

TSVETELIN STEPANOV, *Waiting for the End of the World. European Dimensions, 950–1200*, translated by DARIA MANOVA (*East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450*, 57). Leiden – Boston: Brill 2019. 364 + xviii pp. – ISBN: 978-90-04-34393-1 (Hardback: \$202)

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The stated subject matter of the book is the literary motif of collective eschatological protagonists, i.e., Gog and Magog, the Ishmaelites, and the Blond Nations, which formed a standard and prominent element in medieval apocalyptic literature. TSVETELIN STEPANOV seeks to present a synthesis of the numerous traditions that concern the theme of eschatological peoples in its “European dimensions,” focusing on the tenth through twelfth centuries. He positions himself against “Marxist” (p. xiv) and “positivist” (pp. xi, xiv, 9, 11, 304) scholars, who either neglect altogether or misinterpret the apocalyptic material. The purpose of the book is to offer a “macro-perspective” on “a common religious-philosophical and spiritual phenomenon” of the entirety of Europe (p. xi). It is said to be followed by a second volume, which will focus on the cult of the Archangel Michael in its “European dimensions.” In this review, I first highlight the theoretical hazards of STEPANOV’s approach. I then evaluate its methodological and argumentative quality and finally survey the contents of the book.

### **Theoretical Hazards**

The purpose of the book is to survey the “European dimensions” of medieval eschatological traditions. The notion of “Europe” is delineated along geographical markers, which stretch from the territory of Islamic Iberia to the Islamic Volga region, encompassing the Western and Eastern parts of the European continent. Armenia and Georgia fall outside the author’s idea of “Europe,” although the region north of the Caucasus is included. It is remarkable that “Europe” is only defined along geographical markers although the intention of the book is to establish that eschatology formed “a common religious-philosophical and spiritual phenomenon” (p. xi). The reader may wonder why “Europe” is defined by geography rather than by the “(presumably) pan-European phenomenon” (p. 11, also pp. xii, 252,

299). After all, the term “Europe” does not appear in the sources; the author introduces the “European” perspective in order to “expand the borders of the European civilized world” (p. 14), which begs the question why geography was chosen to demarcate an intellectual phenomenon. Apart from that, the author’s choice of words seems, at times, reminiscent of a neo-colonial approach to history, postulating that Europe embodies the civilized world and, *ipso facto*, whatever falls outside it, qualifies as uncivilized. For instance, STEPANOV opposes the “realm of the civilized ‘people of the Book’” with uncivilized paganism (p. 180). Elsewhere, he talks about the “aggressive Islamic world” (p. 76) and the “newly enlightened and Christianized people” (p. 106). Such biased terminology advances a Eurocentric viewpoint that serves to eulogize Bulgarian history rather than to understand better the medieval source material. Although STEPANOV declared his primary aim to be the advancement of the current political project of European integration (p. xi) through an investigation of the shared intellectual heritage, his survey reads much more like an apology for Bulgaria’s inclusion in the “European civilized world” (p. 14). The reader is given the impression that STEPANOV replaces the Marxist and positivist approaches he opposes with a nationalist and neo-colonial one.<sup>1</sup>

The author properly appreciates the importance of the Biblical frame of reference for apocalyptic and historiographical works (pp. 234, 303). Nevertheless, he makes no use of Biblical commentaries. Instead, he interprets Biblical “topoi and clichés” (p. 127) from the historicist perspective, which focuses on the historical contextualization of a given text or literary motif (p. 211). While this approach has certainly merit, it neglects the continuous exegetical traditions of motifs and texts. Biblical commentaries are of great help in recovering the meaning of medieval literary artifacts. Moreover, the decoding of apocalyptic motifs requires an appreciation of typological ex-

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1. There are a number of expressions that seem to carry a nationalist undertone. For instance, “the Bulgarians did de facto achieve this through the ‘export’ of the Word in Old Church Slavonic (Old Bulgarian) among the Serbs, the Rus’ and other Eastern-Slavic peoples” (p. 189); “the prosaic fact that it was the Bulgarians who were the first among the Slavic-speaking Eastern-Orthodox peoples to legitimately acquire the title of ‘tsar’ [...]” (p. 192); “the northeastern Bulgarian lands had been liberated by Tsar Samuil’s army” (p. 198, similarly p. 209). Despite the outspoken opposition to positivist scholarship, the reader can find positivist residues throughout the book. For example, the repeated emphasis on textual “data” (pp. 135, 148, 177, 187–189, 212, 239, 242, 254, 282–284, 291) treats historical sources as given, positive facts that are decontextualized from their respective transmission histories; it also neglects those sources that have been lost, which is a critical concern when it comes to medieval apocalyptic sources.

