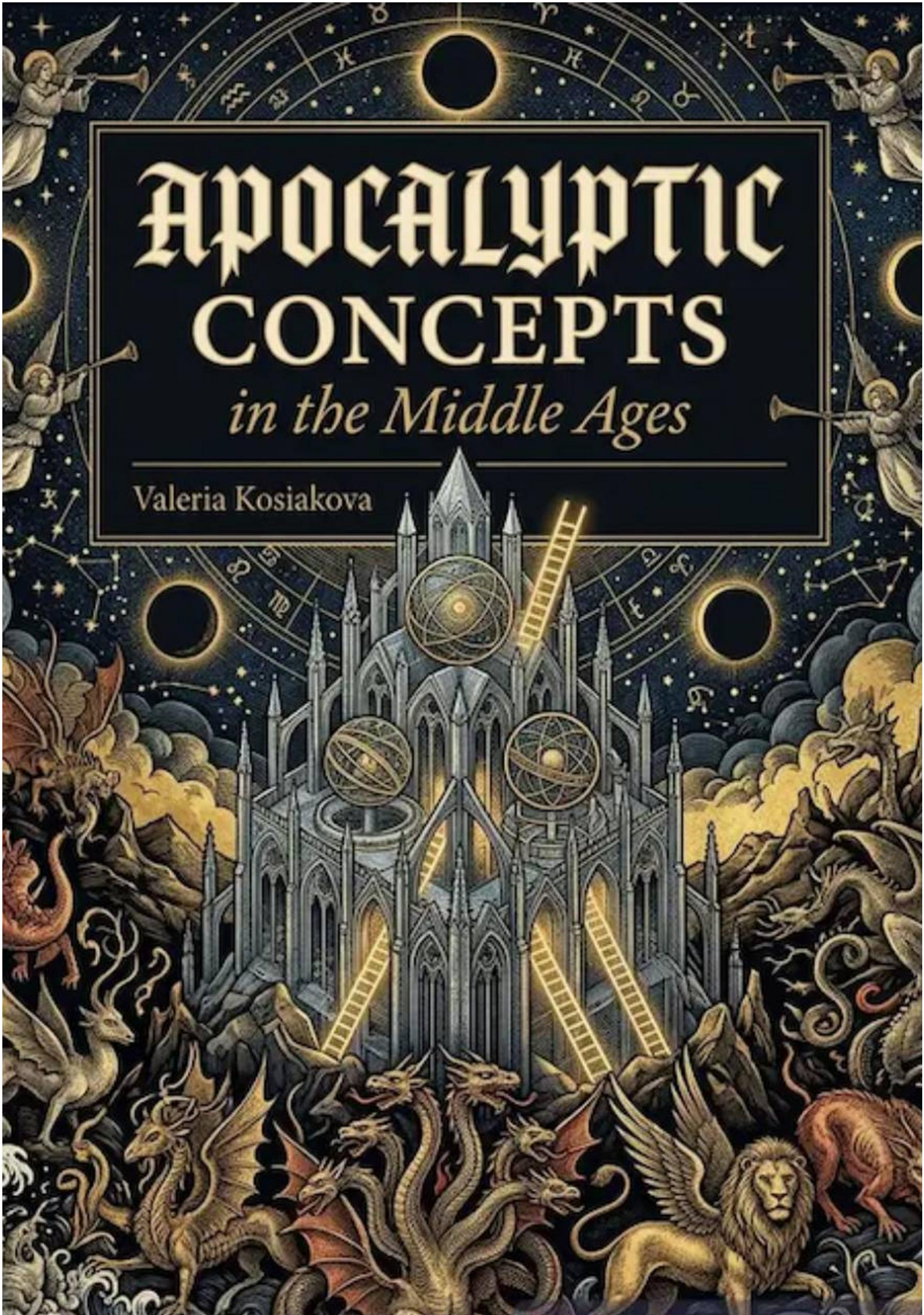
Apocalyptic Concepts in the Middle Ages

Valeria Kosiakova



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The book is dedicated to the peculiar adventures of the Apocalypse. The author analyzes myths, legends, canonical and visual texts, folklore, and apocrypha, identifying the traditional and the explicit, the official and the marginal, the hidden and the fantastical, the ideological and the political — dimensions of the representation of the Apocalypse. Special attention in the book is given to the specific experiences on the eve of the Early Modern period, the analysis of the works of Hieronymus Bosch, his unique visionary eschatology, the surprising nuances and aspects of his artistic universe, as well as the figure of Ivan the Terrible and the embodiment of utopian ambitions to create a New Jerusalem on earth, which must be preceded by apocalyptic chaos and the Last Judgment. The book is addressed to both the general reader and the specialist.

