The Constans-Vaticinium

When it comes to Christian apocalyptic thought it must not be forgotten that numerous apocalyptic motifs and schemes were taken from Hellenistic and Roman oracle literature.¹⁵¹ Without going into too much detail on the pagan antecedents of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, one thesis needs to be addressed here, namely, the notion that the Last Roman Emperor *topos* is derived from the Sibylline oracular tradition.

The *Latin Tiburtine Sibyl* is a medieval text that combines various oracular and apocalyptic traditions into a prophetic compilation attributed to the legendary Roman Sibyl or prophetess of Tibur. The text contains the motif of a last emperor who is said to usher in a period of great prosperity and peace that will last for 112 years. He will uphold orthodoxy, convert the pagans, defeat the unclean peoples of the North, and at the advent of the Antichrist he will abdicate in Jerusalem. This last emperor is named Constans.¹⁵² The *terminus ante quem* of this Tiburtine Sibyl is 1047, the year to which the earliest manuscript dates. Möhring proposes the year 1022 as an approximate date of composition.¹⁵³ However, it is clear that this text uses earlier material taken from various prophetic traditions.

Möhring has recently argued that the passage referring to the last emperor, Constans, which he calls the Constans-Vaticinium, goes back to a now-lost fourth-century prototype. This

¹⁵⁰ Generally, apocalypses tend to propagate passive rather than active attitudes; see McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 32. In the end, the real protagonist in the apocalyptic drama is divine grace, which alone predetermines the ultimate outcome. Cf. n.19.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Brandes, “Endzeitvorstellungen und Lebenstrost,” 35–6. For an introduction to Christian Sibyllinism, see McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 18–21.

¹⁵² For a synopsis of the content of the *Latin Tiburtine Sibyl*, see Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 28–32.

¹⁵³ On the dating, see Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 32–3.

proposition has been the subject of some debate.¹⁵⁴ Möhring's strongest arguments are based on the absence of any explicit mention of the Ishmaelites and on the use of Ps 68:32 in the *Latin Tiburtine Sibyl*.¹⁵⁵ The fact that the Ishmaelites are not mentioned *expressis verbis* can be explained by Pseudo-Methodius' marked concern to portray the Arabs as nothing more than common pagans.¹⁵⁶ It is doubtful whether the Latin West prior to the Crusades had any profound knowledge about the Muslims which could have challenged the authority of Pseudo-Methodius on this matter. Moreover, in the Byzantine reception history of the Last Roman Emperor motif the emphasis on the Ishmaelites changed continuously. As I will show below, in some Greek apocalyptic texts the Arabs were seen as the greatest menace,¹⁵⁷ while in other Byzantine apocalypses Latin factions play at least as important a role.¹⁵⁸ Thus, neglecting the Ishmaelites could also be explained by a reference to more potent threats.

Möhring argues that Ps 68:32 best fits the historical context of the early fourth century when Christianity gained a foothold in Egypt and Ethiopia. This was appreciated by Eusebius of Caesarea as the fulfillment of Ps 68:32 saying: "Ethiopia stretches out her hand unto God."¹⁵⁹ Arguably, Athanasius of Alexandria interpreted the spread of Christianity as an eschatological sign.¹⁶⁰ Thus, Möhring proposes that the introduction of Ps 68:32 into the Last Roman Emperor motif originated in the early fourth-century eschatological excitement related to the conversion of Ethiopia.¹⁶¹ Although this line of argument is reasonable, at best, it presents only circumstantial evidence. It allows for the possibility that the Constans-Vaticinium presents an older version of the Last Roman Emperor motif. However, it needs to be kept in mind that there is no direct evidence for any such claim. An early Christian Sibyl text, the so-called *Oracle of Baalbek*, does not contain this motif.

In his edition of the *Oracle of Baalbek*, Alexander argues that the text is based on a now-lost Greek archetype which he calls the Theodosian Sibyl. This lost archetype was redacted in

¹⁵⁴ Concerning the various viewpoints, see *ibid.*, 39–42.

¹⁵⁵ For Möhring's augmentation see *ibid.*, 42–4.

¹⁵⁶ See *supra* n.136.

¹⁵⁷ For instance in the *Diegesis Danielis*; see chapter 3.4.1.

¹⁵⁸ For instance in *Last Daniel*; see chapter 3.4.5.

¹⁵⁹ MPG 20, 137D (Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, II. 1.13): Eusebius here quotes Ps 68:32: Αἰθιοπία προφθάσει χεῖρα αὐτῆς τῷ θεῷ. See Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 42, n.213.

¹⁶⁰ Robert W. Thomson, ed., *Athanasiana Syriaca, Vol. 4. Expositio In Psalmos*. CSCO 386 (Leuven: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1977), 53, 133. See Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 43, n.215.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 42, 44. It is clear that an essential precondition for the Parousia is conversion of the Gentiles. Cf. Lk 2:30–32; Acts 13:47. Thus, the rapid spread of Christianity in the early fourth century invited eschatological speculations. Cf. Magdalino, "The History of the Future," 5.

the Eastern Roman Empire into the *Oracle of Baalbek* in the years between 502 and 506. At the same time, the Theodosian Sibyl was transmitted to the Latin West, where its translations provided the source material for the medieval Tiburtine Sibyls.¹⁶² While the motif of consecutive eschatological rulers can be found in the *Oracle of Baalbek*, there is no trace of the Last Roman Emperor *topos* or its essential functions of ultimate imperial restoration and abdication.¹⁶³

The question remains: Did the *topos* of the Last Roman Emperor originate in a now-lost fourth-century prophetic text attributing the last emperorship to Constantine the Great's third son, Constans (r. 337–350) or did it originate in the heat of polemic discourse at the end of the seventh century? In the end, the evidence that comes down to us does not allow for a final word on this issue.¹⁶⁴ But even if the motif of the Last Roman Emperor did not originate with Pseudo-Methodius it was his *Apocalypse* that made this *topos* an integral part of the subsequent apocalyptic tradition. As I will show below, numerous Byzantine apocalypses were attributed to Pseudo-Methodius unambiguously testifying for his authority. Furthermore, the notion of the victorious fight against the Ishmaelites and the integration of the Gog and Magog motif¹⁶⁵ cannot be derived from the Constans-Vaticinium. Ultimately, the eschatological motif of the Last Roman Emperor became strongly associated with the pseudonymous Syriac writer.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Alexander, *Oracle of Baalbek*, 48–68, 136–8.

¹⁶³ See *Oracle of Baalbek* 20–1 (lines 180–203). Indeed, the very idea that the “the ruler of perdition” (i.e., the Antichrist) kills the last emperor from Heliopolis (βασιλεὺς ἀπὸ Ἡλίου πόλεως) seems utterly remote from the motif of the abdicating Last Roman Emperor, who personifies the *katechōn*.

¹⁶⁴ There is, however, a dominant trend toward considering Pseudo-Methodius the real genius behind the motif. See among others, Alexander, “Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works,” 66–7, n.35; idem, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 163, n.44; Wortley, “The Literature of Catastrophe,” 16–7; Brandes, “Endzeitvorstellungen und Lebenstrost,” 36–7. Considering the numerous arguments (see also the next note) and the state of the evidence I judge the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* to be the earliest instance that advances the Last Roman Emperor motif.

¹⁶⁵ See Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 163, n.44. In a note Alexander points out that the combination of Gog and Magog with Alexander the Great is not attested prior to the seventh century. Therefore, the motif of Constans defeating Gog and Magog in the *Latin Tiburtine Sibyl* must be a later interpolation, or alternatively, the entire motif of the Last Roman Emperor is a later adaptation taken from the Pseudo-Methodian tradition.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Alexander, “The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor,” 14–5 (Appendix).

3. RECEPTION HISTORY

In this chapter I investigate the reception history of the Last Roman Emperor motif. On the basis of ten sources I study the changes and particularities of its subsequent development. My analysis is followed by a table in which I juxtapose the motifs associated with the Last Emperor. Finally, I advance various conclusions regarding the change in topical focus and imagery as well as the implications of structural modification.

3.1. The Edessan Apocalypse

As mentioned above, the *Apocalypse* was rapidly disseminated and within years of its composition was revised into an Edessan adaptation.¹⁶⁷ The general scheme of the end-time drama and the language closely resembles that of Pseudo-Methodius.¹⁶⁸ What has come down to us is a fragmented version of this text; the title and the beginning section are missing. The notion that this text was composed in or around Edessa derives from internal evidence. One section of the text reads: “He [i.e., the Antichrist] will reign over all the earth. He will not enter, however, into the city of Edessa, for God has blessed it and kept it, nor into those four monasteries”¹⁶⁹ From the exceptional status which Edessa and its monasteries is granted here one can infer that the author might have been a monk in one of the four monasteries mentioned.¹⁷⁰

However, an even more important question is that of the date of composition. While Martinez argued for a late thirteenth-century origin, Reinink argued for a late seventh-century

¹⁶⁷ The text has been translated by Harald Suermann into German (idem, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, 87–97) and by Francisco J. Martinez into English (Martinez, “Eastern Christian Apocalyptic,” 232–46). For an introductory study of this fragment, see Reinink, “Der edessenische ‘Pseudo-Methodius,’” 31–45. See further Reinink, “The Romance of Julian,” 81–6; idem, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), xli. For a comparison of the Edessan fragment with the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, see Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, 162–71.

¹⁶⁸ The resemblance is so great that François Nau identified this text as the archetype of the Syriac *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*; see François Nau, “Révélations et légendes. Methodius. – Clement. – Andronicus,” *Journal asiatique*, sér. 11, No. 9 (1917): 415–71 (esp. 415–452).

¹⁶⁹ *Edessan Apocalypse* 226 (f. 102v.). I follow here Martinez, “Eastern Christian Apocalyptic,” 236 (f. 102v.).

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Reinink, “Der edessenische ‘Pseudo-Methodius,’” 33.

date.¹⁷¹ The greatest difficulty of the dating revolves around the peculiar mention of the year 694. The text reads: “When these years, which last one week and a half after [the] 694 years, will have passed then the king of the Greeks will go out”¹⁷² Reinink supposed that the anonymous author calculated the number 694 with the incarnation of Christ in mind. According to the Edessan chronology the year of the Incarnation equals AG 309. If one adds 694 to this date one arrives at AG 1003, which is equivalent to AD 691/692.¹⁷³ This date fits well with Reinink’s thesis about an increase of Syriac apocalypticism in the late seventh century.¹⁷⁴ His argument can be supported if one understands the mention of the one and a half year-weeks, i.e., ten and a half years, as an extension of the last year-week (mentioned in Pseudo-Methodius) by an additional three and a half years. Arguably, this increase was necessary because the Last Roman Emperor had failed to appear in 691 as prophesied by Pseudo-Methodius. Therefore, the 70-year rule of the Ishmaelites was promptly prolonged to a 73.5-year rule in order to keep the belief in an impending imperial restoration alive.¹⁷⁵ Thus, according to Reinink, one possible date for the *Edessan Apocalypse* is the year 692.¹⁷⁶

Professor Perczel’s above-cited translation draws attention to the fact that the ten-and-a-half-year period needs to be added to the obscure number 694, resulting in 704.5. The question is: from which date does the number count?¹⁷⁷ One possibility is the Byzantine era, which was a revised version of the Alexandrian era and finalized in the seventh century. According to the Byzantine era the creation of the world was fixed at 1 September 5509, so that the first year of the Incarnation started on 1 September 9 BC and ended on 31 August 8 BC. If the text takes the year of the Incarnation as the starting point, then the year 704.5 refers to the year AD 695/696.

¹⁷¹ For the arguments, see Martinez, “Eastern Christian Apocalyptic,” 218–9 and Reinink, “Der edessenische ‘Pseudo-Methodius’,” 34–8.

¹⁷² *Edessan Apocalypse* 222 (f. 98v.). Translation by István Perczel. For Martinez’s translation, see Martinez, “Eastern Christian Apocalyptic,” 232 (f. 98v.). Alternatively, see Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, 245 and Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, 86 (lines 18–20).

¹⁷³ Reinink, “Der edessenische ‘Pseudo-Methodius’,” 36–7. He is followed by Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 268, n.29.

¹⁷⁴ See Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), xli-xlii and idem, “Early Christian Reactions to the Building of the Dome of the Rock,” 230–41. See also Han J.W. Drijvers, “Christians, Jews and Muslims in Northern Mesopotamia,” 69–74.

¹⁷⁵ *Edessan Apocalypse* 222 (f. 98r.).

¹⁷⁶ Reinink, “Der edessenische ‘Pseudo-Methodius’,” 38, n.59.

¹⁷⁷ Regarding the chronological calendar of Syrian writers, see Ludger P. Bernhard, *Die Chronologie der syrischen Handschriften* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971), esp. 160–75 and, more recently, Hubert Kaufhold, “Zur Datierung nach christlicher Ära in den syrischen Kirchen,” in *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock*, ed. George A. Kiraz (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), 283–337.

This date would provide the *terminus ante quem*, because it marks the year in which the legendary Last Roman Emperor is said to finally arrive.¹⁷⁸

There are two important developments in this text concerning the figure of the Last Roman Emperor. First, the typological connection with Constantine the Great, only implicit in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, is further elaborated. It is said that the Roman emperor moves out in order to defeat the Arabs when a horse, never ridden before, puts its head into a bridle which is made from the nails of the True Cross.¹⁷⁹ This imagery is pregnant with multiple meanings. First, it emphasizes that the relic of the True Cross and its associated parts are in imperial hands.¹⁸⁰ Second, it refers to the legendary *inventio* of the True Cross in Jerusalem by Constantine's mother, Helena.¹⁸¹ Third, it uses the potent imagery of a never-ridden horse, which clearly refers to the colt Christ rode into Jerusalem.¹⁸² This allusion is designed to prefigure the imminent *adventus* of the Roman emperor into this very city. Thus, the motif of the bridle adds additional ideological support to the notion that the Roman emperor is divinely favored by connecting him with motifs reminiscent of Constantine the Great.

The other important development in the *Edessan Apocalypse* is the tentative dissociation of the Last Roman Emperor from the emperor who would liberate the Christian commonwealth from the Arab foe driving them back into the desert. The *Edessan Apocalypse* foretells that a Liberator or Victorious Emperor will move out with his son in 694 and crush the Ishmaelites before ushering in a 208-year-long period of general prosperity and peace.¹⁸³ This is just enough time for Christians to revert to their habitual sinfulness, which eventually triggers God's wrath in sending forth the unclean peoples of the North, who are – after a brief rule – annihilated by God's angels. After that the Antichrist will arrive and will be defeated by Enoch and Elijah. Only

¹⁷⁸ There are more possible dates to consider. See Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 113–7.

¹⁷⁹ *Edessan Apocalypse* 222–3 (ff. 98v.–99r.).

¹⁸⁰ Regarding the location of the True Cross, see *supra* n.77.

¹⁸¹ Suermann and Reinink point out that this theme ultimately originates in the Syriac *Judas Cyriacus Legend*; see Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, 164–5; Reinink, “Der edessenische ‘Pseudo-Methodius,’” 41; idem, “The Romance of Julian,” 82–3; idem, *Syrische Apocalypse* (CSCO 541), xlii, n.53. See further Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta. The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 165–80.

¹⁸² Mk 11:2–11, Lk 19:30–41.

¹⁸³ It is not entirely clear where the number 208 derives from. This number shows similarity with the “two years and eight months” period which is mentioned in connection with the unclean peoples of the North; see *Edessan Apocalypse*, 224 (f. 101r.). The year 208 together with the year 694 mentioned earlier seem to converge onto the number 1000. On the importance of the year 1000, see Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 58, 59, n.49, 75, 79, n.234, 83; Magdalino, “The History of the Future,” 4–28 and especially idem, “The Year 1000,” 233–70. Notwithstanding its unknown origin, there is no reason to not take this number literally.

then, after the entire eschatological drama has been played out, will the Last Emperor ascend to Golgotha in order to abdicate and end all earthly power.