egesis.<sup>2</sup> Although STEPANOV adopts ÉVELYNE PATLAGEAN's notion of a "dual Holy Land" (pp. 124, 136, 141f, 150, 182) and summarizes LILIANA MAVRODINOVA's discussion of typology (pp. 207f.), he curiously does not acknowledge the centrality of typological exegesis for apocalyptic writings. He talks about the "contamination" (pp. 164, 219, 260, *passim*) and "distortions" (pp. 212, 220) of *topoi* and clichés, about "archetypal literary storylines" (p. 188) and "imaginary cop[ies] of the Promised Land" (p. 230), as if historical veracity were the only worthwhile aspect of literary motifs.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he labels typologies as "imaginative cognitions" that produced "a psychological effect on the irrational strata in the thoughts and emotions of a person" (pp. 269f). Due to his exclusively historicist approach, STEPANOV overlooks the meaning of various typologies. For instance, he considers it a "seemingly strange choice" (p. 173) that the *Primary Chronicle* juxtaposes Constantine the Great with Michael III. If seen within a typological framework, the strangeness disappears and the association comes to signify that Michael III was presented as a New Constantine. Elsewhere, he rejects the interpretation that the use of the title "khagan" in Bulgarian apocalypses may be a typological construct that refers back to the righteous priest-king ideal of the Old Testament (i.e., Melchizedek). He justifies his rejection with the lack of corroborative evidence (p. 254). Yet this was a common typology in Byzantium and the question of whether the same literary device may be at work in the Bulgarian works deserves closer scrutiny.<sup>4</sup>

2. Typology is a theory of history; it places historical events into the framework of salvation history and constructs reciprocal correspondences between two or more events in such a way that earlier events (types) are seen as the adumbrations of subsequent events (antitypes), which, in turn, function as the fulfillment of their premonitory heralds. Typology introduces patterns of vector-like trajectories into the fabric of history. These patterns convey an eschatological import: the later the corresponding event, the higher its value and eschatological significance. One may liken this interpretative technique to a Matryoshka doll, which consists of a consecutive series of differently sized dolls that are placed one inside another. The largest doll contains the whole series of smaller ones, just like the final antitype contains and fulfills all previous types. Typology is not only applied to Biblical exegesis but also to any other literary genre that pertains to salvation history, such as historiography, hagiography, and apocalyptic literature.

3. The prioritization of historical veracity is apparent throughout the book, esp. pp. 118, 126, 173, 221, 251, 258, 276. The author's historicist conviction is most clearly captured in the verdict that "[...] the real history did not interest this type of people (monks?) in the way it did historians such as Procopius of Caesarea, Menander, [...]" (p. 258).

4. See, for instance, the (probably) ninth-century *Anonymi de rebus Byzantinis vaticinium*, in ATHANASIOS VASSILIEV (ed.), *Anecdota graeco-byzantina, pars prior*. Moscow 1893, pp. 47–50, at p. 48, ll. 27–28 and the thirteenth-century *Narratio mendici*

## Methodological Criticism

The most apparent weakness of the book is its heavy reliance on secondary literature. STEPANOV regularly paraphrases whole sentences and sections. His achievement is to have singled out the authorities of the respective fields, e.g., PAUL MAGDALINO for Byzantium and BERNARD MCGINN for the Latin West. Yet this hardly makes a good monograph. There are neither new sources presented nor are well-known sources interpreted in a new light. It is frequently unclear where the author consulted primary sources and where he merely repeats other scholars' references to them. This is most obvious when STEPANOV copies other scholars' bibliographical mistakes.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the first two-thirds of the book read much like a (linearly arranged) catena of previous scholarship.

The fact that primary sources were not always consulted has led the author to a number of misunderstandings. A few examples should suffice to illustrate this point. Concerning the well-known Last Judgment depiction in the imperial palace, which Emperor Alexios I commissioned, the author wrongly assumes that there is an association between Alexios and the last emperor motif (pp. 93, 145). We know of the mosaic from an epigram recorded by the twelfth-century Byzantine court physician and poet Nicholas Kalliklēs.<sup>6</sup> The epigram does not evoke the last

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*regis*, in WALTER G. BROKKAAR et al., *The Oracles of the Most Wise Emperor Leo & The Tale of the True Emperor (Amstelodamensis graecus VI E 8)*. Amsterdam 2002, pp. 90–101, at p. 94, ll. 62–64, where the savior-emperor is likened to Christ evoking Heb. 7:3, which, in turn, likens the Old Testament priest Melchizedek to Christ.

5. For instance, on p. 142 (“Lolos 1978, 130–132”) STEPANOV repeats the lapsus made by ÉVELYNE PATLAGEAN, *Byzantium’s Dual Holy Land*. In: BINYAMIN Z. KEDAR – R. J. ZWI WERBLOWSKY (eds.), *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land*. Proceedings from the International Conference in Memory of Joshua Prawer. Basingstoke 1998, pp. 112–126, at p. 123, n. 9. The correct reference is: LOLOS 1976, 130–132. Elsewhere (pp. 158, 325), he repeats the typo made by DAVID C. VAN METER, *Selected Documents on Eschatological Expectations and Social Change around the Year 1000*. In: RICHARD LANDES – ANDREW C. GOW – DAVID C. VAN METER (eds.), *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*. Oxford 2003, pp. 337–345, at p. 337 regarding ROBERT HUYGENS’ 1956 article on the Letter on the Hungarians. The correct reference is: ROBERT B. C. HUYGENS, *Un témoin de la crainte de l’an 1000 : la lettre sur les Hongrois*. *Latomus* 15.2 (1956) pp. 225–239. Similarly, the references to Otto of Freising’s *Chronica* (p. 76), to the *Patria Kōnstantinoupoleōs* (p. 149), to “Hes. Opp. 465; Hom. Il. IX, 457; Paus. II, 2” (p. 284) are missing from the final bibliography. Apparently, these references were copied from the secondary readings cited beforehand.