Содержание

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From the author

This book explores a crucial concept, especially in the medieval era—the End of the World, the anticipation of it. The book's protagonist, as well as its primary image, is the Apocalypse. But what is the Apocalypse? How did it arise? What are its origins? Why did the image of total collapse become so ubiquitous and even appealing? What do the Book of Revelation, the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, and the sinister political activities of Ivan the Terrible have in common? An examination of three characters, still iconic today, allows us to see the dynamics of the medieval idée fixe, the obsession with the idea of the End of the World. Initially a myth and oral tradition, this concept was gradually fueled by preaching, then cemented by writing, transformed into a text called the "Apocalypse," which soon acquired canonical status. This powerful and figurative prophecy influences minds and imaginations, causing people to fear, dream, and create a visual equivalent of the nightmarish visions of the inevitable future described by the author of "Revelation." The pictorial canon forms yet another dimension to the idea of the End Times, which increasingly takes on "flesh." The Apocalypse draws ever closer to humanity, tightening its grip on them, becoming real, present, and actual. The representation, reinforced by textual and visual canons, which enter into a dialectical interaction and mutual influence, becomes a powerful intellectual tool, generating a unique ideological discourse. Finally, the representation, having passed through the stages of myth, dream, text, and image, transforms into direct political action on a national scale, implemented by the Russian Tsar.

The concept of the apocalypse is one of the fundamental algorithms of European culture. This concept troubled not only Christians at the dawn of the new era, theologians, and ordinary believers, but also thinkers of the new generation—from Isaac Newton to Stephen Hawking. Many contemporary works of fiction (and not so fiction) (texts, films, games), both popular and elite, cannot exist without the inclusion of an eschatological code. In difficult times of adversity, crises of various kinds, cultural depressions, and revolutions, this code once again acquires strength and symbolic significance. Mikhail Bulgakov's "The Master and Margarita" or "The Golden Calf" by Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov, Boris Pasternak's "Doctor Zhivago" or Venedikt Erofeyev's "Moscow-Petushki," the novels of Yuri Mamleev or Viktor Erofeyev, Vladimir Orlov's "Viola Player Danilov" or Vladimir Sorokin's "Ice," etc.—Russian literature of the 20th century is particularly replete with apocalyptic images, manifested in direct or veiled allusions, travesty-like or very peculiar interpretations of figures from the eschatological code, not to mention the reception and reflection of utopian messianism and the role of Rus'/Russia in the fate of the world.

All illustrations in this book can be enlarged and viewed in more detail using the internet—for this purpose, they are provided with detailed bibliographic information. A list of sources at the end of the book and a set of page-by-page notes can direct the most assiduous reader to more detailed interpretations and explanations not included in this book.

In conclusion of these brief introductory remarks, the author expresses his deepest gratitude to all those people who made it possible for this work to appear in print.

Chapter 1. Apocalypse Forever

Where to begin a narrative about the apocalypse? Isn't it with the fact that the idea of the End of the World has been an integral part of every culture since time immemorial? The forms of representation of this idea are varied: from the eschatological myth of an ancient people or an archaic religious object in a museum display case to the latest blockbuster with a moralizing subtext,

depicting a world on the brink of extinction. Common colloquial formulas such as "apocalyptic landscape," "apocalyptic," or "post-apocalyptic" express the idea of finality, desolation, and despair. Many literary texts of the 20th and 21st centuries narrate the decline of family and country, the existential crises of heroes, the sense of the end of history, the decline of civilization, the "death of the author," "death of the reader," "death of the subject," and so on. Even if "apocalypse" doesn't become the main theme of such works, it ominously looms between the lines, creating a disturbing atmosphere. What is apocalypse? Are the metamorphoses of history, the entropy of social formations, wars, crises, and the doom of man to death perceived through a universal eschatological symbolic code, or is it a purely European cultural trait, constructed by Christian dogma? Can we say that apocalypse is a rational universal, or is it an unconscious sublimation of hidden human anxieties, fears, and fantasies? Be that as it may, the artifacts included in the apocalyptic imagery are countless, and the field of research is endless.