The same para-historical genealogy as seen in Pseudo-Methodius is employed, which assigns Kushite, i.e., Ethiopian (or Nubian) descent to the Last Roman Emperor. More than 210 years will pass after the Christian reconquest of the Near East. It is unlikely that this Last Emperor is identical with the Victorious Emperor. However, the text does not indicate that these rulers are not to be identified. Be that as it may, by introducing a relatively long interim period between the liberation from the Arab dominion and the arrival of the Antichrist the author negates the immediacy of the ultimate end. This might be due to the difficulty of attributing Ethiopian provenance to Justinian II, the emperor who was anticipated to rule in the year 695/696.¹⁸⁴

It is furthermore remarkable that the Last Roman Emperor abdicates after the appearance and slaying of the Antichrist. This reversal is hard to understand considering Pseudo-Methodius' explicit emphasis on the fact that the Roman Empire is the *katechōn* and must, therefore, be removed before the Antichrist can appear. Thus, this sequence of events would imply that the monastic author does not agree with this standard interpretation.¹⁸⁵ It is not clear why the Last Roman Emperor's abdication is portrayed as the very last human action in world history, immediately followed by the universal annihilation of all, the Parousia, and ultimately the Last Judgment.

3.2. The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles

The *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* is an early eighth-century text that retells the story of Christ based on the synoptic Gospels and the beginning of the Acts while supplementing it with three related revelations.¹⁸⁶ These three revelations are attributed to the apostles Simeon Kepha (i.e.,

¹⁸⁴ See Reinink, "Der edessenische 'Pseudo-Methodius'," 42. Cf. Magdalino, "The Year 1000," 253.

¹⁸⁵ It is equally unclear what made the unknown author deviate from the traditional scheme of Enoch and Elijah being slain by the Antichrist. Instead, the *Edessan Apocalypse* attributes the successful annihilation of the Antichrist to these two prophets. See *Edessan Apocalypse* 226 (f. 130.).

¹⁸⁶ Harris dates the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* mid-eight century, see James R. Harris, *The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, Together with the Apocalypses of Each One of Them* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), 22. Drijvers narrows the date further down. He proposes the period around the year 702, that is, after the composition of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and before 'Abd al-Malik's death; see Han J.W. Drijvers, "The Gospels of the

Peter), James, and John. The apocalypses incorporate numerous elements of Pseudo-Methodius such as the motif of burdensome tribute,¹⁸⁷ the fear of widespread apostasy,¹⁸⁸ the proposition that Christians have no savior,¹⁸⁹ and several references to a victorious emperor. In what follows, I treat the latter motif, which strongly resembles the Pseudo-Methodian notion of the Last Roman Emperor.

The apocalypse of Simeon Kepha assigns the tribulations of the Christian world to the Chalcedonian heresy, that is, to those who “divide our Lord.”¹⁹⁰ The emphasis of this first revelation lies on the fragmented state of the Church which will be overcome at the end of times. Drijvers’ convincingly demonstrated that the second revelation, i.e., the apocalypse of James, presents a series of *vaticinia ex eventu* that narrate the deeds of Constantine the Great such as his war against Licinius in 324 CE and the issuing of the Edict of Milan.¹⁹¹ The text ends with the prophecy that a man “from his [i.e., Constantine’s] seed shall rise up in his place,” who will rule the earth in peace at the end of times.¹⁹² The last revelation, that is, the apocalypse attributed to John the Evangelist,¹⁹³ describes the Arab conquest and the subsequent hardships that Christians have to endure until divine intervention will cause internal strife among the Arab factions.¹⁹⁴ Then a “man from the North” will rise, who defeats the Ishmaelites by exploiting their weakened cohesion. He will chase them back into the desert, where the Arabs will be met by a devastating plague.¹⁹⁵

Twelve Apostles: A Syriac Apocalypse from the Early Islamic Period,” in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. Vol. 1: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. A. Cameron, L.I. Conrad (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), 211, 213 and idem, “Christians, Jews and Muslims in Northern Mesopotamia in Early Islamic Times: the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles and Related Texts,” in *La Syrie de Byzance à l’Islam*, ed. P. Canivet, J.-P. Rey-Coquais (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1992), 74. Cf. Reinink, “Early Christian Reactions to the Building of the Dome of the Rock,” 241. Similarly, Suermann dates it to the year 700, see Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, 191.

¹⁸⁷ *Twelve Apostles* 37. I refer here to the English translation and not to the Syriac. Cf. *Apocalypse* XI.14, XIII.3–4.

¹⁸⁸ *Twelve Apostles* 37. Cf. *Apocalypse* XII.3–6.

¹⁸⁹ *Twelve Apostles* 32. Cf. *Apocalypse* XIII.6.4.

¹⁹⁰ *Twelve Apostles* 32.

¹⁹¹ *Twelve Apostles* 33–4. See Drijvers, “The Gospels of the Twelve Apostles,” 196–99.

¹⁹² *Twelve Apostles* 34.

¹⁹³ This apocalypse is attributed to John the Evangelist, who was considered to be also the author of the *Revelation of John*. That is why in the opening scene one finds imagery reminiscent of the *Revelation of John*. See Drijvers, “The Gospels of the Twelve Apostles,” 199–200.

¹⁹⁴ The hope that internal strife would terminate the Arab dominion was born out during the Second *Fitna*. It was promoted, for instance, by John bar Penkāyē in his *Rīš Mellē* or *Summary of World History*, see Brock, “North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century,” 73.

¹⁹⁵ *Twelve Apostles* 38–9.

There is good reason to identify the “man from the North” with the man “from the seed” of Constantine. Provided that the three short apocalypses are concerned with the same future, the prospect of final reunification of the Churches, the reference to an ultimate peaceful ruler descending from Constantine the Great, and the notion of a Victorious Emperor who defeats the Arab foe all seem to converge onto the motif of a Constantine *redivivus*.¹⁹⁶ Arguably, the Miaphysite author considered the time of Constantine the Great a period in which the Church was still united. Moreover, Constantine was a successful general, who would be the type of character that could successfully engage the Arabs. The imagery of a Roman emperor defeating the Ishmaelites together with the various other motifs taken from Pseudo-Methodius substantiate the interpretation that the Victorious Emperor in the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* is an adaptation of the Pseudo-Methodian Last Roman Emperor *topos*. It is important to note that the use of this *topos* is reduced to its military function and extended by the notion of Church reunification.¹⁹⁷ The essential motifs of sudden appearance and abdication are missing. One wonders whether the absence of the abdication scene is meant to reduce the Roman emperor’s divine legitimacy. However, the absence of this imagery does not imply that the anonymous author disagrees with its conceptual implications.¹⁹⁸ What is certain is that the text is primarily concerned with the Arab threat and avoids speculating about the end times. In sum, two out of the three apocalypses contained in the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* promote a curtailed form of the Last Roman Emperor motif, which is reduced to its military function against the Arabs.

¹⁹⁶ See Drijvers, “The Gospels of the Twelve Apostles,” 201 and idem, “Christians, Jews and Muslims in Northern Mesopotamia,” 73. It should be noted that while the *Twelve Apostles* portray the Victorious Emperor as a second Constantine, the Pseudo-Methodian typology of a second Gideon is dropped. The same development can be observed in the Edessan *Apocalypse*.

¹⁹⁷ Although, the reunification of the Church is not explicitly addressed in Pseudo-Methodius, the fact that the Last Roman Emperor is portrayed as the emperor of all Christians regardless of their confessional adherence as well as the emphasis on his rebuilding of churches suggest that Pseudo-Methodius considered that this figure would establish order and concordance in ecclesiastical affairs.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, 185–6.

3.3. The first Greek redaction of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*

The first Greek redaction of the Syriac *Apocalypse* is on the whole a faithful translation.¹⁹⁹ However, as any translation, this Greek recension too, adapts the text to a different audience, thus being compelled to use paraphrases and terminological rewording.²⁰⁰ For instance, the translation systematically replaces the term “of the Greeks” (*d-yawnōyē*) with “of the Romans” (*tōn R[h]ōmaiōn*). In certain cases the translation simplifies the choice of words, such as rendering the term “wooden vehicle” (*rkūbē d-qaysō*) (V.4.13) as “ship” (*naus*) ([5] 4,3). When it comes to toponyms or the names of individuals mentioned in the apocalypse, the reader is faced with honest attempts to keep the translations intelligible. To give just one instance, in chapter V.6.9, the Codex Vaticanus syriacus 58 reads *mwny* or Mūnī, while the Beinecke Syriac 10 reads *mwy* or Mūyā providing various possible interpretations,²⁰¹ among which the Greek translator chose the reading reminiscent of the Umayyads, thus he rendered the term to read *oumaia* ([5] 6,2). It becomes clear that some of the names mentioned in the Syriac version were obscure even for the anonymous translator.²⁰²

In addition, the translation employs emendations, textual additions, and interpretations in order to render the text more congenial to the Byzantine audience. Immediately at the beginning of the text, in the preamble, the reference to Mount Sinjār in northern Mesopotamia is left out, probably in an attempt to neglect the Syrian origin of this apocalypse, which was, after all, attributed to a native Lycian.

Considering the fact that the imminent downfall of the Arab dominion did not occur in the early 690s, the Greek translator had to account for the elapse of time when translating the chronological data. Therefore, where the Syriac reads ten year-weeks, the Greek consistently

¹⁹⁹ See Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 54; Pablo Ubierna, “The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (Greek),” *BibHist*, 246; Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO 569), 11.

²⁰⁰ Concerning the choice of words Aerts has pointed to a phrase, which follows Plato, namely Rep. 413a: ἐνεύσθησαν τῆς ἀληθείας; see, Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO 569), 15.

²⁰¹ See Reinink, *Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), 13–4, n.V,6(1).

²⁰² For example in III.1.2 the Syriac has the city name *Tmnwn*, which is derived from the Syriac word for “eight” (*tmānē*). The Greek, however, reads *Thamnōn* which is reminiscent of θάμνος, “bush.” Thus, the Greek does not reflect the originally intended meaning. See W. J. Aerts, “Zu einer neuen Ausgabe der ‘Revelationes’ des Pseudo-Methodius (syrisch-griechisch-lateinisch),” in *XXIV. Deutscher Orientalistentag: ausgewählte Vorträge*, ed. W. Diem, A. Falaturi (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 125.

reads seven year-weeks²⁰³ possibly replacing the original version of 70 years with the symbolic number taken from Dan 9:25.²⁰⁴

There are various occasional additions and emendations, among which I mention only a few examples here. In chapter [8] 4, for instance, the translator puts additional stress on the barbarian behavior of the unclean peoples of the North by supplementing the Syriac with the detail that instead of performing proper burial rites these barbarians prefer to eat their dead. A more important emendation can be found in chapter X.2, where the Syriac proposes a Pauline exegesis according to which the *katechōn* is the priesthood, the holy cross, and the kingdom (i.e., Roman Empire). The Greek reduces the *katechōn*'s meaning to refer exclusively to the Roman Empire.²⁰⁵

Regarding biblical quotations, the Syriac often cites Peshitta verses freely, while the Greek follows the text of the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament more closely. Sometimes, the Greek expands the Syriac use of biblical citation in order to provide further clarification.²⁰⁶ For instance, while the Syriac in chapter XII.5 alludes to 1 Tim 1:9 and 2 Tim 3:2–4, the Greek redaction quotes an extensive portion of this Pauline passage, notably the section 2 Tim 3:1–5. Similarly, in chapter XI.6–7 the Syriac argument concerning the sexual perversities Christians had committed is rephrased and supplemented by a protracted citation of Rom 1:26–27. Also, at times, passages (e.g., [10] 1) are extended in order to clarify the fact that the biblical citation to follow (i.e., 2 Thess 2:1–4) refers unambiguously to the fortunes of the Roman Empire, a fact that is less explicit (but clearly intended) throughout the Syriac.

Most importantly though, are three interpolations that can be found in the first Greek recension. First, in [10] 4.1–9 the translator rephrases the Syriac narration of the destruction of the second Jewish temple by providing a text which is identical with a section of Anastasius of Sinai's *Disputation against the Jews*.²⁰⁷ Second, in chapter [13] 7–10 one finds a lengthy

²⁰³ *Apocalypse* [10] 6,4–5: ἐπ' ἀριθμῷ κυκλομένων ἑβδοματικῶν ἑβδόμῳ χρόνῳ.

²⁰⁴ Cf. *Apocalypse* V.9, X.6, XIII.2 with [5] 9, [10] 6, [13] 2.

²⁰⁵ Cf. *Apocalypse* X.4, where the Syriac tells about the Jewish institutions of the priesthood, prophecy, and kingship. The Greek redaction omits this section.

²⁰⁶ Compare, for instance, the Syriac chapter X.1 with the Greek version of [10] 1.

²⁰⁷ See MPG 89, 1212B. Kmosko speculates about the possible encounter of Anastasius with Pseudo-Methodius at Saint Catherine's monastery, therefore explaining the textual resemblance with direct personal contact and the shared ideological agenda of promoting the Byzantine *Kaiseridee*; see Kmosko, "Rätsel," 293–5. The Greek contains a lengthy verbatim passage of Anastasius' work and the Syriac closely resembles it. It is far from being clear which of the two authors borrowed the other. See further Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*,

addition recounting the Arab advance on Constantinople and the ensuing siege of 717/718. Third, the very last paragraphs of the apocalypse ([14] 11–14) are inflated by the appearance of Enoch and Elijah, who refute and are subsequently slain by the Antichrist.²⁰⁸ This theme ultimately derives from the *Revelation of John* and at the time of the translation belonged to the standard eschatological repertoire of Byzantine apocalypses.²⁰⁹ In what follows, I translate the second interpolation and supplement it with a brief commentary.²¹⁰

Then, all of a sudden, they [i.e., the Ishmaelites] will arrive in chariots and horses by the ten thousand. For he [i.e., Ishmael] will come out in the first month of the ninth *indictio* and he shall seize the cities of the East flooding them all. Then he will divide into three realms: one part will hibernate²¹¹ in Ephesus, the other in Pergamon, and the third in Malagina.

And woe you, Land of Phrygia and Pamphylia and Bithynia, for when it will be freezing, Ishmael will take hold of you. Since he [i.e., Ishmael] and his seventy-thousand seamen will come like an all consuming fire and they will devastate the islands and those inhabiting the coastline.

Woe you, [City of] Byzas, that Ishmael will conquer you. Since every horse of Ishmael will cross over and the first of them will set up his tent opposite to you, Byzas, and will begin the fight and crush the Xylokerkos gate and enter until the [Forum of the] Ox. Then the Ox will moo greatly and the Xērolaphos²¹² will roar, since they are being smashed by the Ishmalites.

Then a voice from heaven will arrive and say: “This vengeance suffices for me,” and then God, the Lord, will take away the cowardice of the Romans and throw it into the hearts of the Ishmaelites and he will throw the bravery of the Ishmaelites into the hearts of the Romans and after having turned around they will drive them out of their (lands) smashing them without mercy. Then will be fulfilled what is

231–35. For general information regarding Anastasius’ references to Islam, see André Binggeli, “Anastasius of Sinai,” *BibHist*, 193–202.

²⁰⁸ It is curious that the last paragraphs are supplemented by episodes taken from the *Revelation of John*, while the previous paragraphs ([14] 7–8), which deal with the exegesis of Gen 49:17, are rather shortened.

²⁰⁹ See Wilhelm Bousset, *Der Antichrist in der Überlieferung des Judentums, des neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1985), 134–9. The addition of the Enoch and Elijah motif (although in unconventional form) can already be found in the *Edessan Apocalypse* 226 (f. 103r.).

²¹⁰ For further comparison of the Syriac and the first Greek redaction, see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 51–60, Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO 569), 9–14; Aerts, “Zu einer neuen Ausgabe,” 124–7; Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 97–100.

²¹¹ In translating χερμάζειν as “to hibernate” I follow Brandes’ recommendation. See Wolfram Brandes, “Die Belagerung Konstantinopels 717/718 als apokalyptisches Ereignis. Zu einer Interpolation im griechischen Text der Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse,” in *Byzantina Mediterranea. Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Klaus Belke, Ewald Kislinger, Andreas Külzer, Maria A. Stassinopoulou (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 73, n.36. Cf. Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO 570), 49 ([13] 7,4).