6. Edition in ROBERTO ROMANO (ed.), *Nicola Callicle: Carmi (Collana di Studi e Testi 8)*. Naples 1980, pp. 101–102 (= carmen 24). The epigram has been translated into

emperor topos. Its apocalyptic dimension consists of associating Alexios with Christ, the heavenly judge. Furthermore, STEPANOV claims that seventh-century Jews held the Christian notion of a last, messianic emperor in “high esteem,” as testified by the *Signs (ʿOtot) of Rabbi Šim ʿōn b. Yoḥai* (p. 181). His claim derives from MARTHA HIMMELFARB’s brief survey of this Jewish apocalypse. But he fails to note her emphasis on the Jewish “adaptation” of the Christian motif. What STEPANOV calls a “small change” in the motif, HIMMELFARB recognized as an essential literary inversion that “no Christian would have written.”<sup>7</sup> The Christian motif of a last emperor was not held in “high esteem” but rather in high contempt. What is more, this is a pseudonymous text, like most medieval apocalyptic writings. Therefore, it is deceptive to state that “Simeon bar Yochai wrote not only [the] ‘Signs’, but at least one more work [...]” (p. 181). The failure to consult the sources has also led to the following inaccuracies: STEPANOV does not differentiate between Hippolytos of Rome (d. 235) and Pseudo-Hippolytos (pp. 106, 176, 192); the latter, a pseudonymous author, penned the *Oratio de consummatione mundi et Antichristo* (BHG 812z, CPG 1910). Also, he erroneously attributes the anonymous *Ludus de Antichristo* to Otto of Freising (p. 170), misunderstanding MCGINN’s discussion of the text.<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, he confuses the *Book of Revelation* with the *Gospel of John* (p. 274).

Regarding the translations of primary sources, the reader may be surprised to find an English translation of a section of the so-called Khazar correspondence, which is based not on the original Hebrew but on a Russian translation found online (pp. 26f). Likewise, Arabic and Greek sources were consulted in Russian or Bulgarian translation.<sup>9</sup> One exception is the *Narration on Hagia Sophia*, which has been consulted in the French translation by GILBERT DAGRON (p. 138), although there exists a reliable English translation.<sup>10</sup> The only sources that STEPANOV seems to have consulted

English by PAUL MAGDALINO – ROBERT NELSON, *The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century*. *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982) pp. 123–183, at pp. 124–125.

7. MARTHA HIMMELFARB, *The Apocalypse: A Brief History*. Chichester 2010, pp. 133–134. The passage in question has been translated into English by JOHN C. REEVES, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader (Resources for biblical study 45)*. Atlanta 2005, p. 113.

8. BERNARD MCGINN, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*. New York 1979, pp. 117f.

9. See, for instance, the passage by Michael Psellos’ *Chronographia*, which has been rendered into English from a Bulgarian translation (p. 266).

10. ALBRECHT BERGER (tr.), *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople: The Patria*

in the original are Latin and Church Slavonic texts.

Another weakness of the book is the absence of a central thesis, which translates into a lack of structural and argumentative coherence. Its main argumentative strategy appears to be repetitiveness.<sup>11</sup> For instance, the author supposes that the year 1092 signified the presumed date of the end of the world for both Byzantines and Bulgarians. But he fails to prove this assumption. Instead of pointing to any source material, he simply reiterates his assumption until it appears to be a given (pp. 5, 14, 17, 88, 93, 112, 115, 121, 145, 172, 174, 194, 202, 251, 253, 264, 289, 295).<sup>12</sup> Likewise, he repeats frequently DANIEL VERHELST's view that apocalyptic literature was produced by (presumably erudite) monks and clerics (pp. 6, 17, 30, 75, 113, 121, 137, 157, 164, 176, 179, 181, 183, 187, 188, 191, 200, 230, 250, 252, 256, 262f, 272, 298, 300).<sup>13</sup> VERHELST's statement refers to the Latin West and should not be over-generalized. In particular, it is more than doubtful whether one can infer from the assumption of monastic/clerical authorship that apocalyptic writings did not influence the masses, neither in the West nor in the East (as stated on pp. 6, 253). On the one hand, this inference presumes that authorship and audience are largely coextensive categories, which needs to be proven. On the other hand, the inference is challenged by the historiographical testimonies that give accounts of apocalyptically informed public alarmism and panic.<sup>14</sup>

(Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 24). Cambridge, MA 2013.

11. STEPANOV acknowledges his repetitive style (pp. xiv, 15).

12. It is noteworthy that there is some Byzantine evidence that refutes end-time calculations at the late eleventh century. The *Dioptra* of Philip the Monk denies millenarianism on the basis that by the time of its composition (c. anno 1097 AD = 6605/6 AM) too much time had already elapsed for the end to transpire either after 6000 years after the creation of the world or after 1000 years after the incarnation (or resurrection). Its author argues that the time of the end does not depend on any number of years but on the number of the righteous souls in heaven, following Rev. 14:1–5. The text argues against any acute apocalyptic anxiety in the late eleventh century. For the passage in question, see SPYRIDŌN LAVRIŌTĒS (ed.), *Ἡ Διόπτρα. Ὁ Ἄθως, Ἀγιορειτικὸν περιοδικὸν* 1. Athens 1920, pp. 142–144 (lib. III.6).

13. DANIEL VERHELST, *Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000*. In: RICHARD LANDES – ANDREW C. GOW – DAVID C. VAN METER (eds.), *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*. Oxford 2003, pp. 81–92, at p. 82.