Concepts of the End of the World have their roots in archaic cultures. Eschatological myths and legends (from the ancient Greek ἔσχατον — "final," "last" and λόγος — "word," "knowledge") tell of fatal catastrophes and natural disasters that wipe out the human race. Many mythological systems describe the creation and birth of the world, the establishment of cosmic order, the struggle with chthonic beings, and the exploits of heroes. But if existence or life had a divinely given beginning, then, according to the logic of myth, an ending is inevitable: just as all life comes to an end, so too will the universe in *the end* times return to the same chaos from which it was created. The beliefs of the Kai tribe (New Guinea) describe a creator named Malengfung. Having created the world and humanity, he retreated to the ends of the earth, beyond the horizon, and fell asleep. Every time he turns in his sleep, the earth trembles, but when he awakens and rises, the sky will fall to the earth, destroying all life. A legend from one of the Caroline Islands claims that the creator will one day destroy humanity for its sins, but the gods will live on, implying a new creation of the world. A legend from another Caroline Island tells of a creator who will flood the island when his son grows tired of caring for humanity. And the Negritania tribe on the Malay Peninsula tells of the destruction of the world by the thunder god Karei for disrespecting his will. Therefore, during thunderstorms, the natives try to avert catastrophe by offering bloody atoning sacrifices. Although the catastrophe will be universal, it will be followed by a new creation [1].

An archaic myth about the end of the world

Most myths of New Guinea, Mesoamerica, Native Americans, and other archaic and primitive cultures, when telling about the End of the World, assume a cyclical structure: the world is destroyed by God due to some ritual violations or due to the old age and fatigue of the world itself, but a global, most often natural, catastrophe is followed by a new creation. According to Aztec beliefs, for example, the world had already been destroyed three or four times, and a fourth (or fifth) destruction was expected in the future, associated with the disappearance of the sun and a total flood, after which, however, one pious couple would survive. The Choctaw Indian tribe believed that the world, having already suffered a flood, would be destroyed by fire, but the souls of the dead would return, their bones would become fleshy, and the resurrected people would once again find themselves in their former habitats [2]. A similar myth can be found among the Eskimos: people will be resurrected, gaining life from their bones (a belief typical of hunting tribes). Let us also recall the ancient Egyptians, who so carefully created mummies: they preserved each organ of the deceased in separate jars, inserted eyes, painted anthropomorphic sarcophagi - and all this so that the soul would not get lost after death and would return, recognizing and reviving its owner.

[1] Eliade, M. Aspects of Myth. Moscow, 1995, p. 62.

[2] Bierlein, J. F. Parallel myths. NY., 1994, p p . 130-132.

Archaic myths, in their various forms, represent an idea inherent to the worldview of their era. This is the idea of the renewal of natural cycles, the renewal of life on earth, and the cleansing of humanity from accumulated sin. Myths, legends, and traditions tell of the destruction of humanity (partial or total); they convey a positive idea of the infinity of existence, because death is followed by a return to the original: after the destruction of the old world, a new one will be born. The poetics of myth presupposes analogical thinking: just as a human being is born, grows up, ages, and dies, so the world goes through a similar vital cycle. Most often, after the End of the World, which comes as a flood or other global catastrophe that destroys people, a couple—a man and a woman—survives, from whom the human race begins anew, or the deity itself creates a new world.

The oldest myth of the destruction of humanity by flood was recorded in writing in the Sumero-Acadian culture long before the Bible. A partially surviving clay tablet from the city of Nippur, dating back to the 3rd millennium BC, tells of a worldwide flood [3]: a certain deity (most likely Enki, the deity responsible for the earth and waters) informs the other gods of his desire to preserve humanity, hoping that the survivors will build temples and make their cities religious centers. With the exception of one ruler—Ziusudra, the Sumerian prototype of the biblical Noah—the entire world is mired in sin, not honoring the gods. Instigated by God, Ziusudra builds a ship to escape the flood: " *All the storms raged simultaneously with unprecedented force. And at that very moment the flood inundated the main sanctuary. For seven days and seven nights the flood inundated the earth. And the winds carried the enormous ship across the stormy waters. Then came Utu (the sun god), the giver of light to heaven and earth. Then Ziusudra opened a window on his great ship. And Utu, the hero, penetrated the great ship with his rays. Ziusudra, the king, prostrated himself before Utu. The king killed a bull for him and slaughtered a sheep* [4]. " The flood is also described in the Sumero-Akkadian-Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, one of the oldest surviving literary works in the world, the earliest fragments of which date back to the 2nd millennium BC.