²¹² The author seems to have deliberately adapted the place name of Xērolaphos to read Xērolaphos so that it resembles ἔλαφος, i.e., deer, which supports the idea of the place producing animal-like sounds. See Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO 570), 49–50 ([13] 9,5).

written: “One (man) will chase a thousand, and two put ten thousands to flight.”
[Deut 32:30] Then they will be finished off and their sailors will be destroyed.²¹³

The interpolation tells about three Arab armies that advance through Anatolia and converge onto the imperial capital. They lay siege on Constantinople and penetrate the land walls at the Xylokerkos gate north of the Golden Gate. The Arabs fight their way through the streets until they reach the Forum of the Ox located along the *Mesē*, the primary thoroughfare through the city. There the Ishmaelites are being beaten back by divine intervention. The Arabs are being put to flight just before the Last Roman Emperor is about to awake in the subsequent section. It is probable that the introduction of Deut 32:30 at the end of the text was intended to prefigure the imminent arrival of the Last Emperor, thus, further strengthening his divine appointment in defeating the Arabs.

This interpolation is inserted at the dramatic peak of the *Apocalypse*. Following the blasphemous Arab exclamation that Christians have no rescue,²¹⁴ and prior to the awakening of the Roman emperor,²¹⁵ the interpolation narrates the historical event of the siege of Constantinople. There have been two Arab sieges of the city in this period, namely the siege that took place in the years 674–678 and the siege of 717/718. Judging from internal evidence, it is probable that the narration refers to the siege of 717/718. The text mentions that the siege started during a cold winter. Theophanes reports that the winter of 716/717 was exceptionally cold causing much hardship for the besieging Arabs.²¹⁶ That is, the description of the Arab siege of Constantinople in the interpolation fits Theophanes’ description of the beginning of the Arab

²¹³ *Apocalypse* [13] 7–10: [13] 7 τότε αἰφνίδιον ἐλεύσονται ἐν ἄρμασι καὶ ἐν ἵπποις μυριοπλασίως· ἐξελεύσεται γὰρ τῷ πρώτῳ μηνὶ τῆς ἐνάτης ἐπινεμήσεως καὶ συλλαβέτω τὰς πόλεις τῆς ἀνατολῆς κατακλύζων πάσας, μερισθήσεται δὲ εἰς ἀρχὰς τρεῖς· καὶ τὸ μὲν ἐν μέρος χειμάσει εἰς Ἔφεσον, τὸ δὲ ἕτερον εἰς Πέργαμον, καὶ τὸ τρίτον εἰς Μαλάγινα. [13] 8 Καὶ οὐαὶ σοὶ γῶρα Φρυγία καὶ Παμφυλία καὶ Βιθυνία· ὅταν γὰρ παχνίση, ὁ Ἰσμαὴλ παραλαμβάνει σε· ἐλεύσεται γὰρ ὡσπερ πῦρ κατεσθίον ἅπαντας καὶ οἱ ναῦται αὐτοῦ ἑβδομήκοντα χιλιάδες, καὶ ἐρημώσουσιν τὰς νήσους καὶ τοὺς τὴν παραλίαν οἰκοῦντας. [13] 9 Οὐαὶ σοὶ, Βύζα, ὅτι ὁ Ἰσμαὴλ παραλαμβάνει σε· περάσει γὰρ πᾶς ἵππος Ἰσμαὴλ καὶ στήσει ὁ πρῶτος αὐτῶν τὴν σκηνὴν αὐτοῦ κατέναντί σου, Βύζα, καὶ ἄρξηται πολεμεῖν καὶ συντρίψει τὴν πύλην Ξυλοκέρκου καὶ εἰσελεύσεται ἕως τοῦ Βοός· τότε Βοὺς βοήσει σφόδρα καὶ Ξηρόλαφος κραυγᾶσει, συγκοπτόμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰσμηλιτῶν. [13] 10 Τότε φωνὴ ἔλθη ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσα· «ἄρκει μοι ἢ ἐκδίκησις αὕτη», καὶ ἄρει κύριος ὁ Θεὸς τότε τὴν δειλίαν τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ βάλη εἰς τὰς καρδίας τῶν Ἰσμηλιτῶν καὶ τὴν ἀνδρείαν τῶν Ἰσμηλιτῶν βάλη εἰς καρδίας τὰς τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ στραφέντες ἐκδιώξουσιν αὐτοὺς ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων συγκόπτοντες ἀφειδῶς. Τότε πληρωθήσεται τὸ γεγραμμένον· «εἷς διώζεται χιλίους καὶ δύο μετακινήσουσι μυριάδας». Τότε συντελεσθήσονται καὶ οἱ πλωτῆρες αὐτῶν καὶ εἰς ἀφανισμόν γενήσονται.

²¹⁴ See *supra* n.75.

²¹⁵ That is, between *Apocalypse* [13] 6 and [13] 11.

²¹⁶ C. de Boor, ed. *Theophanis Chronographia*, 396. On the second Arab siege, see Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 509–10.

siege of 716/717.²¹⁷ Thus, the *terminus post quem* of the interpolation is, in all likelihood, the winter 716/717. The breaching the walls did not happen. It is a genuine prophecy. In accordance with the principle of *ultimum vaticinium ex eventu*, one can argue that the interpolation's date of the composition predates the outcome of the siege.²¹⁸ This consideration supports the thesis of an early eighth-century date for the interpolation.

In contrast, Aerts proposed a later date. He argues that references to later history can be found in the text such as the Arab advance into Thrace in the year 781.²¹⁹ However, it is possible that the interpolation was further interpolated later on.²²⁰ The very anxiety about the possible capture of the city can best be explained if one considers the interpolation to be composed before the outcome was known.

What is more, the interpolation is missing in the Syriac as well as in the Latin versions. The oldest surviving Latin manuscripts go back to the early eighth century.²²¹ Thus, it is possible that first Latin translation, which was certainly done on the basis of the first Greek redaction,²²² was carried out before this interpolation was inserted into the Greek. Although this is not a forceful argument, it is supporting the notion of an early dating.²²³ If true, this would mean that the appearance of the Last Roman Emperor was early on associated with the fate of the imperial capital. The interpolation demonstrates how the apocalyptic narrative of Pseudo-Methodius was adopted for the Byzantine audience whose interest in imperial matters centered on the Queen of Cities.

²¹⁷ Cf. Schmoldt, "Die Schrift 'Vom jungen Daniel' und 'Daniels letzte Vision,'" 173.

²¹⁸ See Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 296–7.

²¹⁹ Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen* (CSCO 570), 48 (n.[13] 7,1ff) and Aerts, "Zu einer neuen Ausgabe," 130. Cf. Brandes, "Die Belagerung Konstantinopels," 83.

²²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 88.

²²¹ Concerning the Latin manuscripts, see Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen* (CSCO 569), 48–57. See also ODB s.v. Methodius of Patara, Pseudo.

²²² See Aerts, Kortekaas, *Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen* (CSCO 569), 25–8.

²²³ Brandes, "Die Belagerung Konstantinopels," 71.

3.4. The Visions of Daniel

As I have pointed out above, Byzantine apocalyptic texts are essentially pseudonymous.²²⁴ That is why, an apocalyptist always faced the question of what authority to chose. In the Byzantine tradition the most authoritative character in matter of apocalypticism was the prophet Daniel.

As Paul Magdalino pointed out years ago, there is an intrinsic tension between Christian eschatological thought and imperial ideology. While the former stressed the impermanence and eventual destruction of any earthly order, the latter was preoccupied with promoting the image of invincible and sustaining rulership. The only way to resolve this tension is by proposing that these notions, in fact, converge. As Magdalino puts it:

The only eschatology which imperial ideology could accept was one which played down the significance of the events between the fall of the empire and the Second Coming, but stressed, instead, the extent to which the Kingdom of God was already being anticipated, or even realized, in the Roman Empire.²²⁵

Thus, in order to resolve this intrinsic contradiction a sense of the convergence of Roman imperial ideology and Christian eschatological thought had to be achieved. The canonical *Book of Daniel* provided the necessary scriptural foundation for this. In it the prophet describes the succession of four great kingdoms. The fourth kingdom, the Iron Kingdom (Dan 2:31–44, 7:1–28), which would last until the end of time, came to be identified with the Roman Empire. This Danielic eschatology fitted well with the Byzantine imperial interest in reaching the utmost permanence and thereby legitimizing its exceptional status in the divine providential scheme. Put differently, the Roman Empire was considered to be temporally the closest realm to the Kingdom of Heaven.²²⁶ Thus, from the perspective of the eschatological focal point, i.e., the Parousia, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Roman Empire seemed to converge. What mattered most until reaching this inevitable focal point was to maintain the integrity and unity of the last Danielic kingdom. Consequently, threats to this integrity such as the Arab invasions had to be rhetorically contained. The most popular way to do this was by using the Danielic scheme of situating

²²⁴ Pseudonymity was important because it lent authority and credibility to any given apocalypse. The authority of a church father such as Methodius, or the authority of a prophet such as Moses or Elijah was unquestionable.

²²⁵ See Magdalino, “The History of the Future,” 10.

²²⁶ The underlying idea here is the notion of approaching the divine. Temporal and topographical proximity as well as imitation of sacred behavior were recognized means by which earthly matters could converge with the divine. Cf. Nicol, “Byzantine Political Thought,” 52 and Magdalino, “The History of the Future,” 11–15.

historical phenomena within the framework of successive empires and stressing the temporary fugacity of any challenge to the notion that the Roman Empire would last until the end of the world. Given the congeniality of the *Book of Daniel* with the Christian theology of history, many apocalypses were attributed to the authority of the prophet Daniel. Due to the common interest in historiography, virtually all apocryphal Daniel apocalypses were based on recent Byzantine history containing, therefore, numerous *vaticinia ex eventu*.²²⁷

Due to the generic quality of these apocalypses, which by nature are prone to subsequent interpolations and emendations, I consider the *Visions of Daniel* corpus a genre. Over the course of the entire Byzantine history this genre continuously produced ever-new apocryphal writings attributed to Daniel or, at times, to other authorities as well.²²⁸ Given the generic character of this corpus, I agree with DiTommaso that there is no need to postulate a single prototype for all versions of apocryphal Daniel apocalypses that have come down to us.²²⁹

In this subchapter I examine five versions from among the thirteen Greek apocryphal Daniel apocalypses that DiTommaso lists.²³⁰ He considers eleven of them to have originated in or after the seventh century and to predate the eleventh century. Thus, eleven versions potentially contain material derived from Pseudo-Methodius. My selection is determined in part by the availability of the sources (three of the eleven texts are still not edited) and in part by their significance. The five texts I have chosen are: the *Diegesis Danielis*, the *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse*, *Daniel καὶ ἔσται*, the *Seven-Hilled Daniel*, and *Last Daniel*. Two of these, namely, the *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* and *Daniel καὶ ἔσται*, have been scrutinized by Paul Alexander. His devotion to the issue of dating will provide essential help in proposing a hypothetical timeline for the sources. Although I will not be able to avoid commenting on the issue of dating, my primary focus will be on the eschatological figure of the Last Roman emperor and his derivatives. For a better overview I have compiled a table organizing the main motifs pertaining to the Pseudo-Methodian Last Roman Emperor narrative (Figure 2). As noted earlier, because the designations of the various Daniel apocalypses are often confusing, I

²²⁷ Cf. David M. Olster, “Byzantine Apocalypses,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. John J. Collins, Bernard McGinn and Stephen J. Stein (New York: Continuum, 1998), vol. 2, 64.

²²⁸ As I will show, at least one *Vision of Daniel* was attributed to John Chrysostom, while other versions were attributed to Methodius of Patara; for instance, the *Diegesis Danielis* and *Last Daniel*; see *infra* n.232 and 296.

²²⁹ DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 192, 224–30, *passim*.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 96–7.

continuously refer to DiTommaso's catalogue of the apocryphal *Visions of Daniel* as a reference guide.

3.4.1. *Diegesis Danielis*

The *Diegesis Danielis* or the Narrative of Daniel is an apocalyptic text that has come down to us in two manuscripts.²³¹ While the Montpellier manuscript (M) does not attribute the composition to anyone in particular, the Bodleian manuscript (B) attributes it to “our Bishop Methodius.”²³² Thus, already the title shows how closely this composition was associated with its Pseudo-Methodian source. In the following, I use Berger's 1976 critical edition of the *Diegesis Danielis*.

The apocalypse opens with an attack of the Ishmaelites on the Byzantine capital. The first chapters narrate the Arab advance through Anatolia and the ensuing siege of the “Seven-Hilled” Constantinople. At a most desperate moment (5.1–2), manuscript B tells about a forlorn prayer to God. Both manuscripts continue in stating that a divine voice will intervene which intimidates the Ishmaelite enemy and wakes up a Roman emperor who was previously thought dead and useless. This awakening emperor's name is said to start with *kappa* (5.3–7).²³³ Together with his two sons, this Roman emperor will arrive from the east to the capital. They slaughter the Ishmaelites, expel them from the streets of Constantinople and enslave the survivors (5.10–6.6). This victory will usher in a time of great prosperity and peace. Territories are regained, cities and churches rebuild, and military weapons will become obsolete (6.14–21). The emperor, who is called after a wild animal (M), and his sons will die after 33 prosperous years.

The next three chapters (following Berger's stichometry) deal with the gradual decay and final destruction of the imperial city. First, a wicked man from the north is said to perpetrate various iniquities (7.1–6). He is followed by either a foreign, tall man from the south (M) or by a

²³¹ According to Berger the apocalyptic text contained in Venice, Bibliotheca Marciana, Marc. grec. VII 22 fols. 14–16 provides a third manuscript of the same composition, although shorter. It is noteworthy, that this is the only manuscript that attributes the work to the prophet Daniel. See Berger, *Daniel Diegese*, 8–9. However, DiTommaso considers it a witness of another Daniel apocalypse; DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 131.

²³² The title of the Montpellier, Cod. Fac. Med. Nr. 405, fols. 105r–115 (M) reads: Διήγησις περὶ τῶν ἡμερῶν τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου τὸ πῶς μέλλει γενέσθαι καὶ περὶ τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος. (Narrative about the Days of the Antichrist, How He will come into Being and about the End of Times.) Oxford, Bodleian Library, Codex Canonicianus Nr. 19, fols. 145–152 (B) has the *inscriptio*: Τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Μεθοδίου ἐπισκόπου λόγος περὶ τῶν ἐσχάτων ἡμερῶν καὶ περὶ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου. (Discourse of our Holy Father Methodius about the Last Days and the Antichrist.)

²³³ Whereas manuscript M reads *kappa*, manuscript B reads *ēta*.

foreign, foul woman (B), who will reign over Constantinople (8.1). Next, the apocalypse warns the Seven-Hilled Babylon, prophesying its eventual sinking into the sea. The section closes with an enigmatic note that hereafter imperial power is transferred from Constantinople to Rome (9.9). The remainder of the text, which makes up almost half of the entire composition, deals with the Antichrist, the Jewish context, and the traditional episode of the two witnesses, Enoch and Elijah (here supplemented by the Evangelist John) being slain. The eschatological peoples of the North are not mentioned.

It is noteworthy that there is no abdication scene in this apocalypse. The main concern (of the first half of the composition) lies with the defeat of the besieging Arabs and the ensuing imperial recovery. Continuous peace and prosperity ensue. All this is dependent on the Victorious Emperor and his limited 33-year reign. After his death the empire succumbs to moral decay, which culminates in the destruction of the imperial capital. Thus, the motif of the Pseudo-Methodian Last Roman Emperor is reduced to its military and governing function. The abdicating function is not attributed to the Victorious Emperor, neither is it attributed to any subsequent ruler. However, the fact that Constantinople is being destroyed prior to the appearance of the Antichrist might be intended as a substitution of the imperial abdication. It is unclear, though, what the transfer of imperial power to Rome is supposed to suggest and how this event relates to the removal of the *katechōn*.

