

Apocalypse and reform from late antiquity to the Middle Ages. Edited by Matthew Gabriele and James T. Palmer. Pp. x + 234 incl. 3 tables. London–New York: Routledge, 2019. £110. 978 1 138 68402 7
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In the final entry in this volume of collected essays, Jay Rubenstein decries ‘the preference of modern historians of apocalyptic thought to focus on millenarianism and chronological prediction more generally’ (p. 225). Such an approach, he argues, leads to significant distortion, either by its overemphasis on fanatical outbreaks of apocalyptic fervour, such as the alleged ‘terrors of the year 1000’, or conversely by its privileging of an Augustinian anti-apocalyptic eschatology as the dominant hermeneutic of the early medieval period.

In contrast, the ten essays included in Mathew Gabriele and James Palmer’s *Apocalypse and reform* argue that the use of apocalyptic terminology in the world of late antiquity and its medieval continuation was both much more pervasive and far less heterodox than commonly assumed. Indeed, apocalyptic language during this time period was primarily employed to encourage moral or institutional reform. The volume is organised chronologically, beginning with Veronika Wieser’s examination of the *Chronicle* of Hydatius of c. 468 and concluding with Jehangir Malegam’s discussion of Augustinian reformers of the twelfth century, bookended by Palmer and Gabriele’s introduction to the volume and an afterword by Rubenstein. For the most part, they cohere together remarkably well, each entry revolving in some way around, in Rubenstein’s words, ‘the complexity and real sophistication of premodern eschatology’ (p. 224).

While many of the essays are case studies which further the volume’s purpose by focusing on a particular person or time period, several contributions stand out in particular. Immo Warntjes’s entry ‘The final countdown and the reform of the liturgical calendar in the early Middle Ages’ (pp. 51–76) argues, *contra* Richard Landes, that the replacement of AM (*anno mundi*) calendrical reckonings by the Dionysiac system in the seventh and eighth centuries was not due to the supposed crisis of a looming apocalyptic countdown, but was rather the by-product of a liturgical reform programme driven by the need for church unity. Matthew Gabriele’s ‘This time: maybe this time: biblical commentary, monastic historiography, and lost cause-ism at the turn of the first millennium’ (pp. 183–204), on the other hand, focuses on how the Carolingian empire perceived itself as the final remnant of Roman imperial authority whose fall would initiate the end. Using the evidence of five monastic texts written during its failing years, he demonstrates how its defenders utilised biblical typology to provide hope of an imperial revival: ‘*This time. Maybe this time. The Franks would rise again*’ (p. 196).

In his ‘Afterword’, Jay Rubenstein skilfully incorporates each of the preceding essays to make his case that modern studies of apocalyptic rhetoric in the premodern world are hampered by modern assumptions about the implications of the term. ‘Far more challenging to the imagination’ of modern minds than ‘the vision of Christ appearing in a scientifically explicable nuclear explosion’, he writes, ‘is the [medieval] apocalypse of a world reformed’ (p. 227). The result is a well-crafted, tightly-focused volume which provides a

necessary course correction to the academic study of the apocalypse in late antiquity and the medieval period.

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The making of medieval history. Edited by Graham Loud and Martial Staub. Pp. xvi + 240 incl. 30 ills. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer (for York Medieval Press), 2017. £25 (paper). 978 1 903153 70 3

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Each of the eleven essays collected here considers ways in which phenomena in medieval history have been distorted by their modern interpreters. At best, as in Peter Biller's homage to Marc Bloch and the pitfalls of translated nomenclature, the effect is to expose the 'historicist' or 'presentist' agenda that remains not so much a blight but a defining feature of even the most sophisticated explorations of the human past. By focusing on three key terms ('religion', 'popular religion' and 'heresy'), Biller reveals what are essentially twentieth-century impulses, in these instances serving to reify faith, to dignify the lives of the laity, and to equate 'heresy' with 'dissent' and hence with an underlying Marxisant agenda that celebrates popular or local resistance to hegemonic norms. Just as the modern obsession with 'popular' religion risks concealing the 'massive condescension' with which medieval (and not so medieval) clergy approached the laity, so, Biller argues, the medieval understanding of *religio*, as 'worship' rather than 'creed', renders the study of inter-faith relations in the Middle Ages peculiarly vulnerable to 'epistemological creep'. With likewise broad focus, Jinty Nelson calls for more imagination in our treatment of a Middle Ages in constant dialogue with, indeed defined by its distance from, modernity. Despite its homiletic tone, this is an essay whose practical demonstrations tend towards the now somewhat frayed globalist *clichés* of migration, plague and climate. Globalism and materialism (both dialectical and otherwise), it might be noted, remain disturbingly close bedfellows. Returning us from the astral plane to the splintering timbers of humanity, Ian Wood probes the medieval fantasies devised by various nineteenth-century novelists (Scott, Chateaubriand, Sismondi, Thierry, Manzoni, Felix Dahn and, more surprisingly, Wilkie Collins), a useful supplement to Wood's *Modern origins of the early Middle Ages*. Patrick Geary emphasises the significance of ethnicity as a defining feature of post-Roman Europe's departure from the classical past, here restating one of the central themes of his *The myth of nations* (2002). By attacking the modern 'Eurocentric' equation of Christendom with 'the West', he also offers an introduction to Michael Borgolte's unashamedly astral plea to set western European culture in broader monotheistic context, extending not just from Ireland to Kiev but from the Sahara to the Ganges. Two complementary essays, by Bastien Schlüter and Joep Leerssen, build upon a rich literature (not least Camilla Kaul on the Kyffhäuser monument) to explore the nineteenth-century manipulation of the myth of Frederick Barbarossa. In neo-Ghibelline circles Barbarossa was inevitably interpreted as forerunner to 'Barbablanca' (the Prussian Wilhelm I). Hence, as Leerssen reveals, at the extravagantly redecorated Kaiserpfalz at Goslar (1867–97), not only were the Hapsburgs entirely air-brushed from the German past, but Hanover's failure to support Prussia in the war of 1866