In India, the doctrine of the destruction of the universe was known since Vedic times (2000–1500 BCE). Commentaries on the Vedas (Brahmanas) and ancient epics (Puranas) developed the idea of four generations of the world—yugas. In its first generation (Kritayuga), the world is more perfect than in subsequent ones. With the advent of subsequent yugas, man deteriorates spiritually and physically: the world order regresses, the mind and body weaken, and lifespan shortens. The divine day, lasting 8.64 billion years, consists of the "day of Brahma" (kalpa: Sanskrit *kalpa*—"order," "law") and the "night of Brahma" (pralaya: Sanskrit *pralaya* —disintegration, dissolution). The Mahakalpa (Brahma's lifespan: 100 divine years) and its accompanying Mahapralaya (Sanskrit: *mahapralaya* —great disintegration) form a more grandiose cyclical cycle. However, the great disintegration is not final and is inevitably replaced by a new birth (sarga: Sanskrit: *sarga* , from the root *srj* —to release, to emit).

Buddhism posits a similar cyclical nature of time, a gradual, regressive decline of the universe. The Buddhist period of the mahakalpa is followed by the destruction of all worlds, including the human world. The collapse of the worlds proceeds from the lowest to the highest. First, the most "long-term" and terrible hells decay and collapse (there is a theory that this destruction will occur because no one will be born in the hells anymore, as the universe will no longer contain "malicious" violators of karmic laws). Following the lower worlds, the human worlds will begin to collapse. When they too turn to dust, the worlds of the gods and demigods will also begin to perish, and eventually even the palaces of the celestials will crumble. With the completion of the cycle, the entire universe is destroyed. Then, after a vast period of time, the universe unfolds anew. In Buddhism, the series of mahakalpas is considered endless and beginningless.

[3] Belitsky, M. Sumerians. Forgotten World. Moscow, 2000, p. 226

[4] Quoted from: Kramer, S. N. History Begins in Sumer. Moscow, 1965, p. 179.

Ancient Egyptian myths also tell of the destruction and rebirth of the human race. But the unique monuments of this culture are the "Pyramid Texts" (Old Kingdom - 24th–22nd centuries BC), the "Sarcophagus Texts" (Middle Kingdom — 21st – 17th centuries BC), and the "Book of the Dead" (New Kingdom — 16th – 12th centuries BC) tell not of universal death, but of individual death. Initially, funeral texts, intended to ensure the king a blessed life beyond the coffin, were read aloud. They were later transferred to the sarcophagi of courtiers and nobles, and finally to papyri adorned with drawings depicting burial scenes, funeral rituals, and posthumous judgment. This is how the "Book of the Dead" emerged—a complex religious and magical collection that evolved over centuries. Sacred texts, where ethical teachings were intertwined with ancient magic, included various works related to the afterlife cult. The famous 125th chapter of the "Book" describes the posthumous judgment of Osiris over the dead, which was depicted on the walls of tombs, then on sarcophagi, and gradually became a part of the ancient Egyptian iconographic canon. The crowned Osiris, king and judge of the afterlife, was depicted seated on a throne, holding a staff and whip—the symbols of royal authority. The gods sat above him. In the center of the courtroom stood a scale on which the gods Thoth and Anubis weighed the heart—a symbol of the soul of the deceased. In chapter 30, the deceased asks his heart not to testify against himself at the trial. So, on one side of the scale is the heart (soul, conscience)—light or burdened with sins—and on the other is truth, represented by the feather of the goddess Maat or her figurine. If a person led a righteous life on earth, their heart and feather weigh equally; if they sinned, the heart outweighed the feather. The acquitted deceased was sent to the afterlife, while the sinner was devoured by the monster Amat (a creature with the head of a crocodile and combining the features of a lion and a hippopotamus). The defendant delivered a long justification speech to his judges and the jury: *“Here I come to you, Lord of Truth; I bring the truth, I drive away lies. I have done no injustice to people. I have done no evil. I have not done what is an abomination to the gods. I have not killed. I have not diminished the loaves in the temples, I have not diminished the food of the gods, I have not snatched funeral offerings from the dead. I have not diminished the grain measures, I have not shortened the lengths, I have not violated the fields' measurements, I have not increased the weights, I have not tampered with the scales' needles. I am pure...* "[5]

The story of humanity's decline is also told in the myths of Ancient Greece, integral to Western European culture. In his poem "Works and Days," Hesiod presents the world as a gradual degradation occurring over the course of five epochs. The first epoch—the "golden age" under the Titan Cronus —was a kind of paradise: people lived long, never aged, and their existence seemed akin to that of the gods. But then humanity descended: the Silver, Bronze, Heroic, and Iron Ages. With the advent of each new age, life, as seemed natural, worsened. Hesiod believed he lived in a less than ideal era of the world's old age: the heroic times were over; the world, once energized, had exhausted its energy, and Zeus would destroy it when children were born gray-haired. Heraclitus believed that the world would ultimately be destroyed by fire. Plato, in his Timaeus, suggests an alternative: the destruction of the world by a flood.