Berger identifies the Victorious Emperor who has the name of a beast with Leo III (r. 717–741).²³⁴ Indeed, Leo the Isaurian does fit the other two characteristics given in the text: he arrived from the Eastern provinces and his baptismal name starts with a *kappa*, i.e., Konon. Furthermore, Berger proposes that the wicked emperor from the north is Constantine V (sole ruler 741–775), and the foul, foreign woman is Empress Irene (sole ruler 797–802).²³⁵ Furthermore, he understands the obscure note about the *translatio imperii* from Constantinople to Rome as a reference to Charlemagne's coronation in the year 800. Since there is no mention of Irene being deposed or killed, Berger dates the *Diegesis Danielis* to the year 801 when Irene was still ruling in the Byzantine capital.²³⁶

Berger's propositions have been challenged. For instance, Cyril Mango convincingly argues that originally the Victorious Emperor was intended to be Theodosius III (r. 715–717). He

²³⁴ Berger, *Daniel Diegese*, 32–3.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 33–7.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

argues on the basis of manuscript M, which reads that the initial letter of the liberator emperor is *ēta* (5.7). The numeric value of this letter is eight, which (if retranslated according to apathetical sequence) might refer to the eighth Greek letter, i.e., *theta*, which is the initial of Theodosius.²³⁷ Furthermore, manuscript M does not call the emperor a wild animal.²³⁸ Thus, Mango argues, manuscript M assigns the role of the Victorious Emperor to Theodosius III, while manuscript B reassigns it to his immediate successor, Leo III. This argument confirms Mango's observation that the only historical fact provided in the apocalypse is the start of a siege of Constantinople, arguably the siege of 717/718.²³⁹ Therefore, similarly to the Greek interpolation, the *Diegesis Danielis* can be dated tentatively to the time of the second Arab siege.

There is, however, one weak point in Mango's argument to which Hoyland has already drawn attention: Mango objects to the possibility that Leo III could have been considered a dead and useless figure. Hoyland is correct in asserting that these epithets belong to the *topos* of the Last Roman Emperor as presented by Pseudo-Methodius.²⁴⁰ Although this criticism has no effect on Mango's argument on a whole, it does point to a crucial aspect of understanding Byzantine apocalypses. Despite the fact that these texts show an increased interest in the historical narrative of the Byzantine Empire, not all eschatological rulers are meant to be historical characters. It is hard to demarcate the line unequivocally where history ends and prophecy begins. This is particularly so, if one considers the very nature of the apocalyptic genre, which is prone to interpolations. That is why the context often provides the only help in discerning between visionary trope and historical fact.

If Mango and Hoyland are correct that the siege of Constantinople is the only historical fact in the *Diegesis Danielis*, then this means that the wicked man from the north and the foul and foreign woman (B) are not historical characters.²⁴¹ Agreeing on this point is important

²³⁷ See Cyril Mango, "The Life of Saint Andrew the Fool Reconsidered," *Rivista di Studi Byzantini e Slavi* 2 (1982): 312. Cf. Wilhelm Bousset, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Eschatologie." *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 20 (1900): 288, n.1.

²³⁸ Cf. Mango, "Saint Andrew the Fool Reconsidered," 312.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 313. Hoyland agrees with Mango here; see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 298. Provided that the *Diegesis Danielis* and the Greek interpolation dealt with above refer to the same Arab siege, and given the fact that this siege is the only *vaticinium ex eventu* in the *Diegesis Danielis*, this apocalypse probably dates to the beginning of the second Arab siege. Cf. Schmoldt, "Die Schrift 'Vom jungen Daniel' und 'Daniels letzte Vision,'" 173; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 296–7; Brandes, "Die Belagerung Konstantinopels," 85–6.

²⁴⁰ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 299, n.127.

²⁴¹ Cf. Mango, "Saint Andrew the Fool Reconsidered," 311.

because the temptation is great to identify the foul woman with the Empress Irene.²⁴² I would caution against this identification for two reasons. First, I explained above the principle of particularity which proposes that historical reviews are usually more detailed than prophetic visions. The mention of the foul woman does not amount to more than two short sentences which contain little specification about her reign or character.²⁴³ Thus, the scarcity of information about this figure might indicate that this is a mere literary motif. Second, the mention of the foul woman is immediately followed by reference to and imagery from the *Revelation of John*. The *Diegesis* reads as follows:

Woe you, Seven-Hilled Babylon,²⁴⁴ for your wealth and your glory will fall as will your boasting, which you uttered.²⁴⁵ “I put on gold and hyacinth and the pearl and the scarlet and purple garment and silver and amber and nothing is but my might, since in me emperors will reign and masters will come and go and great rulers will live in me.” Woe you, Seven-Hilled Babylon, Mother of all Cities, since God directs His wrath (towards you), which is full of fire. And your high walls will sink into the sea.²⁴⁶

Parallel to this passage Revelation 17: 3–4 and 18:10 read:

Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was gilded with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, which was filled with abominations, and the filthy things of her adulteries.²⁴⁷

²⁴² Apart from Berger, *Daniel Diegese*, 6, 36 also DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 138–9, George T. Zervos in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments*. Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 756 and (although more cautiously) Olster, *Byzantine Apocalypses*, 65 consider the foul woman to be Irene. This view has already been advanced by Sara C. Murray, *A Study of the Life of Andreas, The Fool for the Sake of Christ* (Borna-Leipzig: Noske, 1910), 31.

²⁴³ The woman (γυνή) is said to be μαρὰ καὶ ἀλλόφυλος (foul and foreign), *Diegesis Danielis* §8.1(B). For a speculative attribution of these characteristics to Empress Irene, see DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 139.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Rev 17:9.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Rev 18:19.

²⁴⁶ *Daniel Diegesis* §9.1–3: καὶ λοιπὸν οὐαὶ σοὶ Ἐπτάλοφε **Βαβυλῶν**, ὅτι ὁ πλοῦτος σου καὶ ἡ δόξα σου πεσεῖται καὶ τὸ καύχημά σου ὃ ἐλάλησας, ὅτι **περιβέβλημαι** τὸν χρυσὸν καὶ τὸν ὑάκινθον καὶ **μαργαρίτην** καὶ τὴν **κοκκίνην** στολὴν καὶ τὴν **πορφύραν** καὶ τὸ ἄργυρον καὶ ἤλεκτρον καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἐμὴ χεῖρ, ὅτι ἐν ἐμοὶ βασιλεῖς βασιλεύσουσιν καὶ δυνασταὶ εισέρχονται καὶ ἐξέρχονται καὶ ἄρχοντες μεγάλοι ἐν ἐμοὶ κατοικήσουσιν. οὐαὶ σοὶ ταλαίπωρε **Βαβυλῶν**, ἡ μήτηρ πασῶν τῶν πόλεων, ὅτι κλινεῖ Θεὸς τὴν ὀργὴν αὐτοῦ γέμουσαν πυρός. Emphasis mine.

²⁴⁷ Rev 17:3–4: καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με εἰς ἔρημον ἐν πνεύματι. καὶ εἶδον γυναῖκα καθημένην ἐπὶ θηρίον κόκκινον, γέμον[τα] ὀνόματα βλασφημίας, ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα. καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἦν **περιβεβλημένη πορφουροῦν** καὶ

Woe, woe you, great city, mighty city of Babylon, for in one hour your judgment has come.²⁴⁸

From the Greek (see below) the resemblance is obvious. The colors, ornaments, and choice of words clearly reflect the imagery used by John of Patmos. Therefore, I argue that the brief mention of the foul woman in chapter eight of the *Diegesis Danielis* introduces the theme of Babylon as the great harlot.²⁴⁹ The foul woman might easily be a personification of the sinfulness of the imperial capital, just as the *Revelation of John* uses the harlot metaphor in reference to Babylon (i.e., Rome).²⁵⁰ Consequently, the woman's figure should not be read as a historical person but as a literary motif.²⁵¹ The same case can be made concerning the respective passages in *Last Daniel*²⁵² and in the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse*.²⁵³ In fact, Lennart Rydén reasons similarly concerning the latter source, to which I turn below.²⁵⁴

κόκκινον, καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίταις, ἔχουσα ποτήριον χρυσοῦν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς γέμον βδελυγμάτων καὶ τὰ ἀκάθαρτα τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς. Emphasis mine.

²⁴⁸ Rev 18:10: οὐαὶ οὐαὶ ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, Βαβυλὼν ἡ πόλις ἡ ἰσχυρά, ὅτι μία ὥρα ἦλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου. Emphasis mine.

²⁴⁹ Cf. also Rev 17: 3 with the following *Diegesis Danielis* section (§8.2(B)): καὶ συγκαθήσεται (i.e., γυνή) ἐπὶ τῶν πλευρῶν τοῦ νότου τῆς Ἑπταλόφου. Emphasis mine.

²⁵⁰ At the same time, concerning the origin of the foul woman motif, one should not forget about possible Sibylline influence. The *Oracle of Baalbek* 21 (lines 200–4) contains an obscure reference to a woman who can not find a man (καὶ οὐ μὴ εὔρη [ἄνθρωπον]). Cf. *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 864A (line 162). Furthermore, Magdalino draws attention to another possible background of the motif. He mentions Malalas who recorded an incident in 541, when a woman in Constantinople prophesied the sinking of the city. See Magdalino, “The History of the Future,” 5–6.

²⁵¹ However, I do concede the possibility that the foul women motif is a later interpolation which is made fit into the context of Constantinople being portrayed as the adulterous harlot of Rev 17. For this position might speak Mango's consideration that manuscript B, which mentions the foul woman, is a subsequent revision. (However, Mango considers the revision to have taken place shortly after 716/717.) On this position, see Pablo Ubierna, “L'apocalyptique byzantine au IXe siècle,” in *Monastères, images, pouvoirs et société à Byzance* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 23), ed. Michel Kaplan (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006), 215. It is possible that a later scribe expressed his discontent with Empress Irene in associating her with the imagery of the vainglory and wicked Seven-Hilled City. If it is a later interpolation then, in all likelihood, the potent imagery of the imperial capital as the adulterous harlot of Rev 17 provided the rhetorical theme which was readily used to accommodate the first woman who ruled over the imperial capital. There is, however, one serious problem with this interpretation. Identifying the foul woman with Irene would imply that the narration up until her mention is a string of *vaticinia ex eventu*. Accordingly, the Victorious Emperor has already annihilated the Arab threat and ushered in a time of great prosperity. It is questionable whether a possible interpolator really considered the Arabs to be defeated.

²⁵² *Last Daniel* §66–68.

²⁵³ *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 864A–864D (lines 162–191).

²⁵⁴ Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 249–51. See chapter 3.5.

3.4.2. Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse

The *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* counts among the *Visions of Daniel* because its title explicitly refers to the authority of Daniel.²⁵⁵ As will become clear, this apocalypse is a close adaptation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. Therefore, DiTommaso might be correct in conjecturing that originally this apocalypse circulated under the name of Methodius before being later revised and re-attributed to John Chrysostom.²⁵⁶

Alexander discerned four parts in the text. The first section (§§1–3) starts with Alexander the Great. Using the same motifs and language, the pseudonymous author repeats Pseudo-Methodius' accounts of the para-historical genealogy of Alexander the Great being descended from a Kushite mother²⁵⁷ and about Alexander's deeds confining the unclean peoples of the North behind the Caspian gates. Furthermore, this first section summarizes Pseudo-Methodius' claim that the last of the four Danielic kingdoms is the Roman Empire, which, on the one hand, shares the same Ethiopian heritage as Alexander the Great, and on the other hand, possesses the actual wood of the life-giving (ζωοποιός) True Cross. Pseudo-Chrysostomos supplements his summary with an exegesis of the very same biblical passages Pseudo-Methodius used.²⁵⁸

The second section of the apocalypse (§4) presents the only original part of the apocalypse. It tells about the capture of Constantinople by the Ishmaelites and their advance to Attalia (ἔως Ἀτταλῶν).²⁵⁹ Alexander understands this short passage as a crucial *vaticinium ex eventu* which enables him to date this apocalypse. His argument rests on the notion that al-Mutasim (r. 833–842), after taking Amorium in 838, intended to move onto Constantinople. This led him to dispatch an armada from Syria which was to advance on the Byzantine capital. Alexander speculates that the Muslim fleet would have needed to take the naval base of Attalia in order to safely advance up the Aegean.²⁶⁰ Thus, Alexander concludes: “Small wonder that

²⁵⁵ The *inscriptio* reads: τοῦ ἐν ἀγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου λόγος ἐκ τῶν ὀράσεων τοῦ Δανιήλ (Discourse of our Holy Father John Chrysostom from the Visions of Daniel). *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* titulus.

²⁵⁶ DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 157. DiTommaso refers to the apocalypse as *Discourses of John Chrysostom Concerning the Vision of Daniel*. For his overview, see *ibid.*, 155–8, 362–3.

²⁵⁷ See Figure 1.

²⁵⁸ I.e., Ps 68:32, 2 Thess 2:7, 1 Cor 15:24. See *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* §2.16–3.9.

²⁵⁹ *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* §4.5.

²⁶⁰ Regarding the history and failure of this naval expedition, see the respective chapter in the *Vita of St. Theodora the Empress*, i.e., see Martha P. Vinson, tr., “Life of St. Theodora the Empress,” in *Byzantine Defenders of Images*.

when in 842 Apodinar's [i.e., the Muslim naval commander] squadron captured Attalia, an anonymous Byzantine apocalypticist ... should have seen in this event a threat to the capital itself."²⁶¹ The problem with this argument is that there is no evidence supporting the claim that the Arab fleet actually took Attalia.²⁶² However, the text does support Alexander's assumption since it uses the past tense (aorist) saying that "Ishmael [already] came as far as Attalia,"²⁶³ while a few lines above the apocalypticist uses the future tense prophesizing that "they [i.e., the Ishmaelites] will enter the Seven-Hilled City."²⁶⁴ Thus, I agree with Alexander on dating the composition around the year 842. The second section closes with the blasphemous Arab insult that the Romans have no rescue (ἀνάρρυσις). This phrase presents another (almost verbatim) borrowing from the Greek redaction of Pseudo-Methodius.²⁶⁵

According to Alexander, the third section of the apocalypse (§5) reproduces elements from the (now lost) Greek original of the *Slavonic Daniel*.²⁶⁶ In essence, Alexander persuasively argues that the *Slavonic Daniel* is based on a Greek original that was composed in Sicily between 827 and 829.²⁶⁷ From this composition, Pseudo-Chrysostomos appropriated, for instance, the expression "the so-called Rebel City."²⁶⁸ It is in this city that an emperor of humble origin will be revealed, whom everyone had considered useless or even dead. His name is said to start with the letter *lambda*. After his anointing as emperor²⁶⁹ this man will defeat the Arabs first alone, and then with the alliance of the "blond races" (ξανθὰ ἔθνη). After their final defeat he will enter

Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1988), 373–4.

²⁶¹ Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 76.

²⁶² For information about Attalia see ODB s.v. Attaleia.

²⁶³ *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* §4.5: καὶ εἰσῆλθεν Ἰσμαὴλ ἕως Ἀτταλῶν. Emphasis mine.

²⁶⁴ *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* §4.3: καὶ εἰσελεύσονται ἐν τῇ πόλει τῇ Ἑπταλόφῳ. Emphasis mine.

²⁶⁵ Cf. *Apocalypse* [13] 6.

²⁶⁶ DiTommaso refers to this work as the Slavonic *Vision of the Prophet Daniel on the Emperors*. For his treatment of this apocalypse see DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 145–51, 504–7.

²⁶⁷ Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 62–4.

²⁶⁸ *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* §5.1: ἡ πόλις ἐκείνη ἡ καλουμένη τυραννίς. According to Alexander, the "Rebel City" is Syracuse; see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 72–3.

²⁶⁹ The text reads: κάκει χρίσουσιν αὐτὸν εἰς βασιλεία where χρίω clearly means "to anoint." There is no clear evidence to argue for Byzantine anointing ceremonies prior to 1204. However, Byzantine authors often used this term in a metaphorical sense. Thus, it is uncertain whether this term portrays a hint of "Western," e.g., Lombardian influence on the apocalypse. In any event, the use of the verb χρίω clearly puts additional emphasis on the emperor's role as Christ's viceroy on earth. Regarding Byzantine coronation customs, see Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 273–6 and Janet L. Nelson, "Symbols in Context: Ruler's Inauguration Rituals in Byzantium and the West in the Early Middle Ages," in eadem, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 259–81. See also Dimitar Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium (1204–1330)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 387–8.

Rome, where he will open up a treasure and distributes its wealth to the people. After having consolidated his rule this Victorious Emperor will move to Constantinople and chase away its ruler. The fourth and last section (§6) recounts the coming of the Antichrist, the death of Enoch and Elijah, and the final Parousia. The language and themes used here are again direct borrowings from the Greek redaction of Pseudo-Methodius.