14. For Byzantium, see for instance, RUDOLF KEYDELL (ed.), *Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum libri quinque (Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae 2)*. Berlin 1967, pp. 169–170 (lib. V.5) and VASILE GRECU (ed.), *Ducas. Istoria turco-bizantină (1341–1462) (Scriptores Byzantini 1)*. Bucharest 1958, pp. 363–365 (lib. XXXIX.17–18).

Moreover, STEPANOV speaks at one point (p. 113) about different perceptions of eschatology among monks, nobles, and the common people but fails to substantiate his assessment. The authorship and audience of medieval apocalyptic are thorny issues that requires painstaking scrutiny and not the uncritical reiteration of generalizations.<sup>15</sup>

The book was written in Bulgarian and translated into English by DARIA MANOVA. Apart from the occasional typo and mistaken article,<sup>16</sup> the book uses some idiosyncratic expressions that seem to reveal the author's discomfort with the Greek language. For instance, the expression "basilei" (pp. 8, 50, 151–154, 205, 251, 264) is used to denote "emperors," although the plural of basileus is basileis. A similar case can be found in "topoic" (p. xiii). Also, the transliterations from Greek into Latin are inconsistent.<sup>17</sup>

The final bibliography is vast. Half of the cited literature consists of Bulgarian and Russian scholarship. STEPANOV's heavy reliance on Bulgaro-Russian scholarship is possibly the greatest strength of the book, since it introduces scholarly works that the English-speaking audience is not much familiar with. Notwithstanding, it does not serve the English-speaking reader that references to seminal studies (such as MIRCEA ELIADE's *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, JEAN DELUMEAU's *La peur en Occident*, JOHN MEYENDORFF's *Byzantine Theology*, or PETER BROWN's *The World of Late Antiquity*) are given in their Bulgarian translations. Likewise, it is unfortunate that STEPANOV refers to the original Bulgarian version of the important study by VASSILKA TĀPKOVA-ZAIMOVA and ANISSAVA MILTENOVA. Instead, reference should have been made to its English translation, which appeared in 2011.<sup>18</sup>

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15. For a balanced discussion of the target audience of apocalyptic literature in Late Antiquity, see MATTHIAS BINDER, *Apocalyptic Thought Written for Monks? Some Texts and Motifs and Their Function in Greek and Syriac Antiquity*. In: HAGIT AMIRAV – EMMANOUELA GRYPEOU – GUY STROUMSA (eds.), *Apocalypticism and Eschatology in Late Antiquity: Encounters in the Abrahamic religions, 6th–8th Centuries* (Late Antique History and Religion 17). Leuven 2017, pp. 43–74.

16. E.g., "apocryph" (p. 229); "imaginativness" (p. 261); "that [was] cherished" (p. 262); "in particulate" (p. 264).

17. For instance, "Cinnamus" (p. 147) – "Komnenos" (p. 153); "Anatole" (p. 118) – "anatoli" (p. 273); "eon" (p. 105) – "enkainia" (p. 152); "macrokosmos" (p. 180). It also occurs that transliterations are not inconsistent but wrong, e.g., "ta pros talassan" (p. 129).

18. VASSILKA TĀPKOVA-ZAIMOVA – ANISSAVA MILTENOVA, *Historical and Apocalyptic Literature in Byzantium and Medieval Bulgaria*. Sofia 2011.

The bibliography has a number of further shortcomings. It is pointed out in the acknowledgements (p. xvi) that the book was largely completed in 2011. As a result, the secondary literature of the last decade is largely missing. For instance, it is noteworthy that the conference volume edited by WOLFRAM BRANDES – FELICITAS SCHMIEDER – REBEKKA VOSS (eds.), *Peoples of the Apocalypse. Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios* (Millennium-Studien 63). Berlin – Boston 2016 has not been consulted, despite its clear relevance to the book. With regard to Byzantine apocalypticism, the bibliography is wanting, too. As pointed out above, the author heavily relies on the scholarship of PAUL MAGDALINO. While this is a safe strategy, it neglects much outstanding work done by other Byzantinists (e.g., MARIE-HÉLÈNE CONGOURDEAU, AGOSTINO PERTUSI, PABLO UBIERNA).

### **A Survey of the Contents**

The introduction gives a useful overview of recent studies on apocalypticism in the Latin West and Byzantium, especially with regard to the contested issue of whether there existed a wide-spread apocalyptic anxiety around the year 1000 AD. STEPANOV suggests that in order to resolve this issue for “Western Europe,” one ought to investigate traditions in Eastern Christendom (p. 5). Unfortunately, the issue is not revisited and the reader is left to draw his/her own conclusion. The author distances himself from previous Bulgarian scholarship that saw in apocalyptic literature an expression of the heretical movement known as Bogomilism (p. 9). In terms of methodology, he points out that his approach focuses on the comparison of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim literary sources on the one hand, and on their historical and anthropological contextualization on the other. He contends that a given topos can be compared with its cognates in different religious contexts because it represents “the same phenomenon” (p. 14). Furthermore, he sets down his “somewhat arbitrary” timeframe (p. 11), which stretches from c. 950 to c. 1200,<sup>19</sup> and highlights that he does

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19. The timeframe is justified in view of the fall of Constantinople in 1204, which “put an end to a lot of the established notions about the Christian world” (p. 11). This appears to be an oversimplification and would require some explication. In contrast, I would argue that the Byzantines were resilient in maintaining their apocalyptic horizon of expectations, which provided the religious, political, and psychological foundation that allowed the Eastern Romans to persist in exile and to aspire to reconquer Constantinople. From the viewpoint of the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition, the year 1204 marks a moment of continuity rather than rupture.



not differentiate between the terms “apocalypse” and “eschatology” (p. 13), using them interchangeably.