Not only in the fertile south but also in the north, humanity pondered the End of the World. In Norse mythology, so attractive for film adaptations, a vivid eschatological image is presented in the scenes of a cosmic battle described in the Eddas. The dead seer Völva, summoned from the grave by Odin, predicted the last day of the world's existence—Ragnarök. Its arrival would be preceded by the breakdown of tribal norms, bloody strife among kin, and moral chaos. The Vafthúrdnir, the Elder Edda, and the Younger Edda also mention a three-year "giant winter" preceding Ragnarök. According to the prophecy, on the day of Ragnarök, the monstrous wolf Fenrir will break free from his bonds

[5] Ancient Egyptian “Book of the Dead” // Questions of history / Transl. from ancient Egypt, introduction and comments by Chegodaev, M. A. M., 1994, p. 156.

and swallow the Sun, plunging the world into darkness—then the sea will overflow its banks, and the world serpent Jörmungandr will emerge from the depths. These monsters will be joined by the fire giant Surtr, with his flaming sword that scorches the earth, Hel, the ruler of the underworld, and the treacherous fire god Loki, along with the giants. A ship of the dead will arrive. The army of the sons of Muspelheim will ride across the rainbow bridge Bifröst, which will collapse in the process. All the Aesir, led by Odin, will oppose the army. In the final battle, Odin and Fenrir will perish, Thori and the serpent Jörmungandr will fall, and all the others will perish too, for neither evil nor good can defeat each other. Then the giant Surt will destroy the earth with all his fiery might, thus ending the battle between Darkness and Light. But the world's destruction will be followed by its rebirth: the sons of Odin and Thor will survive and settle in the Valley of the Gods (in the center of Asgard). The woman Liv and the man Livthrasir will survive, sheltered in a grove, and will once again give rise to the human race.

Monotheistic End of the World

The eschatology of the most ancient faiths is cyclical, in contrast to the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) with their linear concept, in which the time of the world is like an arrow released by God and rapidly flying towards its final eschatological goal.

According to the Bible, the beginning of the world and human existence also belongs to a kind of "golden age," but with the violation of God's will, the life of Adam and Eve in the earthly paradise comes to an end. This is followed by the degradation of the human race, culminating in the flood. After the "ritual purification by water," a new life begins with the line of Noah. However, until Abraham, the true God remains hidden from man. The relationship between God and man is finally cemented on the tablets of the covenant given to Moses. The coming of the prophet marked the beginning of the eschatological time. The Jews reached the highest spiritual level at the time of the giving of the Torah, but their worship of the golden calf, contrary to divine commandments, prevented the advent of the messianic era. God's chosen people were forced to continue their wait for the true messiah, which for them was not Jesus of Nazareth.

The views on eschatology vary across the various doctrines of the Abrahamic religions. Some Jewish and Islamic texts speak of a fatal error or catastrophe that occurred during the creation of the world, which is why it is always characterized by an element of imperfection and decay. Christian teaching, however, holds that the Kingdom of God is already among believers (Luke 17:21), so the Christian perception of time is characterized by a permanent sense of the End of the World: " *He is certainly good who daily looks for death, and he is holy who desires it at every hour* . " [6]The culmination of this sense is the idea of the Second Coming of Christ and the Apocalypse. In Jewish and Christian religions, the End of the World will occur only once, since the world was created only once. In the Judeo-Christian myth, time is linear and irreversible. Eschatology reveals the sacred significance of human actions: people will be judged by their deeds. After the Last Judgment, only the righteous, those who believe in Holy Scripture, will attain eternal bliss.

The Judeo-Christian paradigm introduces new notions of secular and divine time into the history of culture, reunited in an inevitable future event when the heavenly and the earthly will converge at a single point—the apocalypse. Christian temporality breaks the vicious circle of archaic time cycles and rushes forward, like a spear-bearer on horseback, yearning for defeat or triumph, toward its highest, predestined goal—the End of Ends, the Last Judgment, the meeting place of man and God.