In sum, one can say that the *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* is on the whole an abbreviated version of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* with a few emendations such as the *vaticinium* about the fall of Attalia. There is a minor deviation from the Pseudo-Methodian scheme when Pseudo-Chrysostomos fails to mention the coming of Gog and Magog at the end of time. This event is addressed at the beginning of the apocalypse, however, where these unclean peoples are mentioned in connection with Alexander the Great.²⁷⁰ More importantly, though, Pseudo-Chrysostomos leaves out the emperor's abdication scene. Here, as in the *Diegesis Danielis*, the Roman emperor's function is reduced to defeating the Arabs and restoring imperial power. By not mentioning the abdication it seems that the apocalypse tries to postpone the ultimate end to the unspecified future. If Pseudo-Chrysostomos agrees that the Roman Empire is the *katechōn*, then the Antichrist's arrival is conditional on its removal or destruction. Thus, not mentioning the unclean peoples of the North might further hint at the author's aim to avoid speculating on the relationship between the Roman Empire and the ultimate eschatological end drama revolving around the Antichrist.²⁷¹

One further important element in the apocalypse needs to be mentioned, namely, the characterization of the Victorious Emperor, who is said to have a name that “was inferior in the world.”²⁷² This can be understood as referring to the humble origin of the rising emperor. The humility or poverty of the Victorious Emperor is a permanent feature in the later Byzantine apocalyptic tradition and if the dating of the *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* is correct then this text presents an early mention of this motif.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* §1.17. While Pseudo-Methodius mentions the eschatological arrival of the unclean peoples twice (in association with Alexander the Great (*Apocalypse* [8] 10) and then in connection with the Last Roman Emperor (*Apocalypse* [13] 19–21)), Pseudo-Chrysostomos mentions them only once.

²⁷¹ The same argument can be made for the *Diegesis Danielis*.

²⁷² *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* §5.1: οὔτινος τὸ ὄνομα ἦν ἕλαττον ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

²⁷³ See *infra* n.325. The motif of poverty or humility cannot be found in the *Slavonic Daniel*, from which (as noted above) Pseudo-Chrysostomos borrowed certain elements. For Alexander's English translation of the *Slavonic Daniel*, see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 65–72. Another important difference is that the *Slavonic Daniel* does contain the emperor's abdication scene.

3.4.3. Daniel καὶ ἔσται

The Vision of Daniel on the Last Times and the End of the World, or *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* for short, is another brief apocalypse that belongs to the *Vision of Daniel* genre.²⁷⁴ It is characterized by a marked eclecticism giving “the impression of a mosaic built from often minute pebbles.”²⁷⁵

Alexander’s comprehensive analysis divides the text into five historical (§1) and five eschatological sections (§§2–4): (1) The Arab attack on Rome and the sack of St Peter’s in 846, (2) the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, (3) the internal strife among southern Italian principalities in the mid-ninth century, and (4) the murder of Michael III in 867.²⁷⁶ Here Alexander engages in ambitious speculations arguing that this section²⁷⁷ is a propagandist attempt to justify Basil I’s murder of Michael III by comparing the former with Phinehas, the Jewish high priest, who is reported to have justly killed the Israelite prince Zimri together with his Midianite concubine for their blasphemy against the God of Israel.²⁷⁸ Alexander’s argumentation is convincing. If true, this interpretation would exemplify the active role apocalyptic literature played (or at least laid claim to) in shaping the public image of emperors by reworking political events into an eschatological framework. Based on this argument Alexander dates the apocalypse to the year 867 or 869, that is, to the period shortly after Basil I had killed his benefactor Michael III or the time of the devastating Constantinopolitan earthquake of 869.²⁷⁹ The last (5) historical episode refers to Sicilian events in 852/853.²⁸⁰

The five eschatological sections are: (6) The arrival of the Victorious Emperor among the inhabitants of the “Rebel City” (i.e., Syracuse). This emperor is portrayed as “having signs inscribed on his finger, a sweet voice, a crooked nose, and a curtailed stature,”²⁸¹ and his name is

²⁷⁴ For an overview of the content and the manuscript situation, see DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 158–62, 364–5.

²⁷⁵ Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 77.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 77–83.

²⁷⁷ *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* §1.10–11.

²⁷⁸ Num 25:1–8. It might be important here that the blasphemy of worshipping Ba’al-pe’or was introduced by the Midianites, a people Pseudo-Methodius identifies with a proto-Arabian tribe. See *supra* n.81.

²⁷⁹ Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 87, 94–5.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 83–7.

²⁸¹ *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* §2.1–2: σημεῖα ἔχων τίτλωμα ἐπὶ τὸν δάκτυλον αὐτοῦ. ἡ λαλία αὐτοῦ ἠδεῖα, ἡ ρίς αὐτοῦ ἐπικυφοῦς, κολοβὸς τῆ στάσει. Alexander recognizes that usually physiognomic descriptions in apocalyptic literature are restricted to the Antichrist. For the typical characterization of the Antichrist, see Bousset, *Der Antichrist*, 100–1, 132–4. However, Alexander is correct in remarking that in detail the descriptions of the Victorious Emperor and the Antichrist differ significantly; see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 88, n.35. Provided that Alexander’s

said to start with the letter *lambda*. He will defeat the Ishmaelites and together with the “blond races” pursue them to Akra.²⁸² (7–8) The Victorious Emperor then smashes a bronze idol in Rome and after consolidating his reign by giving out money to the people he proceeds to enter Constantinople, chasing away the sovereign ruling there. The emperor prophesies the ultimate destruction of the Seven-Hilled City through a great deluge. After a rule of 32 prosperous and peaceful years, the Victorious Emperor dies naturally. (9) Following the gradual moral decay of the Romans God punishes mankind by releasing the unclean peoples of the North, who are in turn annihilated by an angelic figure. (10) Finally, the Last Roman Emperor moves to Jerusalem and abdicates on Golgotha at the advent of the Antichrist. The remainder of the text recapitulates the classical eschatological sequence of the characterization of the “son of perdition,” the killing of Enoch Elijah, and finally the Parousia.

In his commentary, Alexander argues that the motifs of mounting a chariot (ἄρμα), the possible reference to fighting beyond the Euphrates, and the idea of being discovered by divine revelation point to Sibylline oracular literature.²⁸³ What is important for my purpose here is to consider how the figure of the Roman emperor is portrayed. First of all, it not clear how many emperors are being referred to in the apocalypse. While Alexander counts at least five successive emperors, I count only three. I identify one continuous protagonist, the Victorious Emperor, who fulfills the functions of appearing after being thought dead, of defeating the Arabs, of restoring the empire to wealth, prosperity, and peace, and of ruling for the symbolic number of 32 years.²⁸⁴ In support of my interpretation is the fact that in all the other *Visions of Daniel* surveyed here²⁸⁵ and the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* the Victorious Emperor is said to rule for 32

dating of the apocalypse is correct this text might contain the oldest example (which has come down to us) of a detailed physiognomic portray of the Victorious Emperor. For a later instance, see *Last Daniel* §47.

²⁸² Alexander considers Akra to stand for a city district of Jerusalem, which functioned as a fortified quarter under Seleucid rule; see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 90.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 91–4. Knowing about Alexander’s expertise in the Sibylline tradition I will not contest his thesis. However, I would question his interpretation concerning the emperor’s anointing. Alexander considers this motif to derive from an archaic form of the *Nero Redivivus Legend*. Accordingly, an anointed Jewish king would defeat the Arabs in battle very similarly to the battle the Jews fought during the Maccabean wars. I find this proposition, though possible, far-fetched. I rather suspect (as noted above) “Western,” e.g., Lombardian or Frankish influence on the coronation ceremonial and possibly a theological consideration which intended to further underline the Victorious Emperor’s function as Christ’s (i.e., the Anointed) deputy on earth.

²⁸⁴ *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* §2.1–5, §2.15, §2.27, §3.6, §3.12–20.

²⁸⁵ I.e., *Diegesis Danielis*, *Seven-Hilled Apocalypse*, *Last Daniel* except for *Pseudo-Chrysostomos*, which does not mention the duration of the Victorious Emperor’s reign.

(or 30, 33) years.²⁸⁶ At the same time, this emperor is definitely not identical with the Last Roman Emperor who has to fulfill his obligation of abdicating to God at the arrival of the Antichrist. That is, here one finds a clear distinction between two emperors who are associated with the eschatological functions of the Last Roman Emperor *topos*. This division in imperial responsibility was earlier only implied (as in the *Edessan Apocalypse*) or ignored (as in the *Diegesis Danielis* and the *Seven-Hilled Apocsalpyse*). Apart from this notable distinction *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* closely follows the sequence of the Pseudo-Methodian eschatological events.

3.4.4. Seven-Hilled Daniel

The *Vision of Daniel on the Seven-Hilled City*, or the *Seven-Hilled Daniel* for short, is possibly the most obscure apocalypse dealt with in this thesis.²⁸⁷ Virtually nothing can be stated for certain about the date and provenance of this short text.

The apocalypse begins (§1) with a warning to the city of Constantinople, prophesying that it will fall to an unspecified lad (μειράκιον),²⁸⁸ who will occupy the city for some three weeks (probably meaning 21 years).²⁸⁹ Then, the people are said to revolt, for which they are severely punished.²⁹⁰ At that point, a sleeping snake (κοιμώμενος ὄφις) appears who chases the Ishmaelites permanently out of the city.²⁹¹ After the expulsion of the Arabs a bloody Roman

²⁸⁶ For comparison, see Figure 2. The 32-year motif refers to Alexander the Great's lifespan or alternatively to the time-span of Constantine the Great's rule. The other numeral value that is closely associated with the Last Emperor motif is the number 12, which refers to the time-span of Alexander the Great's rule. For the application of the "twelve-year rule" motif, see *Last Daniel* §60, *Seven-Hilled Daniel* §12.22, *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 860B (line 109). Cf. *Apocalypse* [13] 21,3–6. On the meaning of these numerical values, see Bousset, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Eschatologie," 285; John Wortley, "The Warrior-Emperor of the Andrew Salos Apocalypse," *Analecta Bollandiana* 88 (1970): 55–6; DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 162.

²⁸⁷ The textual situation of manuscripts and editions is confusing. See *ibid.*, 127–8. See further *ibid.*, 126–30, 354–6. In the following, I use Schmoldt's critical edition: See Schmoldt, "Die Schrift 'Vom jungen Daniel' und 'Daniels letzte Vision,'" 190–98.

²⁸⁸ Concerning this motif, see Brandes, "Kaiserprophetien und Hochverrat," 190–1, n.145.

²⁸⁹ Seen in the context this lad is probably the Arab foe.

²⁹⁰ The text employs here the image of a tripartite division: one third of the people are killed by the sword, one third are enslaved, and one third hide or run away. This imagery resembles the motif used in *Apocalypse* [13] 7,3–5, *Diegesis Danielis* §2.3–9, and *Last Daniel* §53–4.

²⁹¹ Here, the text provides an exact date for the expulsion of the Ishmaelites, namely the year 6981. It is unclear what this date means. If one considers the year to adhere to Annianus' era (i.e., 1 AM = 25 March 5493 BCE), one would arrive at the year AD 1489. Similarly, if one uses the Byzantine calendar (i.e., 1 AM = 1 September 5510 BCE), one arrives at the year AD 1472. Both years are remarkably close to the notorious year of 1492, which was widely believed to be the date the world would end. Thus, I wonder whether this date is not a later interpolation that read

civil war ensues, which causes much carnage in the streets of Constantinople (§2). A subsequent earthquake wakes a “poor lion” (λέων πτωχός) of great age, whom two angels crown emperor and order him to wage war on his enemies (§2.5–9). Together with his four sons the aged emperor rebuilds the City, erects churches, and defeats the Ishmaelites. His 30-year rule is marked by great benefits for the people. He hands out money and ensures prosperity and peace until (after twelve years) he moves to Jerusalem in order to abdicate his dominion to God. Upon his departure his four sons quarrel and start fighting with each other. Nonetheless, this emperor surrenders his imperial dignity on Golgotha amidst a huge crowd of witnesses (§2.10–29). The last lines of the apocalypse briefly refer to the arrival of the unclean peoples, to the advent of the Antichrist and to the ultimate event, the Parousia (§2.30–33).

This *Seven-Hilled Apocalypse* follows closely Pseudo-Methodius’ structure. All essential elements are present: the awakening of a liberating emperor, his victory over the Arabs, the subsequent restoration of imperial power, the ensuing peace, and his final abdication on Golgotha. Furthermore, the unity of the Victorious or Liberator Emperor and the abdicating Last Roman Emperor is retained. The pseudonymous author integrates later elements into this framework, such as the notion of the emperor’s poverty, his angelic coronation, and the civil war erupting among his sons. The major change that happens is the reversal of his abdication and the arrival of the peoples of the North. The *Seven-Hilled Apocalypse* shares this inverted sequence with the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse*.²⁹²

Concerning the date of the apocalypse, to the best of my knowledge, no strong argument has yet been made. While Schmoldt neglects to deal with the dating, DiTommaso tentatively proposes an eighth- or ninth-century date.²⁹³ For now, I am inclined to accept a late ninth-century date. Anything earlier than this would be challenged to account for the motif of the angelic coronation, which became a standard imperial theme only with the Macedonian dynasty (867–1056).²⁹⁴

the apocalypse as a prophecy which foretold the Ottoman taking of the city as well as its eventual recapture. Concerning eschatological sentiments around the year AD 1492, see Alexander A. Vasiliev, “Medieval Ideas of the End of the World: West and East” *Byzantion* 16, no. 2 (1942–3): 497–500 and Magdalino, “The History of the Future,” 27–8.

²⁹² Cf. *Seven-Hilled Apocalypse* §2.22–30 with *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 860C–869A (lines 114–276).

²⁹³ DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 130.

²⁹⁴ See Klaus Wessel, “Kaiserbild,” in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, Vol. 3, ed. idem and Marcell Restle (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann 1978), 751–2.

3.4.5. Last Daniel

The *Last Vision of the Prophet Daniel*, or the *Last Daniel* for short, is preserved in a great number of manuscripts. In his dissertation Schmoldt met the need for a critical edition, which he based on nineteen manuscripts.²⁹⁵ Some of these manuscripts attribute the apocalypse to Methodius of Patara, thus showing again how closely the *Visions of Daniel* were associated with this seventh-century pseudonymous authority.²⁹⁶ Also, the apocalypse shows the typical eclectic character of the *Visions of Daniel* genre. It parallels numerous passages from earlier apocalypses such as the *Diegesis Danielis*, *Daniel καὶ ἔσται*, and the *Seven-Hilled Daniel*.²⁹⁷

The text opens with a divine voice ordering three angels to each devastate one part of the Roman *oikoumenē*, including Constantinople (§§1–18).²⁹⁸ The “mother of cities” is said to be conquered by a lad (μειράκιον), who in turn will be defeated by a sleeping snake (ὁ ὄφις ὁ κοιμώμενος) (§§19–28).²⁹⁹ Following the apparent reconquest of Constantinople from the Arabs, the “blond race” occupies the city for “six or five years” (§29). What seems important in this context is the continuous strife with the Muslim foe, against whom various factions (including one under a certain “Philip the Great”) gather in the Seven-Hilled City and end up fighting each other (§§30–46). The carnage is stopped by divine intervention, which reveals a man standing on two pillars in the northern part of Constantinople. According to his physiognomy this man is “grey-haired, just, compassionate, dressed in poor clothes, rough in appearance, but gentle in character and very mature. He carries a nail in the right leg, in the middle of the shinbone.”³⁰⁰ After his discovery angels will crown him emperor and order him to defeat his enemies. The Victorious Emperor not only defeats the Arabs, but also the Ethiopians, the Franks and the Tatars (§§48–54). Then he ushers in a 32-year period of great prosperity and peace, distributing much wealth among the people (§§55–59). After his death his successor rules for another twelve years

²⁹⁵ DiTommaso supplements the nineteen manuscripts known to Schmoldt with an additional six witnesses; see DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 366–9.

²⁹⁶ Namely, Venice, Bibliotheca Marciana, Marc. II 125 fols. 6–11, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, jur. gr. 6 fols. 201–202, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Holkham gr. 26 fols. 237–239. and Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Suppl. gr 101 fols. 133r–135v. For the respective titles of the apocalypses, see the critical apparatus in Schmoldt, “Die Schrift ‘Vom jungen Daniel’ und ‘Daniels letzte Vision,’” 122.

²⁹⁷ For close textual comparison see *ibid.*, 167–72.