The book consists of three chapters. The first and second chapter largely reproduce scholarly views on medieval eschatology among the Latins, Byzantines, and Kievan Rus’. Instead of merely summarizing the author’s assertions, I decided to name the authorities from which the bulk of the first two chapters have been compiled and to highlight the most problematic statements. This approach is most revealing of STEPANOV’s *modus operandi*.

The first chapter starts with a survey of apocalyptic expectations among Sephardic and Khazar Jews, which consists largely of a summary of BORIS RASHKOVSKII’s scholarship (pp. 19–29). With regard to the Khazars, who reputedly converted (at least a part of them) to Judaism, it is noteworthy that STEPANOV ignores SHAUL STAMPFER’s recent criticism concerning the historicity of the Khazar conversion.<sup>20</sup> This neglect is symptomatic of most of the book. It hardly engages the sources critically. In fact, the author paraphrases – at times virtually verbatim – secondary literature rather than consulting the sources.<sup>21</sup> Following the Jewish material, he surveys apocalyptic expectations in the Latin West by summarizing the scholarship

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20. SHAUL STAMPFER, Did the Khazars Convert to Judaism? *Jewish Social Studies* 19.3 (2013) pp. 1–72.

21. By way of illustration, one may compare the original statements by MCGINN, *Visions of the End*, pp. 82–83 (in the left column) with STEPANOV’s paraphrase thereof on p. 33 (in the right column):

“Adso was born about 910 and entered the monastic life during the time of the great reforms associated with the houses of Cluny and Gorze. He became abbot of the reformed monastery of Montier-en-Der and died in 992 while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. [...] It is certain that Adso depends ultimately upon patristic teaching on the Antichrist, though his access to this material seems to have been largely through summaries dating from the eighth and the ninth centuries. Maurizio Rangheri has shown the close dependence of parts of the *Letter on the Computation of Time* of Bede (d. 735) and Haymo of Auxerre’s (d. c. 860) *Commentary on Second Thessalonians*.”

“Adso was born about 910, became abbot of the formerly Benedictine, later Cluniac Montier-en-Der Abbey, and died in 992 while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In his writings about the *End of the world* and especially about Antichrist, Abbot Adso was completely dependent on the patristic tradition, as well as on Bede the Venerable and Haimo of Auxerre, authors from the 8th and 9th century, respectively, with regard to the computistical calculations and commentary on the *Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*.”

of BERNARD MCGINN, GEORGES DUBY, and JACQUES LE GOFF (pp. 30–48); he covers various apocalyptic sources, the peace of God movement, and the Christian conversion of northern and central Europe. Concerning apocalyptic aspects in the Ottonians (pp. 48–62), he relies on the study by LEVI ROACH, who has argued that the actions and the behavior of Otto III (980–1002) testify to an acute awareness of apocalyptic expectations.<sup>22</sup> The subsequent discussion of the cult of the Archangel Michael (pp. 62–66) draws on DANIEL CALLAHAN’s research thereof. The statements on Joachim of Fiori echo those by MARJORIE REEVES and BRETT WHALEN (pp. 66–71). The section on the legend of Priester John (pp. 72–78) is based on the insights of LEONID CHEKIN (on Christian cartography) and JEAN DELUMEAU.

The second part of the (first) chapter surveys end-time expectations among the Eastern Romans and the Rus’. This section (pp. 79–96) is largely structured around PAUL MAGDALINO’s scholarship, which has demonstrated how pervasive apocalyptic thought was in Byzantine hagiography and historiography. Due attention is paid to the Rus’, the Pechenegs, and the Magyars; all of which had enjoyed, at one point, the association of being the eschatological peoples of Gog and Magog (pp. 82–92). It is striking that STEPANOV assumes that “high-ranking intellectuals” (p. 89) were averse to apocalyptic thought, simply because these authors used an archaizing sociolect that avoided the Biblical designation of Gog/Magog. He names Michael Psellos, Theophylaktos of Ohrid, and Anna Komnēnē as examples. Yet it has been persuasively argued that Komnēnē’s *Alexiad* does advance an eschatological message.<sup>23</sup> The discussion of apocalyptic aspects in Byzantine art (pp. 96–98) summarizes works by VIKTOR LAZAREV and ALEKSANDRA TEMERINSKI. The chapter closes with a discussion of end-time expectations among the Kievan Rus’ (pp. 98–114), which draws largely on studies by VLADIMIR PETRUKHIN and IGOR DANILEVSKII and asserts that the Rus’ defined themselves as the chosen people through church constructions (e.g., the Church of the Tithes), the literary promotion of Kiev as the new Jerusalem (e.g., in the Sermon on Law and Grace by the eleventh-century Metropolitan Hilarion), and the adoption of the cult of the Theotokos. STEPANOV follows ALEKSEI KARPOV’s view that the Rus’ did not share in eschatological expectations before 1492 (p. 113), which

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22. LEVI ROACH, Emperor Otto III and the End of Time. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (2013) pp. 75–102.