Prophecies of the End of the World have captivated theologians from the dawn of the Christian era, through the Middle Ages, and into the modern era—right up to the present day. Even completely

[6] John Climacus. The Ladder, or Spiritual Tablets. Word 6. On the Memory of Death. Moscow, 2005, p. 150.

secularized apocalyptic signs, symbols, and images, while no longer considered essential, still provide a link to fundamental cultural codes.

Eschatological concepts are present in many myths and beliefs, but the Apocalypse, as a distinct literary genre, originates in the Jewish and early Christian traditions, describing revelations received by a seer or prophet about events, symbols, and an afterlife inaccessible to most ordinary people. The central idea of the Apocalypse is an allegorical, figurative depiction of the future and the End of the World.

The term "Apocalypse" (Greek: *ἀποκάλυψις* —revelation, disclosure (of secrets), Latin synonym— *revelatio*) was first used in the late first century by John the Theologian to denote a specific genre of revelation. The term caught on with the audience and became established in the titles of subsequent apocalyptic works. However, characteristics of the apocalyptic genre are attributed to earlier works, and its origin is associated with the Jewish literary milieu of the mid- second century BC.

Why did a specific genre arise that describes disasters, plagues, punishments, death and human suffering, on the one hand, and the promise of salvation and bliss to the righteous, on the other?

All eras, especially those of unfavorable and changing times, are sublimated and reflected in concentrated form both in folklore, tales, and legends, as well as in works of art and the heroes created by the outstanding authors of these eras. Often, in the popular consciousness and art, passionate historical figures—Patriarch Nikon, Peter the Great, Napoleon, Lenin, Stalin, etc.—are conceptualized as the Antichrist or as horsemen of the apocalypse, appearing in the world shortly before the Last Judgment. At the same time, at the end From the 17th to the first half of the 19th centuries, the Marquis de Sade's provocative prose emerged as a premonition and consequence of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. The rise of Romanticism saw the development of increasingly terrifying and monstrous images, while Goethe's Werther and Faust, Pushkin's Onegin, and Lermontov's Pechorin became iconic figures—symbols of the era. Artistic interpretations of disasters and catastrophes seem called upon to re-experience the past, but in a detached or even alienated way, allowing people to cope, cope, and come to terms with what cannot be reconciled.

In the 20th century, after World War I, Expressionist artists captured the mutilated inner world of their contemporaries on canvas, while German Expressionist cinema brought to the screen a host of monsters, interpreted by Siegfried Kracauer as a premonition of Hitler's rise to power and the coming tragedies provoked by the Moloch of Nazism. After World War II, European cultural figures identified with the devastated heroes of the existential prose of Sartre and Camus.

The artistic image of a universal disaster has a cathartic, therapeutic quality. It can be terrifying, horrifying, or distorting of reality, but it can also take on reactionary forms, becoming an image of hope and salvation. For example, in the 1930s, a new hero emerged in America —Superman. These were times of the Great Depression and lawlessness, and the utopian aspirations of the masses found their deliverer, savior—a new Christ—in the guardian of law and order.

For European culture, the artistic meta- and proto-formula of any total catastrophe—presupposing the restoration of justice, the coming of the Savior, the Last Judgment, and the reward of each according to his deeds—is most vividly and fully represented by the biblical Book of Revelation. However, this paradigmatic Apocalypse also has deep roots in the Jewish tradition.

As a result of historical catastrophes, a series of destructions, deaths, and violence, a genre of unique consolation and retribution gradually emerged, figuratively offering hope for liberation from the oppression of earthly circumstances in an apocalyptic future. Historical reality offered no consolation or contentment to the Jewish people, usurped by foreign states, religions, and traditions —Egypt, Babylon, Rome.

The utopian project of the apocalypse provided answers to the most important questions regarding the future of the Jews and the world as a whole, and also provided the most important imperatives in connection with the fatal future: the culminating passages of apocalyptic writings paint

pictures not only of the punishment of sinners who have not overcome their sin, but also of the forgiveness and consolation of the righteous.

What kind of apocalyptic works are we talking about?

Early Abrahamic eschatology, which served as a source of inspiration for future monotheistic religions, is found in the books of the prophets, created during the reign of the First Temple and before the creation of the Second Temple (10th – 6th centuries BC).