²⁹⁸ This opening section seems to follow the motif from the Greek interpolation of Pseudo-Methodius, where three Muslim armies approach Constantinople and lay waste to various parts of Anatolia; see *Apocalypse* [13] 7,3–5.

²⁹⁹ This passage closely follows a section from the *Seven-Hilled Daniel* §1.17.

³⁰⁰ *Last Daniel* §47: Πολιὸν δίκαιον ἐλεήμονα [φορῶν πενιχρά] τῇ ὄψει αὐστηρόν, τῇ δὲ γνώμῃ πραύν, μεστόν τῇ ἡλικίᾳ. ἔχοντα ἐπὶ τὸν δεξιὸν πόδα μέσον τοῦ καλάμου ἦλον.

before abdicating in Jerusalem. Thus, this ruler is technically the Last Roman Emperor (§§60–61). Next, an internecine civil war breaks out among the Last Roman Emperor’s four sons in which finally all perish. Then a foul woman rules the Seven-Hilled City, whose haughtiness causes the submergence of the capital. Shortly afterwards, other cities share the same fate (§§62–73). Ultimately, the Antichrist arrives. His advent is marked by ubiquitous famines, earthquakes and destruction. Then the heavens roll up like a papyrus-scroll³⁰¹ and the Last Judgment ensues (§§74–85).

It is apparent that this text reuses various elements from earlier apocalypses. For my purpose it is important to appreciate the adaptation of the following motifs. Adhering to the traditional *topos*, the Victorious Emperor is revealed at a moment of great struggle and hardship. The motifs of angelic coronation and monetary benefactions to the people are already known from the *Seven-Hilled Daniel*. His physiognomy stresses his poor origin and mature age while supplementing this traditional characterization by an obscure note of him having a nail (ἦλος) in his right leg.³⁰² Further, it is interesting that the Victorious Emperor not only defeats the Arabs but other foreign nations as well, including the Franks and the Tatars. Again adhering to the tradition of the *topos*, the emperor’s reign lasts for 32 years, while his successor rules for twelve years before abdicating. Here, one can see another clear distinction between the Victorious and the Last Roman Emperors. Following the imperial abdication the fate of the empire irreversibly deteriorates. A great civil war and the successive destruction of imperial cities signify the gradual disintegration of the last Danielic Empire giving way to the arrival of the Antichrist.

Concerning the dating DiTommaso proposes an eleventh- or twelfth-century provenance. More specifically, he considers the mention of a Great Philip to refer to Philippe I of France (r. 1060–1108), thus placing the text at the time of the First Crusade.³⁰³ Alternatively, John Wortley considers the apocalypse to have reached its final shape in the thirteenth century, although earlier elements can certainly be identified.³⁰⁴ Indeed, the mention of the Tatars (Τάταροι) and the

³⁰¹ Cf. Rev 6:14.

³⁰² Possibly a reference to the nails of Christ’s crucifixion. I do not know of any other *Vision of Daniel* in which this motif is used. However, as noted above, the *Edessan Apocalypse* associates the Victorious Emperor with the nails of the True Cross. See *supra* n.179.

³⁰³ DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 192. It would be remarkable to find such a clear reference to a near-contemporary historical character from the Latin West in Byzantine apocalyptic literature. Yet, this is possible if the section (*Last Daniel* §40) portrays a genuine *vaticinium ex eventu*. In contrast to DiTommaso’s dating, Möhring considers an early-ninth-century date, see Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, 311.

³⁰⁴ Wortley, “Literature of Catastrophe,” 8–9.

notion of the continuous occupation of Constantinople by the “blond race” indicate thirteenth-century events since these descriptions go beyond the traditional *topoi* of vaguely alluding to the unclean peoples of the North and the eventual temporary loss of the capital to the Ishmaelites. Thus, I agree with Wortley that this apocalypse probably gained its present shape during the Crusades.³⁰⁵

3.5. Andreas Salos Apocalypse

The *Vita of St Andreas Salos*, written by a certain Nikephoros in Constantinople, contains an eschatological section in which Andreas the Fool explains to his friend Epiphanius how the world will come to an end. This section has been critically edited by Rydén.³⁰⁶ The text is remarkable because it lists more than five consecutive imperial rulers, some of whom share the characteristics of the Pseudo-Methodian Last Roman Emperor.

The apocalyptic passage opens with the prophecy that the New Jerusalem, i.e., Constantinople, will never fall to invaders. Then, Andreas foretells that “God will raise up an emperor from poverty,”³⁰⁷ who will bring prosperity and peace to the Romans before moving on to “humble the sons of Hagar.”³⁰⁸ Then, he is said to restore imperial frontiers on land as well as at sea. He will rebuild churches and subdue transgressors and magnates, while upholding a strict orthodoxy that results in the persecution of Jews and a ban on musical instruments.³⁰⁹

The 32-year reign of this Victorious Emperor is followed by four subsequent rulers. The next two despots are wicked emperors, whose reign is marked by punitive natural catastrophes such as violent storms, earthquakes, and famines. Then a good Christian emperor from Ethiopia follows who, during his twelve-year reign, repairs the churches his predecessors destroyed. His rule is characterized by widespread joy. Next, an Arab ruler briefly ascends to the throne. It is he who abdicates in Jerusalem after having erected and previously assembled the True Cross from

³⁰⁵ Cf. Brandes, “Die Belagerung Konstantinopels,” 84 and idem, “Kaiserprophetien und Hochverrat,” 191, n.146.

³⁰⁶ Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 199–214. The English translations given here are taken from Rydén.

³⁰⁷ *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 853B (line 23).

³⁰⁸ *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 856A (lines 31–2).

³⁰⁹ Generally, apocalyptic literature disapproves of music and games. Cf. Rev 18:22. See Mango, *Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome*, 211 and Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 251. Such disapproval can also be found in the *Apocalypse* [2] 1.

its numerous pieces.³¹⁰ Thereafter, three young men are said to plunge into a devastating civil war in which the male Roman population is so reduced that a woman assumes the government.³¹¹ Her reign is depicted in the apocalyptic imagery of harlotry,³¹² killing of relatives,³¹³ playing music, and haughtiness.³¹⁴ As a result of her abominations, Constantinople is destroyed by a huge flood.³¹⁵ The imperial government is said to be transferred to various cities, which, however, are unable to stop the rapid disintegration of imperial power. The remainder of Andreas's eschatological prophecy deals with the fate of the Jews, the coming of the unclean peoples of the North, and the advent of the Antichrist, finishing with a brief note on the Last Judgment.

The *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* is rare example of an apocalyptic text which comes down (at least partially) in early manuscripts. The earliest witness, contained in the so-called Monacensis gr. 443, might date to the second half of the tenth century.³¹⁶ Rydén dates the *Vita* of Andreas Salos to this period.³¹⁷ Mango argues against him, proposing a much earlier date, namely, the second half of the seventh century.³¹⁸ The confusion is caused by the fact that the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* presents an intriguing amalgamation of *topoi* taken from the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* on the one hand, and the *Diegesis Danielis*, on the other. From the latter it took the marked concern for the imperial capital and its eventual destruction by a great flood. At the same time, the motifs of the abdication scene, the importance of an Ethiopian dynastic connection, and the arrival of the peoples of the North are *topoi* taken from the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.³¹⁹

³¹⁰ *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 860C (lines 114–121).

³¹¹ This explanation for the rise of a woman to power due to male depopulation can be found as early as in the *Oracle of Baalbek* 21 (lines 200–2). This parallel can be seen as a further argument in favor of the thesis that the foul woman described in apocalyptic texts was originally a literary motif which had its roots (at least in part) in the Sibylline tradition.

³¹² Cf. Rev 17:5.

³¹³ Cf. Mt 10:21. See Bousset, *Der Antichrist*, 76–7.

³¹⁴ Cf. Isa 14:13–4. See further Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 249–51.

³¹⁵ This passage (*Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 864D–865A (lines 192–203)) closely parallels Rev 18:21.

³¹⁶ Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 199. Cf. Brandes, “Die Belagerung Konstantinopels,” 86–7, n.16 and Wortley, “The Literature of Catastrophe,” 4.

³¹⁷ Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 199, 260. For Rydén's argumentation, see idem, “The Date of the ‘Life of Andreas Salos’” *DOP* 32 (1978): 127–55.

³¹⁸ Cyril Mango, “The Life of Saint Andrew the Fool Reconsidered,” *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* 2 (1982): 297–313 (esp. 299–308).

³¹⁹ For further textual comparisons between the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* and various *Visions of Daniel*, see Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 232–7.

The strongest argument for the posteriority of the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* comes from internal evidence. The text is overtly uninterested in its contemporary political environment.³²⁰ No *vaticinium ex eventu* can be discerned. What is more, there is an exceptional reversal in the narration. God does not awake the Victorious Emperor in the heat of a desperate struggle with Islam; rather, the emperor rises and initiates a period of peace and prosperity, during which “they [i.e., the Romans] will beat the blades of their swords into sickles, and their spearshafts and spears they will make into farming implements”³²¹ At this peaceful time, the Victorious Emperor will move out in order to punish the Ishmaelites for their blasphemy. Thus, the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* does not portray any immediate Arab threat, which is an essential notion, particularly in the apocalypses of the early eighth century (the first Greek redaction of the *Apocalypse*, the *Diegesis Danielis*) and also in ninth-century texts (*Daniel καὶ ἔσται*, the *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse*, the *Seven-Hilled Apocalypse*). Therefore, I agree with Hoyland in proposing the safe *terminus post quem* of 740 while assuming a tentative date of the ninth-tenth century, when the Muslim threat was less exigent.³²²

In terms of content, the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* is a peculiar literary work insofar as it advances a new interpretation of the Last Roman Emperor *topos*. As shown above, the apocalypse sketches the succession of five emperors who are followed by a great civil war and the final reign of a foul woman. In contrast to the various *Visions of Daniel* dealt with above, this apocalypse splits the multiple functions of the Pseudo-Methodian Last Emperor and distributes them among successive rulers.

Various attempts have been made to identify the first of the five emperors. Vasiliev considered him to be Michael III,³²³ while Wortley connected the textual descriptions with Basil I.³²⁴ It would be surprising, however, if a text which apparently has no interest in the political or historical narrative of the Byzantine Empire integrated a factual Roman emperor at an unspecified moment. For this reason I agree with Rydén, who does not recognize any reference to contemporary historical figures in the apocalypse. Rather, the five emperors listed provide an

³²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 226, 239, 260.

³²¹ *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 853C (lines 29–31). Cf. Isa 2:4.

³²² Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 305–7. Wortley dates the apocalyptic section to the late ninth century, see Wortley, “The Literature of Catastrophe,” 3. Alexander dates it to the early tenth century, see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 123, 130, and Magdalino endorses a mid-tenth-century date, see Magdalino, “The Year 1000,” 245, 256.

³²³ Alexander A. Vasiliev, “The Emperor Michael III in Apocryphal Literature,” *Byzantina et Metabyzantina* 1 (1946): 237–48.

³²⁴ Wortley, “The Warrior-Emperor,” 45–59.

encyclopedic account of the history of the Roman Empire from Constantine to Jovian.³²⁵ Accordingly, the five emperors signify: (1) the Victorious Emperor: Constantine the Great, (2) the wicked emperor: Constantius II, (3) the pagan emperor: Julian, (4) the good Ethiopian emperor: Alexander the Great,³²⁶ and (5) the good Arabian emperor: Jovian.

This interpretation has the benefit of appreciating the fragmentation of the various typological elements that the Pseudo-Methodian Last Emperor motif carries. As reconstructed above, the Last Roman Emperor combines in one single character the functions of (1) a second Gideon, or later a New Constantine, who delivers Christians from oppression and restores imperial supremacy, (2) a Second Alexander, who is, on the one hand, of Ethiopian descent, and, on the other hand, is responsible for the reconquest of imperial lands so that “the love of the Lord will spread over the whole world,”³²⁷ and, finally, (3) a second Jovian, who returns his *imperium* to its divine source by abdicating on Mount Golgotha. Nikephoros, the author of the *Vita of St Andreas Salos*, divides these three essential functions and distributes them among three distinct emperors, who gradually fulfill the duties of the eschatological work list that Pseudo-Methodius drew up.

In order to understand why Nikephoros changed the Pseudo-Methodian scheme one needs to correct Rydén’s analysis. Rydén misses one important point. It is not completely true that there are only five emperors. Rather, the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* lists seven consecutive rulerships. The abdicating Arab emperor is followed by three young men, who (together with the majority of the male population) perish in a fierce civil war. Subsequently, a foul woman from Pontus rules the imperial capital. Not only does this seven-rule scheme resemble the numerical value of the Seven-Hilled City, it also follows Rev 17:9–11:

³²⁵ Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 238–47. See also Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 125–8. Rydén’s argumentation is particularly laudable for appreciating the topical nature of the poverty attributed to the Victorious Emperor. On the contrary, Wortley’s strongest argument for identifying the Victorious Emperor with Basil I is the latter’s rise “from poverty” (ἀπὸ πενίας); see Wortley, “The Literature of Catastrophe,” 44, *passim*. Realizing that the emperor’s poverty was a standardized eschatological *topos* raises the critical question of whether Basil I’s poverty was much emphasized due to the need to meet the expectation of the eschatological motif. Or conversely, did Basil I’s humble origin actually inspire this motif? See Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 239–40.

³²⁶ The intrusion of Alexander the Great into this historical sequence is hard to explain. However, Rydén is correct in associating Alexander the Great with the motifs of a twelve-year reign, Ethiopian descent, and the fact that he precedes three evil young men, who possibly allude to the *diadochi*; see Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 245.

³²⁷ *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 860B–C (lines 112–3).

The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must stay for (only) a little. And the beast who once was, and now is not, he is the eighth (king) and he belongs to the seven (kings) and goes into destruction.³²⁸

The seven-ruler scheme of the *Revelations of John* is potent in explaining why Nikephoros presents seven consecutive rulers who are divided into five rulers plus two. Among the five rulers Nikephoros distributes the duties of the Pseudo-Methodian eschatological work list culminating in the abdication of the Arabian emperor. I argue that Nikephoros combines here the reading of the two most authoritative apocalyptic authors, namely, John of Patmos and Pseudo-Methodius. Nikephoros appreciated the typological framework and the eschatological functions of the Last Roman Emperor motif and remodeled them onto the seven-ruler scheme found in the *Revelations of John*. He did so, and here Rydén might be correct, in order to present encyclopedic material about the history of the Roman Empire which elucidates the typological parallels between the emperors of the first Christian century under imperial benefaction, i.e., of the fourth century CE, and the eschatological duties of the last emperor(s).³²⁹

It is noteworthy, that following the Arabian emperor's abdication imperial business continues. A foul woman rules in Constantinople until its submergence by the sea. And even then, imperial power proceeds after its transfer to Rome, Thessaloniki, and Syllaion.³³⁰ Only with the arrival of the eschatological peoples of the North does imperial power ultimately come to an end. Rydén explained this phenomenon by maintaining that there is a shift in quality after the

³²⁸ Rev 17:9–11: αἱ ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ ἑπτὰ ὄρη εἰσὶν, ὅπου ἡ γυνὴ κάθηται ἐπ' αὐτῶν. καὶ βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν· οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν, ὁ εἷς ἔστιν, ὁ ἄλλος οὐπω ἦλθεν, καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μεῖναι. καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ αὐτὸς ὄγδοός ἐστιν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστιν, καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει.

³²⁹ Gilbert Dagron mentions that at the beginning of the seventh century Andrew of Caesarea (d. 614) interpreted the seven rulers from Rev 17:9–10 as to refer to seven founders of various empires. Andrew considered the seventh founder to be Constantine the Great. See Gilbert Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire. Études sur le recueil des 'Patria'* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), 324.