23. PENELOPE BUCKLEY, *The Alexiad of Anna Komnene. Artistic Strategy in the Making of a Myth*. Cambridge 2014, pp. 245–284.

begs the question why the Rus' were discussed here. In confirmation of KARPOV's view, he notes that Rus' literature did not apply the topos of the last emperor upon any Kievan prince (pp. 114, 177). There is no acknowledgement of the fact that elsewhere the contrary has been argued.<sup>24</sup>

The second chapter considers the apocalyptic motif of Gog and Magog.<sup>25</sup> He begins with some methodological considerations (pp. 116–128). He adopts MIRCEA ELIADE's notion of "center," in which STEPANOV sees an "archetypal marker" (p. 119) that is a constitutive element in any self-definition insofar as it differentiates one's own location from the periphery of the "other." He goes on to assume that the North was seen as the "archimodel of the direction of invasion" (pp. 122, 188). His argumentation is conjectural; it would have profited from the inclusion of proof texts from medieval apocalypica.<sup>26</sup> STEPANOV also adopts ÉVELYNE PATLAGEAN's notion of a "dual Holy Land" (pp. 124, 136, 141, 150, 182), which holds that the Byzantines – by virtue of exegesis and relics – reduplicated the idea of the Holy Land by applying it to Constantinople. He asserts that the same phenomenon can also be observed in Bulgarian apocalypica, such as the *Vision of the Prophet Isaiah about the Last Times* (p. 124), where the Bulgarian Tsardom is presented as the new Holy Land. The book contains a brief survey of the primary sources under investigation (p. 127). However, the sources are not clearly identified; they are only

24. MARI ISOAHO, *The Last Emperor in the Primary Chronicle of Kiev*. In: EADEM (ed.), *Past and Present in Medieval Chronicles* (Collegium: Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 17). Helsinki 2015, pp. 43–81. It is surprising that STEPANOV neglects the apocalyptic layer in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* (Повѣсть временныхъ лѣтъ), although he repeatedly voices his persuasion that the name Michael had a "symbolic dimension" (p. 104, also pp. 199, 268) connoting eschatological concerns. He ignores the fact that Prince Sviatopolk II (d. 1113) took the Christian name Michael. Also, this neglect seems at odds with STEPANOV's statement that the *Primary Chronicle* early on attributed eschatological significance to the Byzantine Emperor Michael III (pp. 104, 173). It requires explanation if the author tacitly assumes that eschatological concerns subsequently disappear from the *Primary Chronicle*.

25. The chapter is a revised version of TSVETELIN STEPANOV, *Invading in/from the 'Holy Land': Apocalyptic Metatext(s) and Sacred and/or Imagined Geography, 950–1200*. CAS Sofia Working Paper Series 5 (2013) pp. 1–38. The book omits any reference to this paper.

26. The argument could also have benefited from URSULA DEITMARING's insightful study that explains how the North denoted the 'sinister' left side; the 'orientation' towards the East defines the North as being placed on the left-hand side, whereby the 'left' was generally considered to be the place of evil. See URSULA DEITMARING, *Die Bedeutung von Rechts und Links in theologischen und literarischen Texten bis um 1200*. Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur 98.4 (1969) pp. 265–292, at pp. 284–286.

vaguely circumscribed, which reinforces the reader's suspicion that not every source has been consulted.<sup>27</sup>

The bulk of the chapter surveys the development of the Gog/Magog motif, starting with its Biblical roots in Gen. 10:2, Ezek. 38–39, Rev. 20:8, touching upon its transformation in the seventh-century Syriac *Alexander Legend* (pp. 132f) and focusing on its use in Byzantium and the Latin West as well as among the Kievan Rus' and the Khazars. The section on the *Alexander Legend* paraphrases BERNARD MCGINN's summary thereof, while the discussion of Gog and Magog in Islam (pp. 134–136, 177–180) recapitulates the relevant passage in the 2010 monograph by EMERI VAN DONZEL – ANDREA SCHMIDT. The discussion of Byzantium hardly touches upon the Gog/Magog topos (pp. 136–153) but merely reproduces PAUL MAGDALINO's insights into Byzantine imperial eschatology. His statements are supplemented with remarks by LESLIE BRUBAKER and ROBERT OUSTERHOUT on the Constantinopolitan Hagia Sophia Church (pp. 139–140). STEPANOV repeats MAGDALINO's observation that no Byzantine apocalypse from the eleventh and twelfth centuries has survived (p. 143) and follows his lead in focusing on historiographical testimonies instead (i.e., by Iōannēs Tzetzēs, Iōannēs Zōnaras, Nikētas Chōniatēs).<sup>28</sup> The remainder of the chapter discusses sources in Latin and Church Slavonic. The examination of Adso's *De ortu et tempore Antichristi* (pp. 155–157, cf. pp. 32–36), Benzo of Alba's *Ad Heinricum IV. imperatorem libri VII* (pp. 167f), and the anonymous *Ludus de Antichristo* (pp. 169f) is again a paraphrase of MCGINN, while the scholarship of CATHERINE CUBITT and MALCOLM GODDEN is summarized with regard to apocalypticism among the Anglo-Saxons (pp. 160–167). The discussion of the Kievan Rus' (pp. 172–177), which again draws upon the work by PETRUKIN, DANILEVSKII, and KARPOV respectively, asserts that the *Primary Chronicle* portrays the Cumans as Gog/Magog thereby reflecting the Rus' self-

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27. The naming of apocryphal texts can be a confusing matter. For this reason, there exist scholarly tools that help to identify texts clearly. With regard to Greek apocrypha, one can consult the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (BHG) or the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* (CPG), among others. It is regrettable that STEPANOV does not use any such instruments. As a result, it is not always clear which texts he is referring to, as for instance on p. 192 with regard to the texts by Hippolytos (or Pseudo-Hippolytos) or on p. 203 regarding the "Pseudepigraph of Daniel."