As political and religious figures who fought against archaic beliefs and pagan cults, miracle workers and intercessors, prophets and their sons constantly appear in the biblical books. From the 8th century BCE, these functions were supplemented by preaching: seers foretell impending disasters, call for abstinence, and promise deliverance and reward in the afterlife. Furthermore, the prophets themselves—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah—began to create large-scale works predicting global events of cosmic proportions—a doctrine of the ultimate fate of the world.

The Book of Isaiah became the most striking prophecy of the First Temple era, linking historical events and eschatological images: the Assyrian invasion for the sins of the Jews is the central focus of the narrative (Isaiah 7:17, 23-24). Isaiah foretells the punishment of the proud and powerful (Isaiah 2:11-15, 19), thus creating a picture of the judgment of entire nations in cultural history (Isaiah 2:2-4). Following the extermination of sinners, an era of total annihilation of evil will follow, culminating in messianic prosperity and the conversion of all people to the true God, with peace and harmony reigning.

Isaiah also first introduces the image of the messiah as an ideal king, fulfilling an eschatological mission on earth, bringing about a wise kingdom of justice: "*... he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked"* (Isaiah 11:1-6). In the so-called "Apocalypse of Isaiah" (chapters 24-27), [7]an allegory of evil appears in the form of a chthonic monster—the sea leviathan, " *the straight-running serpent, and leviathan, the twisting serpent* " (Isaiah 27:1), and a prophecy of the resurrection of the dead (Isaiah 26:19).

The last prophetic book, standing in a row of early monuments and replete with new eschatological images, is the Book of Joel, probably written between the two campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem, in 600 BC. [8]The book begins with a description of a natural disaster, albeit spontaneous, but widespread - a plague of locusts, but as the narrative progresses, the drama intensifies, unfolding into a tragedy of eschatological proportions: " *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound the alarm on My holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness: a nation spreading as the dawn upon the mountains, a great and mighty people, such as was not since the beginning, nor shall be again throughout all generations. The fire shall devour before it, and the flame shall scorch after it: "Before him the land will be like the Garden of Eden, but behind him will be a desolate wilderness, and no one will be able to escape from it…* " (Joel 2:1–32). Joel prophesies of the Lord's judgment: " *And I will show signs in heaven and on the earth: blood, fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes* ." Joel's reasoning continues to develop the image of the judgment of the nations that oppressed Israel (Joel 3:2) and the testimony of the potential salvation of all who believe in the Lord (Joel 2:32)—an idea later embodied in Christian preaching.

By the sixth century BC, the main motifs of Abrahamic eschatologies had taken shape: ideas of sin and redemption, images of universal catastrophes and disasters, a premonition of the day of God's wrath, the coming of the Messiah, the Last Judgment, and a future earthly paradise.

Apocalyptic sentiments peaked during the tragic period of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the captivity of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah's prophecies foreshadowed the

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[7] These chapters are probably of later origin, with datings varying between the 8th and 2nd centuries BC.

[8] Allen, L. C. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, 1976, p . 21-22.

future deliverance of the Jewish people and the judgment of enemy nations, and the promise of a new covenant subsequently played a fundamental role in the development of Christianity (Jeremiah 31–34).

The period of the Babylonian captivity also includes the prophecy of a captive priest who, at the end of the sixth century BCE, wrote one of the most mysterious images of Scripture—the book of Ezekiel. The eschatological scenes he described are distinguished by impressive imagery and mystical details, such as a vision of the resurrection of the dead: " *And he said to me, 'Prophesy upon these bones and say to them, "O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!"' Thus says the Lord God to these bones: 'Behold, I will put breath into you, and you will live. I will lay sinews on you, and bring forth flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath into you, and you will live. And you will know that I am the Lord...' And as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, there was a movement, and the bones came together, bone to bone. And I looked, and, behold, there were sinews upon them, and flesh had grown up, and skin had covered them above, but there was no breath in them… Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live… Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves, and will bring you up, O my people, from your graves, and will bring you into the land of Israel* " (Ezek. 37:4–13).

Ezekiel develops the theme of eschatological war through the invasion of Gog and Magog—the forces of evil embodied in a universal catastrophe (Ezekiel 38). In European culture, Gog and Magog became bywords for discord and disaster, influencing the visual art of the Middle Ages. In the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, the legend of the enemy people takes on a visual equivalent, and in Russian icons, the depiction of the dog-headed peoples testifies to an apocalyptic war, the ideas of which were embodied in Ivan the Terrible's Oprichnina.