³³⁰ The choice of these three cities is prefigured in the civil war episode (860D–861D) preceding the rise of the foul woman. During this war the “three younger men” (νεώτεροι τρεῖς) who fight for imperial power exalt the cities of Rome, Thessaloniki and Syllaion (861A–861B). On the question of why Nikephoros chose these cities, Rydén proposes an etymological consideration: Rome is associated with ῥώμη (might), Thessaloniki with νίκη (victory), and Syllaion with οὐ συληθήσεται (will not be sacked) (Rydén emends the text here reading οὐ συληθήσεται instead of συλληθήσεται); see Lennart Rydén, “Zum Aufbau der Andreas Salos-Apokalypse,” *Eranos* 66 (1968): 116. For general information about Syllaion, see ODB s.v. Syllaion and for an overview of the historical sources pertaining to Syllaion, see Vincenzo Ruggieri, F. Nethercott, “The Metropolitan City of Syllion and its Churches,” *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 36 (1986): 133–56 (esp. 134–44). There is a textual parallel to the motif of imperial transfer from Constantinople to three other cities (including Thessaloniki) in *Last Daniel* §72–3. For an analysis of this tripartite division, see Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 328.

ceremonial abdication. Accordingly, no good or pious Roman ruler follows the abdication.³³¹ Not only that, but also imperial restoration will be utterly impossible. My sense is that the abdication marks the point following which there is no chance left to reverse or even to halt the gradual and ultimate decline of the empire. Thus, the abdication motif becomes associated with imperial termination rather than with the *katechōn*, which holds back the Antichrist.³³²

On the basis of my analysis of the source material I present a table in which I compile the most important motifs associated with the Last Roman Emperor *topos*. The motifs are ordered according to the eschatological narrative scheme which all authors fairly follow. The apocalypses are arranged in the order of the hypothetical timeline that I established, starting with the original Syriac *Apocalypse* and ending with *Last Daniel*.³³³

Figure 2. Structural comparison of motifs associated with the Last Roman Emperor *topos*

³³¹ Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” 235.

³³² In order to understand Nikephoros’ interpretation of the *katechōn* and to better appreciate the supposedly encyclopedic nature of the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* it might prove crucial to investigate the relationship between the *Vita* and its apocalyptic section.

³³³ The chronological sequence of the apocalypses can be disputed. For the sake of brevity, however, I do not present an argumentation here but rather refer to my arguments above in which I deal with the dating of the respective apocalypses.

	Pseudo-Methodius Syr.	Pseudo-Methodius Gr.	Edessan Apocalypse	12 Apostles
Narrative Context	– Blasphemous Ishmaelite proposition	– Arab defeat during the siege of C/ple	– At the end of the last year of Arab dominion, i.e., in the year 694 (?)	– After a major battle in an Arab civil war
Identity and characteristics	– Last Roman Emperor – Descendent of Alexander the Great and Kūshyat – Second Gideon – Second Jovian		– Victorious Emperor – Descendent of Alexander the Great and Kūshyat – Second Constantine	– Victorious Emperor – Second Constantine
Mode of appearance	– He awakes from sleep after being thought dead		– His appearance is associated with a bridle made of Christ's crucifixion-nails	/
Place of appearance	/		/	/
Engagement with and destruction of the Ishmaelites	– He defeats the Arabs chasing them back into the desert – His sons attack from the West annihilating the Arabs, who remained in Palestine – The surviving Arabs are enslaved		– He attacks from the West, while his son arrives from the South – He defeats the Arabs chasing them to Mecca	– With the alliance of “all the people of the earth” he defeats the Arabs chasing them back into the desert
Aftermath	– Return of captives and displaced – Prosperity – Retaliation against apostates – General peace, joy – Church building – Tax exemptions for the clergy		– Prosperity – General peace and joy – The Roman Empire rules 208 years – Gradual moral decay	– Vigorous rule – General peace – Unification of the Church
Subsequent emperors	/		/	/
Peoples of the North	– Gog/Magog etc. released and defeated by an angel		– Gog/Magog etc. released and annihilated by an angel at Mecca	/
Abdication	– The Last Roman Emperor enters Jerusalem and rules from it for 10 ½ years – Following the first signs of the Antichrist he erects the True Cross on Golgotha and abdicates by placing his crown on top of it		Reversal of order: – The Antichrist appears and debauches all nations (except Edessa) – He is slain by Enoch and Elijah	/
Antichrist	– The Antichrist appears and rules in Jerusalem until Christ throws him into Gehenna	– The Antichrist appears and kills Enoch and Elijah – Christ kills him	– The Last Roman Emperor (King of the Greeks) mounts Golgotha, abdicates as a Second Jovian – Every living thing perishes	/
Last Judgment	– Last Judgment			/

	Diegesis Danielis	Pseudo-Chrysostomos	Daniel καὶ ἔσται
Narrative Context	– Following a prayer to God during an Arab siege on C/ple	– Blasphemous Ishmaelite proposition	– Arabs are called in to support a local fight for the “Rebel city”
Identity and characteristics	– Victorious Emperor – His initial is <i>kappa</i> – He has two sons – He has the name of an animal	– Victorious Emperor – Descendent of Alexander the Great and Kūshyat – A man of “inferior name” – His initial is <i>lambda</i>	– Victorious Emperor – His initial is <i>lambda</i>
Mode of appearance	– God awakes him who was believed dead – He arrives from the East (Persia/Syria) to C/ple	– He appears after being thought dead – He is crowned emperor	Physiognomy: – crooked nose – sweet voice – signs inscribed on his finger – curtailed stature
Place of appearance	/	– He is found due to divine revelation in the Rebel city (Syracuse?)	– He is found due to divine revelation in the Rebel city (Syracuse?)
Engagement with and destruction of the Ishmaelites	– He leads a great exit from C/ple and defeats the Arabs (Dt 32:30) – Enslaving of the surviving Arabs	– He defeats the Arabs – He pursues the Arabs in a joint campaign with the “blond races”	– He defeats the Arabs – Together with the “blond races” he chases them into Palestine, where he defeats them with God’s help in a great battle – Arabs are pursued until <i>Akra</i>
Aftermath	– Church building – Military equipment used as agricultural tools – Prosperity, peace – The Victorious Emperor dies peacefully after a 33 year rule	– The Victorious Emperor goes to Rome – Benefactions to the people – He proceeds to C/ple chasing away the c/plitan emperor	– The Victorious Emperor consolidates his power in Rome – Benefactions to the people – The c/plitan emperor and “another emperor” is slain – The Victorious Emperor enters C/ple – Peace, Prosperity, church building – He dies a natural death after a 32-year rule
Subsequent emperors	– Man of the North rules lawlessly – A tall, foreign man (M) or a foul, foreign woman (B) rules in C/ple – Prophecy of the flooding of C/ple	/	– Gradual moral decay – A emperor rules peacefully
Peoples of the North	/	/	– Gog/Magog etc. arrive and are annihilated by an angel – Prophecy about the flooding of C/ple
Abdication	/	/	– Earthquakes, famines, wars – Upon the first sign of the Antichrist the Last Roman Emperor mounts Golgotha and abdicates
Antichrist	– On the arrival, characteristics and rule of the Antichrist – Jewish reign – Three holy men are slain	– The Antichrist appears and rules in Jerusalem – Enoch and Elijah are slain – Christ kills the Antichrist	– The Antichrist appears – Enoch and Elijah are slain
Last Judgment	– Last Judgment		

	Seven-Hilled	Andreas Salos Apocalypse	Last Daniel
Narrative Context	- A Roman civil war is fought in the streets of C/ple	- Following the statement that C/ple will never fall to invaders	- Various foreign factions fight in the streets of C/ple
Identity and characteristics	- Last Roman Emperor - A lion, whose name is <i>John</i> - He is poor, old and thought dead	- Victorious Emperor	- Victorious Emperor
Mode of appearance	- He awakes from sleep through an earthquake - Angelic coronation	- God raises him from poverty	- Physiognomy: - grey-haired, just, compassionate, dressed in poor clothes - rough by appearance, gentle in character - He has a nail in his right leg <hr/> - Angelic coronation
Place of appearance	/	/	He is found in the north of C/ple standing on two pillars
Engagement with and destruction of the Ishmaelites	- He defeats the Arabs and pursues them (Dt 32:30)	- Peace and prosperity - Military equipment used as agricultural tools - Then, he defeats the Arabs and achieves great victories	- He defeats all foreign factions including the Arabs, who are divided into three parts
Aftermath	- He rebuilds churches with the support of his four sons - Treasuries are opened and distributed - Prosperity - Peace - All Christians have one emperor - He rules for 30 years	- He rules for 32 years - In the 12 years he grants tax exemptions - Church building - Benefactions to the people - He persecutes the Jews and upholds orthodoxy	- Treasuries are opened and distributed - Prosperity - Military equipment used as agricultural tools - The Victorious Emperor dies a natural death after a 32-year rule
Subsequent emperors	- After 12 years the Last Roman Emperor goes to Jerusalem - His four sons wage a devastating civil war	- A son of lawlessness rules for 3 ½ years - Anti-Christian (pagan) emperor rules - A good Ethiopian emperor reigns for 12 years, builds churches; time of general joy	- His successor abdicates in Jerusalem after a 12-year reign
Abdication	- The Last Roman Emperor abdicates surrounded by many witnesses erecting the Cross and Crown on Golgotha	- A good Arabian emperor reigns for 1 year before he reassembles the True Cross and abdicates on Golgotha - Civil war breaks out among three young men	- Civil war breaks out among the four sons of the abdicating emperor
Peoples of the North	- Gog/Magog etc. arrive	- A foul woman rules, who burns icons, crosses, gospels; during her reign C/ple sinks into the sea - Imperial power transfers to Rome, Thessaloniki, Sylaion	- A foul woman rules in C/ple - C/ple sinks into the sea - other cities follow suit
Antichrist	- The Antichrist appears	- The Antichrist appears - Enoch, Elijah, and John are slain	- The Antichrist rules - Famines and earthquakes
Last Judgment	- Second Coming	- Last Judgment	- Last Judgment

CONCLUSION

Based on the material surveyed here, the following conclusions regarding the development of the Last Roman Emperor motif can be drawn. First of all, it is intriguing to see how differently the Syriac and the Greek apocalypses approach the *topos* of the Last Roman Emperor. The Syriac sources particularly address the typological functions of the Last Emperor in so far as he is portrayed as a second Gideon, a second Constantine, a second Jovian, and a second Alexander the Great. The Greek apocalypses, on the other hand, pay special attention to the more concrete personality, physiognomy, and individual characteristics of the Pseudo-Methodian Roman emperor. All the *Visions of Daniel* dealt with here show a marked interest in characterizing the Victorious Emperor. One gets the impression that the Syriac texts are preoccupied with legitimating the Roman emperorship *per se* as the liberating agent of divine providence, while the Greek texts meet its audience's interest in learning about the specifics of the emperor who would initiate the eschatological end drama.

This observation can be explained in part by a reference to proximity. Syrian authors were far removed from the emperor's residence and therefore unable to witness his appearance during triumphal processions or at public celebrations. The Constantinopolitan populace, on the other hand, was accustomed to see the emperor often in ritualized performances such as his presence in the *kathisma* from where he participated in watching the spectacles of the Hippodrome.

Furthermore, the Syriac apocalypses, provided their dating to the very late seventh century is correct, were composed in a climate of heightened ideological polemic with the Muslim hegemony and consequently replied in rather abstract terms promoting an ideal Last Roman Emperor without specifying his individual characteristics. The Greek tradition, on the other hand, was persistently interested in the personal attributes of the Last Roman Emperor, because these attributes were understood as the factors that determined his fitness to rule. I understand the later additions that emphasize the mature age, the humble origin, and benevolent character of the emperor³³⁴ as attempts to ensure the eschatological ruler's moral aptitude to receive the divine grace that ensures victory and success. Wisdom, humility, and benevolence

³³⁴ See Figure 2 for an overview of these motifs.

were qualities that a Byzantine emperor had to possess in order to be considered the legitimate incumbent of the emperorship.³³⁵

As a result, Byzantine apocalypses increasingly specified attributes and assigned them primarily to the Victorious Emperor figure.³³⁶ While some of these attributes were certainly taken from related traditions, others were inspired by historical fact. As in the case of the *Diegesis Danielis* there was a tendency to historicize the Victorious Emperor by identifying this literary *topos* with a historical character such as Leo III. This development warranted the veracity of the attributes (e.g., initial letter of the name, arrival from the East, etc.) while attaining authority through descriptions that functioned as *vaticinia ex eventu*. It is extremely difficult to judge which new attribute is based on real historical fact and which on purely literary adaptation or innovation. This is true not only for attributes but also for characters. However, the fact might help that the only specific characterizations of any eschatological figure in the *Visions of Daniel* pertain to the Victorious Emperor. According to the exegetical principle of particularity: the richer the motif's description, the higher the probability that it refers to a historical reality. For instance, in the case of the *Diegesis Danielis* there are good reasons to consider that the respective descriptions refer to Leo III (or in the case of manuscript M to Theodosius III). At the same time, the subsequent figures such as the foul woman or the abdicating Last Roman Emperor are far less detailed and therefore not likely to be historical characters.³³⁷

It can be observed that the eschatological work list of the Pseudo-Methodian Last Roman Emperor was gradually redistributed among various successive emperors. In the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* the duties of appearing at a moment of great distress, defeating the Arabs, ushering in a period of great prosperity and peace, resisting the onslaught of the unclean peoples of North, and ultimately, abdicating after a ten-and-a-half-year rule in Jerusalem are all assigned

³³⁵ See Steffen Dieffenbach, "Frömmigkeit und Kaiserakzeptanz im frühen Byzanz," *Saeculum* 47 (1996): 35–66 (esp. 58–60), who focuses on the aspect of piety and identifies it as a crucial component for legitimately holding the office of emperor. Dieffenbach does not neglect to mention that the emperor's philanthropy and benevolence are also much-needed qualities.

³³⁶ These characterizations are first and foremost: his arrival by divine revelation, the initial of his name, his poor origin, his physiognomy, his victory over the Arabs and his prosperous 32-year rule.

³³⁷ I have to emphasize again that I consider the foul woman to be, first and foremost, a literary *topos*. The circumstance that the foul woman appears in connection with Constantinople, which is portrayed as the harlot of Rev 17 (see *supra* n.251), and the fact that this motif reappears in numerous apocalypses (*Diegesis Danielis* §8.1–2(B), *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 864A–D (lines 162–91), *Last Daniel* §66–68) demonstrate the topical character of the foul woman. I stay reserved on the possibility that the historical figure of Empress Irene contributed to the development of this motif.

to one unspecified Roman Emperor.³³⁸ It appears that the dissociation of these functions happened gradually. The *Edessan Apocalypse* does not explicitly dissociate the Victorious Emperor from the abdicating Last Roman Emperor, while the *Diegesis Danielis* and the *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* both keep silent about the abdication scene. That is, these last two texts avoid speculating about the relationship between the Roman Empire and the ultimate eschatological end drama revolving around the unclean peoples of the North and the Antichrist. What matters for these pseudonymous authors is, first and foremost, liberation from the Arab threat. One finds an unambiguous dissociation of the liberating from the abdicating function in *Daniel καὶ ἔσται*. This division became part of the subsequent tradition, as can be seen in the cases of *Last Daniel* and the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse*.³³⁹ The *Seven-Hilled Apocalypse* is an exemption from this development.

The trend of dissociation might be explained with the authors' intent to prolong the Roman Empire's existence. That is, by distinguishing the Victorious Emperor from the abdicating Last Roman Emperor the apocalyptist might have attempted to rewrite the history of the future: in contrast to the Pseudo-Methodian scheme, the liberating emperor who is about to arrive differs from the last Roman sovereign who will terminate the last earthly kingdom and introduce the very last chapters of the eschatological drama. That is, behind the fragmentation of the Last Roman Emperor motif might lie a reluctance to see the world end just yet. The notion of rewriting the history of the future might seem less paradoxical if one considers the divine omnipotence which could, in theory, intervene and change the cosmic plan in accordance with the petitioner's plea to delay the ultimate imperial act of abdication.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* does not indicate anywhere that there is a succession of emperors.

³³⁹ In this respect the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* is exceptional text because it presents no less than seven consecutive imperial rulerships: three good emperors, who divide among each other the eschatological functions of the Pseudo-Methodian scheme, two interim wicked emperors, one triumvirate of quarreling despots and, finally, a foul empress. Because of the difficulty of dating this apocalypse it is impossible to say whether it presents a later stage in the dissociation of the various eschatological functions or whether it stands at the beginning of this process and provided the inspiration for such dissociation on the basis of distinguishing the various typological characters that lie behind these functions. The principle of *lectio brevior* would suggest that the division into seven discrete parts is a later development that follows a simpler division into less numerous parts, as can be seen, for instance, in *Daniel καὶ ἔσται*. What seems clear, however, is that the scheme of sevenfold division is derived from the *Revelation of John*.