28. By implication, the Bulgarian apocalyptic material is an important source for reconstructing the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition at the time from which virtually no apocalyptic source has been preserved. Unfortunately, this implication is neither made explicit nor addressed in the book.

perception of inhabiting the “center.” The author points again to Jewish messianism in the Khazar empire (p. 185; cf. pp. 17–24) before closing with – what appears to be – the first disagreement with a scholarly opinion in the book so far (p. 189). He disagrees with ANTHONY SMITH’s differentiation of two types of “chosen people,” namely (i) the missionary peoples, who rely on expansion and inclusion, and (ii) the covenant peoples, who are characterized by separation and exclusion.<sup>29</sup> STEPANOV contests that the dichotomy does not map upon either the Franks or the Byzantines.

Chapter three surveys miscellaneous aspects of Bulgarian apocalypticism found in literary (and to a lesser extent in material) sources. The survey of Bulgarian apocalyptic sources (pp. 191–205) echoes the scholarship by ANISSAVA MILTENOVA. References to English translations point to KIRIL PETKOV’s 2008 survey of medieval Bulgarian literature. STEPANOV emphasizes that the second half of the eleventh century saw an “explosive emergence” (pp. 200, 202) of historical apocalypses in Bulgaria and seeks to explain it by reference to millenarian anxieties around the year 1092 (p. 202). Yet, as he does not seek to prove that such anxieties existed in late eleventh-century Bulgaria, the purported explanation reads like a *petitio principii*. He briefly deals with apocalyptic aspects in Bulgarian art; a section that draws on the scholarship of LILIANA MAVRODINOVA (pp. 205–210). STEPANOV recites the view by JOHN MEYENDORFF that the Biblical *Book of Revelation* was largely ignored by Byzantine theologians and therefore “it was just not developed as an iconographic scheme, i.e. in specific details that the artists could more or less strictly abide by.” (p. 206).<sup>30</sup> This is an oversimplification. The *Book of Revelation* did exert substantial influence in both literary and iconographic form in Byzantium. The motifs of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:1–14), of the Heptalophos (Rev. 17:9), of the submergence of Constantinople (Rev. 18:21), of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9–22:5) are standard elements in medieval Greek apocalypses. As for the iconographic adaptation of *Revelation*, it has been shown that mural paintings of middle Byzantine churches depicted various

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29. ANTHONY D. SMITH, *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity*. Oxford – New York 2003, pp. 95f.

30. Cf. STEPHEN J. SHOEMAKER, *The Afterlife of the Apocalypse of John in Byzantium*. In: DEREK KRUEGER – ROBERT S. NELSON (eds.), *The New Testament in Byzantium*. Washington, DC 2016, pp. 301–316, who also downplays the significance of *Revelation* in Byzantium. His argument results from the narrow scope of the study, which is limited to a survey of the issue of canonicity and to a discussion of the four Byzantine commentaries on *Revelation*; it largely ignores medieval Greek apocalypses.

scenes from the last book of the Bible.<sup>31</sup> Because the *Book of Revelation* was presumably irrelevant for Byzantine art and because “the Old Testament prophets [...] were the first to preach the idea of the coming Messiah,” (p. 206), STEPANOV surveys depictions of Old Testament prophets in Kastoria, Ohrid, Kiev, Sofia, and the Bachkovo Monastery (pp. 206–210).

The main part of the chapter investigates the motifs of eschatological peoples and individuals in tenth/eleventh-century Bulgarian apocalyptic writings, especially in the *Tale of the Prophet Isaiah*, also called the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle* or *Bulgarian Apocryphal Annals* (pp. 212–298). He discusses the literary figure of the Magyars, Pechenegs, Blond Nations, and Ishmaelites. Furthermore, he presents etymological arguments in support of his claim that the Bulgarians saw themselves as the “center” of Christianity and thus as the “chosen nation.” For instance, he reads the toponym “Edrilo Polje” (pp. 221f) to denote “center” (Bulg. iadro) rather than Adrianople;<sup>32</sup> an argument that I do not find convincing. Such forced arguments do little to convey a coherent thesis. Neither do the sporadic disagreements with Bulgarian colleagues. For instance, it is not clear what purpose it serves to object to V. TĀPKOVA-ZAIMOVA and A. MILTENOVA, who think that the Ishmaelites in the Old Bulgarian translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios* (late eleventh century) were identified with the Cumans and other Turkic tribes (pp. 228f). It remains unclear on what grounds STEPANOV can categorically deny that the indistinct motif of the Ishmaelites could have been applied to the Cumans.