³⁴⁰ Cf. Magdalino, "The Year 1000," 266–7.

Reverses of order in the eschatological timeline occur frequently. For instance, the Edessan fragment places the imperial abdication after the advent and defeat of the Antichrist.³⁴¹ Moreover, the eschatological section of *Andrew the Fool* and *Last Daniel* continue their political narrative despite the fact that the Last Roman Emperor has already abdicated. That is, the abdication appears to be increasingly less instrumental for the advent of the Antichrist and is rather perceived as an event which marks the watershed, after which imperial restoration becomes utterly impossible. In other words, the abdication came to lose its direct association with the *katechōn* and began to signify the gradual but final disintegration of imperial power.³⁴² In the case of the gradual termination of the empire, one can see a further attempt to delay the ultimate end.

Several apocalypses show an increasing concern about civil war. Often, the Victorious Emperor appears in a war-torn imperial capital (*Diegesis Danielis*, *Seven-hilled Daniel*, *Last Daniel*). *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* and the *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* portray internal strife between the Victorious Emperor and the emperor presiding in Constantinople. Moreover, the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* as well as *Last Daniel* particularly emphasize the internal strife that follows the imperial abdication. Arguably, this motif further supports the notion of irreversible and gradual deterioration.

An interesting observation can be made in connection with the Victorious Emperor's sons. In the first Greek redaction of Pseudo-Methodius, in the *Edessan Apocalypse*, in the *Diegesis Danielis*, and in the *Seven-Hilled Daniel* the liberating Roman emperor is said to be supported by his son(s).³⁴³ In the case of *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* and the *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse*, the sons of the liberating Roman emperor are not mentioned. However, in their stead the “blond races” are said to assist the Roman emperor in defeating the Arabs.³⁴⁴ Thus, it can be argued that a tradition existed which replaced the Victorious Emperor's sons with the “blond races.” That is,

³⁴¹ Another instance can be found in the *Seven-Hilled Daniel* and *Apocalypse of Andreas Salos*, both of which share the inverted sequence of first mentioning the abdication and then the arrival of Gog and Magog.

³⁴² This is despite the fact that the abdication scenes in *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* §4.9, *Seven-Hilled Daniel* §2.22, and *Last Daniel* §61 all employ the phrasing of 1 Cor 15:24 saying: παραδώσει οὐκ παραδότην τὴν βασιλείαν (αὐτοῦ) τῷ θεῷ. Also, the phrasing in the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 860C (lines 120–1) clearly refers to this biblical passage, which Pseudo-Methodius had correlated with the *katechōn* (*Apocalypse* [14] 2–3). On the use of this Pauline verse, see Kmosko, “Rätsel,” 285–6; Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 165; Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse* (CSCO 541), 29–30, n.IX,7(3), 37, n.X,4(9); Reinink, “Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende vom römischen Endkaiser,” 101, n.87.

³⁴³ See *Apocalypse* [13] 11,9–10; *Edessan Apocalypse* 223 (f. 99r); *Diegesis Danielis* §5.10; *Seven-Hilled Daniel* §2.10–14.

³⁴⁴ See *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* §2.13–14 and *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse* §5.7–10.

an alliance with the Latin West, which predates the era of the Crusades, appears to be connected with the motif of the Last Roman Emperor's sons.³⁴⁵

Furthermore, the notion of the sons develops into a theme that accounts for internal strife. Already in the *Seven-Hilled Daniel*, but also in *Last Daniel* and the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* the descendants of the Victorious Emperor quarrel among themselves, which results in a devastating civil war. Behind this development might lie the notion of Alexander the Great's four generals (or sons).³⁴⁶ The *diadochi* were renowned for quarreling over the remains of Alexander's empire. Also, one might suppose here an allusion to the pre-Constantinian tetrarchy, which was similarly notorious for producing crises.³⁴⁷ It becomes clear that the cohesion and integrity of the empire of Alexander the Great or that of Constantine the Great was preceded or followed by quarrelsome internal strife. If Constantine established order and unity by putting an end to the tetrarchy, then the final disintegration of the empire would be due to a tetrarchial arrangement. All this suggests that the process of imperial decline came to be understood as a reversal of an imperial rise. In this respect, one can see that the Last Roman Emperor *topos* was continuously considered to be the eschatological antitype of a victorious Constantine and Alexander the Great.

Originally, Constantine the Great was only implicitly addressed in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. It was in the *Edessan Apocalypse* and in the *Gospels of the Twelve Apostles* that the association of the Last Roman Emperor *topos* with the image of first Christian emperor was worked out. The motif of the bridle, the reference to a (re)united Church, and the emphasis on effective military leadership shifted the typological focus away from Gideon and replaced it with Constantine the Great. The association of the Last Emperor with a second Gideon was subsequently lost.

The apocalyptic texts examined here clearly show an increasing tendency to introduce elements from the *Revelation of John* into the Pseudo-Methodian scheme. The introduction of the two (or at times three) witnesses from Rev 11:3–13 can already be seen in the *Edessan Apocalypse* and the first Greek redaction. The motif of the foul woman, the notion of the sinking

³⁴⁵ It is telling that apocalypses of Sicilian origin promote the notion of a military alliance with Latin factions.

³⁴⁶ *Apocalypse* [9] 1. The Greek speaks about Alexander's four sons (οἱ τέσσαρες παῖδες αὐτοῦ), who inherit his rule. The Syriac, on the other hand, mentions Alexander's four general (i.e., the *diadochi*).

³⁴⁷ Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 328.

of the Seven-Hilled Constantinople, and the division of the Last Roman Emperor *topos* into seven consecutive rulers provide further instances of this tendency.

It is important to recognize that the Greek apocalypses show a marked interest in the fate of the capital.³⁴⁸ While the Syriac *Apocalypse* does not concentrate on Constantinople but rather on Jerusalem and the Near East, all Byzantine apocalypses surveyed here focus on the events that would eventually come about in the imperial capital.³⁴⁹ As shown above, the first Greek redaction contains an interpolation which relates the siege of Constantinople and the prophecy that the Ishmaelites will enter through the Xylokerkos gate and advance as far as the Forum of the Ox.³⁵⁰ As a result, the Xylokerkos gate,³⁵¹ the *Forum Bovis*,³⁵² and the (also mentioned) Xērolophos, that is, the seventh hill of Constantinople, became associated with apocalyptic events. As Albrecht Berger and Wolfram Brandes have properly remarked this prophecy came to shape the city's urban planning and outlook throughout Byzantine history and beyond.³⁵³ For instance, the Xērolophos was later on regarded as the only Constantinopolitan remain which would survive the eschatological flood that would annihilate the imperial city.³⁵⁴ The fact of its very name might have contributed to its characterization as the only place escaping the great devulge since “xeros” means “dry.”³⁵⁵ As a result of this apocalyptic association, it was said that

³⁴⁸ The apocalypses that are presumably of Sicilian origin (i.e., *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* and the *Pseudo-Chrysostomos Apocalypse*) pay only moderate attention to Constantinople. This indicates, as one might expect, that provincial apocalypses were slightly less interested in the fate of the imperial capital. It also suggests that the apocalypses that devote much attention to the Seven-Hilled City were composed with a Constantinopolitan audience in mind. Cf. Mango, *Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome*, 207–8.

³⁴⁹ In the Syriac *Apocalypse* (and in its Greek redaction) there are references to “Rome” (V.8) and “Great Rome” (V.4). These mentions are adjacent to references to Thessalonica, Illyria, and the Black Sea, which indicate that what is meant here is the New Rome, i.e., Constantinople. However, Constantinople plays no part in the eschatological end drama.

³⁵⁰ *Apocalypse* [13] 9.

³⁵¹ Most notably, Isaac II (r. 1185–1195, 1203–1204) is said to have ordered the Xylokerkos to be walled up as a preventive measure to ensure that crusading Germans would not enter the city; see Jan L. van Dieten, ed. *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 404, 6–7.

³⁵² The motif of the mooing Ox which was inserted into *Apocalypse* [13] 9,4–5 (τότε Βοῦς βοήσει σφόδρα καὶ Ξηρόλαφος κραυγᾶσει) became a standard motif reappearing, for instance, in the *Seven-Hilled Daniel* §2.3 (although in modified form, καὶ ὁ Ξηρόλ<ο>φος κραυγᾶσει καὶ τὸ σταθόριν (?) εἶπη) and in *Last Daniel* §45 (τότε Βοῦς βοήσει σφόδρα καὶ Ξηρόλοφος θρηνηήσει).

³⁵³ See Albrecht Berger, “Das apokalyptische Konstantinopel. Topographisches in apokalyptischen Schriften der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit,” in *Endzeiten: Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen*, ed. Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 136–7 and Brandes, “Kaiserprophetien und Hochverrat,” 193–5.

³⁵⁴ *Last Daniel* §70. Cf. *Diegesis Danielis* §9.4–6 and *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 868B (lines 243–54).

³⁵⁵ Berger, “Das apokalyptische Konstantinopel,” 144.

a huge stone stood in the vicinity of the Xērolophos which contained “the graved histories about the eschatological stories of the city and its captures.”³⁵⁶

The *Diegesis Danielis*, *Daniel καὶ ἔσται*, *Last Daniel*, and the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* all mention the city’s ultimate submergence into the sea.³⁵⁷ The development to integrate the sinking of the imperial capital into the eschatological scheme was, in all likelihood, motivated by Rev 18:21, which describes the eventual sinking of Seven-Hilled Babylon. Due to the fact that Constantinople was gradually identified with the Seven-Hilled (*Heptalophos*) City, this biblical prophecy came to be understood as a testimony about the ultimate destiny of the capital.³⁵⁸ Additionally, in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* there are three cataclysmic events in world history: the Great Flood, the invasion of the Midiantes, and finally the Ishmaelite conquest. Seen in the Pseudo-Methodian typological framework one can easily speculate that just as the Muslim Arabs are the eschatological repetition of the ancient Midianites, so too is the submergence of the Roman capital the typological antitype of the Great Flood. At the same time, one should not forget about the possible influence of oracular traditions which prophesy the sinking of various cities and islands.³⁵⁹

Arguably, the central role that Constantinople came to play in the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition was amplified by the Arab expeditions against Constantinople in the seventh and eighth centuries.³⁶⁰ In fact, Muslim eschatology focused on the capital’s eventual capture and considered the end of the world being dependant on its fall into Muslim hands.³⁶¹ Consequently, Constantinople became the new focal point of eschatological expectations of both Christians and Muslims. As a result, the fate of the capital and the actions of the Last Roman Emperor became increasingly linked. First, the emperor was said to arrive from the East to the capital (*Diegesis*

³⁵⁶ Theodor Preger, ed. *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), Vol. 2, 176–7 (§47).

³⁵⁷ *Diegesis Danielis* §9.4–6, §12.19, *Daniel καὶ ἔσται* §3.10, §4.24, *Last Daniel* §70, and *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* 868B (lines 243–54). See also Preger, ed. *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*. Vol. 2, 190 (§77).

³⁵⁸ To the best of my knowledge the earliest possible identification of Constantinople with the Seven-Hilled City can be found in the fifth-century Armenian *Seventh Vision of Daniel*, which tells about the city’s wickedness and subsequent destruction. However, the reference to the Seven-Hilled City is equivocal and might also refer to Rome. See DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 102–3 and Mango, *Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome*, 203. On the identification of the Byzantine megalopolis with the Seven-Hilled city, see Berger, “Das apokalyptische Konstantinopel,” 139–46.

³⁵⁹ For examples, see Wolfram Brandes, “Das „Meer“ als Motiv in der byzantinischen apokalyptischen Literatur,” in *Griechenland und das Meer. Beiträge eines Symposions in Frankfurt im Dezember 1996*, ed. E. Chrysos et al. (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 1999), 127–8.

³⁶⁰ Of course, Constantinople appeared in earlier apocalypses as well. For instance, in the *Oracle of Baalbek* 14 (lines 94–5). See further Mango, *Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome*, 203. However, it was not in the focus of the apocalyptic narrative.

³⁶¹ See Vasiliev, “Medieval Ideas of the End of the World,” 472–6.

Danielis §5.5–8) in order to fend off the besieging Ishmaelites, then he was said to be crowned emperor in Constantinople (*Seven-Hilled Daniel* §2.7, *Last Daniel* §49), and, in at least one apocalypse, he would even be revealed within the city itself (*Last Daniel* §47). That is, the Victorious Emperor’s function became increasingly centered on the defense of the capital and on imperial restoration. At the same time, the function of representing the Roman Empire became more and more associated with Constantinople. As a result, the Last Roman Emperor could abdicate without the immediate evaporation of imperial power. In the case of the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* and *Last Daniel* the Seven-Hilled City outlived its Last Roman Emperor.

In conclusion, it can be asserted that the apocalyptic texts studied here show a tendency to fragment the Last Roman Emperor motif and delay the ultimate end of the world by prolonging the eschatological decline of the Roman Empire. What mattered most after the imperial restoration by the Victorious Emperor was the protraction of imperial order. As Gerhard Podskalsky put it:

Im Brennpunkt der Erwartung lag darum nicht die Umkehr der Herrschaftsverhältnisse, nicht revolutionäre Utopie als anarchisches Korrektiv hierarchischer Strukturen, sondern Prolongation, Festigung und Ausbau, kurz: Verewigung des schon Realiserten.³⁶²

In the attempt to work on conceptual models to prolong the Roman Empire, Byzantine apocalyptists used and reused certain eschatological schemes and motifs that belonged to a fairly well-defined repertoire of apocalyptic imagery. The persistent use of specific motifs led to the perpetuation of the expectations and sentiments they evoked. Consequently, the continued application of the Pseudo-Methodian Last Roman Emperor *topos* contributed to the protraction of the seventh-century apocalyptic sentiment, which was characterized by an eschatological struggle with Islam. That is to say, by becoming a vital and indispensable theme of the apocalyptic tradition the Last Roman Emperor motif promoted “politico-religious irredentism”³⁶³ that conditioned Byzantine eschatological thought for centuries. As Magdalino put it: “In a word, Byzantium never really got over the fact that the world did not end with the Arab conquest.”³⁶⁴

³⁶² Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reicheschatologie*, 102. Cf. Brandes, “Endzeitvorstellungen und Lebenstrost,” 58.

³⁶³ Alexander, “Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works,” 60.

³⁶⁴ Magdalino, “The History of the Future,” 31.

With all the above said, much is still left unmentioned. I will have to leave various issues for further research. For one, it is imperative to continue to evaluate the source material. Most notably, the Leonine oracles need to be examined for their contribution to the Last Roman Emperor *topos*. Furthermore, certain motifs still need to be explained. For instance, the motifs of the “sleeping snake” (*Seven-Hilled Daniel* §1.17, *Last Daniel* §25), and the description of the Victorious Emperor who has “signs inscribed on his finger” (*Daniel* καὶ ἔσται §2.1) need to be investigated. Moreover, the development of the Last Emperor motif needs to be considered in its inter-religious context. The Muslim equivalent of the Pseudo-Methodian Last Roman Emperor is the Mahdī, the “rightly guided one.” Just before the composition of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, the Shī‘ī al-Mukhtār, who revolted against Umayyad rule, proclaimed Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya to be the Mahdī, that is, the true heir to the Muslim community. It has been argued that al-Mukhtār’s usage of the term Mahdī was pregnant with messianic connotations promoting, for the first time, a Muslim redeemer figure who would restore Islam to its initial perfection.³⁶⁵ At the same time, there also appear to have also been Jewish expectations for the appearance of a messianic figure.³⁶⁶ That is, the historical context of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* might reveal still more about the genesis of the Last Roman Emperor motif than has been appreciated so far. Apart from the historical aspect, a topical comparison of the motifs associated with the Mahdī might elucidate not only certain motifs used in Byzantine apocalypses but might additionally demonstrate that apocalyptic *topoi* (especially polemic ones) are rhetorical devices that operate in a discourse environment which does not know hermetic demarcation. To this ambitious approach I have contributed here by investigating the Last Roman Emperor motif in the early Byzantine apocalyptic tradition.

³⁶⁵ Saïd Amir Arjomand, “Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classic Period,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* Vol. 2, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1998), 248–51.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 247. See also *supra* n. 61.

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