From eschatological peoples the book shifts to eschatological individuals and miscellaneous motifs. STEPANOV discusses the motifs of the first and the last Tsar (pp. 229–262). These sections present a curious mixture of scholarly polemic, textual analysis, and erratic generalizations. For in-

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31. See NICOLE THIERRY – MICHEL THIERRY, *L'église du jugement dernier à Ihlara (Yılanlı Kilise)*. *Anatolia* 5 (1960) pp. 159–168, with plates xxxvi–xxxix, at p. 164 and plate xxxviii, who have shown that the (probably ninth/tenth-century) Yılanlı Kilise (Serpent Church) in the Cappadocian Ihlara Valley (Turkey) includes a depiction of the enthroned Christ who is surrounded by twenty-four elders, a pictorial adaptation of Rev. 4 :4. For further examples, see YVES CHRISTE, *Jugements derniers*. Saint-Léger-Vauban 1999, pp. 21–52.

32. The term “Edrilo Polje” is mentioned in the *Tale of the Holy Prophet Isaiah of the Future Days* (also called the *Tale of the Prophet Isaiah about the Future Times*), dated to the twelfth-century. English translation in KIRIL PETKOV, *The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, Seventh-Fifteenth Century. The Records of a Bygone Culture* (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450, 5). Leiden – Boston 2008, pp. 207–212, at p. 208.

stance, in order to reconstruct the myth-making of the “first king,” STEPANOV takes the reader on an anthropological odyssey: departing from the *Tale of the Prophet Isaiah*, he proceeds to the Old Testament, then to the Neolithic age, to Ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian mythology, to the Persian *Alexander Romance* and the Qur’ān, before arriving at Old Norse sagas (pp. 239–242), all without providing references to the mentioned sources. He concludes that medieval Bulgarians believed themselves to be “a new ‘chosen people’ in a new Promised Land” (p. 243). The chapter closes with some comments on the apocalyptic motif of the “well” and of the “giants” (pp. 270–298). It is frankly conceded that these topoi have “long been studied” and that his comments do not “draw any completely new conclusions” (p. 286).

At the end of the book, he reiterates his conviction that the year 1000 marked a date of heightened apocalyptic awareness in Europe, which however did not paralyze or even permeate daily life (p. 299). Furthermore, he establishes that the surveyed apocalyptic material is “above all imperially directed” (p. 300); it is not concerned with the fate of the ordinary man and therefore the ordinary man had been hardly influenced by such literature. This conclusion may strike the reader as a tautology. After all, historical apocalypses are by definition politically or “imperially” oriented and since STEPANOV considered only this subgenre of medieval apocalypses, it is no surprise that he finds only political narratives. Had he looked at heavenly journeys (also called moral apocalypses), STEPANOV could have established a more balanced verdict on apocalyptic literature of the tenth through twelfth centuries.<sup>33</sup> Lastly, he assumes the existence of an imaginary apocalyptic geography (or topography) that envisioned a “center” for the “chosen people” and the periphery for the “other” (p. 302). This imagined landscape – together with other apocalyptically connoted motifs – is said to have conditioned “the thinking-and-feeling of the medieval people” (p. 304), which evidently included the Bulgarians.

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33. Although heavenly journeys are mentioned in brief as “travels to the afterlife” (p. 201), they are not examined in the book. For a brief survey of the most prominent heavenly visions in Byzantium and their Slavonic adaptations, see JULIAN PETKOV, *Altslavische Eschatologie (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 59)*. Tübingen 2016, pp. 243–247, 268–270.

## Final Assessment

In short, the book presents a varied compilation of scholarly views on medieval history with special attention paid to the apocalyptic motifs of the last emperor, chosen people, center of the world, and invaders (cf. p. 215). Yet this is not a specialized work on medieval apocalypticism but a general introduction into European history of the tenth through twelfth centuries. It is not entirely clear who the target audience is. Virtually every topic is generally introduced with references given mostly to secondary readings and without in-depth analyses of the sources. The author hardly goes beyond what “is well known” (pp. 8, 24, 55, 83, 94, 102, 106, 148, 150, 164, 223, 255, 265, 279, 286, *passim*). Thus, the reader is presented with a plethora of (often disjoint) notes that are known to experts but largely unintelligible to the general reader. The achievement of the book is limited to the collection and paraphrase of a substantial amount of scholarly literature. This could have been done in a much shorter format though. At the same time, the preoccupation with previous scholarship has hindered the author from examining independently the primary sources. Finally, the book promotes a questionable agenda with – what appears to be – a nationalist and neo-colonial approach to historiography.

The reader who is interested in Bulgarian apocalyptic sources may be better served to consult the fine introduction by ANISSAVA MILTENOVA, *Paratextual Literature in Action: Historical Apocalypses with the Names of Daniel and Isaiah in Byzantine and Old Bulgarian Tradition (11th–13th Centuries)*. In: PHILIP S. ALEXANDER – ARMIN LANGE – RENATE PILLINGER (eds.), *In the Second Degree. Paratextual Literature in Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Culture and Its Reflections in Medieval Literature*. Leiden 2010, pp. 267–284. Furthermore, the reader can turn to the above-mentioned volumes by ТЪПКОВА-ZAIMOVA – MILTENOVA (footnote 18) and by PETKOV (footnote 33), which still give the best overview and discussion of medieval Bulgarian apocalyptic literature for the English/German-reading audience.

### Keywords

Medieval apocalyptic literature; Bulgarian apocalypses; eschatological peoples; Gog/Magog