After the sixth century BCE, the themes developed by the preceding prophets were echoed and developed in the books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The latter added a new detail: God sent the prophet Elijah to earth with the mission of preparing the people for the Last Judgment (Malachi 4:5–6).

Eschatological imagery multiplied and was enriched in preaching. After the conquests of Alexander the Great, the influence of Greek culture extended far beyond the borders of the ancient city-states: the Hellenistic era introduced new literary forms for Jewish prophecies. A book written in the pseudepigraphic genre, attributed to the legendary ancient sage mentioned in Ezekiel, is the Book of Daniel (second century BC, during the persecution of Antiochus). Its classical influence is clearly evident: historical figures are encoded in symbolic images. For example, the nations that harmed Israel are described as apocalyptic beasts: the last beast (the Macedonian empire) has 10 horns, signifying the kingdoms of Alexander the Great's successors (10 being the number of the most important Diadochi—commanders and rulers after Alexander). The "Son of Man" is allegorically depicted as the Jewish people, and the Archangel Michael assumes the role of a formidable messiah. The resurrection of the dead itself becomes possible after the final battle between good and evil —during which evil will be fully revealed, a necessary condition for the ultimate victory of good. Furthermore, during the Hellenistic period, apocrypha were written that were not canonized by either Jewish or Christian tradition. They were read and copied, understood and interpreted: “The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs” (1st century BC), “The Ascension of Moses” (presumably 1st century AD), “The Books of the Sibyls” (2nd century BC – 4th century AD), the most important of the apocrypha – “The Book of Enoch” (influenced early Christian literature, its vivid imagery describes the Last Judgment, at which the angels who rebelled and fell away from God will also be judged and punished – an idea subsequently developed in medieval literature ; presumably 3rd – 1st centuries BC).

The rapid development of apocalyptic literature in Jewish circles is linked to a number of cultural and historical events: the persecution of Jews by the Seleucids, Roman expansion, the Maccabean revolt, the Bar Kokhba revolt, and, most importantly, the destruction of the most sacred

site—the Temple in Jerusalem. This era brought to the forefront of global attention not just new images and disasters, but also new heroes and the Christian religion.

The Apocalypse of Christ

The messianic preaching of Jesus of Nazareth dates back to the 20th–30th centuries CE, in which eschatology occupied a crucial place. Jesus is undoubtedly presented as an apocalyptic prophet, proclaiming the end of the world, repentance before the apocalyptic battle, and salvation by faith.

Christ's eschatological preaching, initially transmitted as an oral tradition, was recorded in the Gospels by the end of the first century. It's likely that many of Christ's sayings in the first century were perceived as prophecies about the end of the world: " *And he said to them, 'Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come with power* '" (Mark 9:1). Subsequently, these meanings faded, giving way to new interpretations.

In the words of Christ on the eve of his arrest, inspired by the books of the prophets Zechariah, Daniel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, an apocalyptic scenario emerges. This speech is presented in the Gospel of Mark and with variations in Matthew and Luke: " *Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? All these will be thrown down, so that not one stone will be left here upon another* '" (Mark 13:2). And further: " *Jesus answered and said to them, 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, saying, "I am he"; and they will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled: for these things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in divers places, and there will be famines and disturbances. These are the beginning of sorrows.'" But take heed to yourselves: for they will deliver you up to councils, and scourge you in the synagogues: and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony before them.... Brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child: and children will rise up against parents and put them to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake: but he who endures to the end, the same shall be saved. But when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one who is on the housetop go down into the house, nor go in to take anything out of his house; and let no one who is in the field turn back to take his cloak. Woe to those who are with child, and to those who give suck, in those days! Pray ye that your flight be not in winter. For in those days shall there be such tribulation as was not since the beginning of the creation which God made, until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would have been saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened those days. Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "Look, there!" believe it not. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, so that, if possible, they may deceive even the elect. But take heed. Behold, I have told you all things beforehand. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with power and glory. And then He will send His angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Learn a parable from the fig tree: When its branch is already tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near, right at the doors. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But about that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch, and pray, for you do not know when the time will come* (Mark 13:5–33).

After the execution of Christ and His Resurrection, the general mood of the apostles expresses the extreme degree of expectation of Christ's imminent return: *"Therefore they* (the apostles) *came together and asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' But He*

said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put by His own authority...' And when He had spoken these things, while they looked on, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men in white apparel stood by them, saying, 'Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:6-11).

The coming of the "Son of Man" is also described by the apostles (Mark 13:26-27, Matthew 13:41-42, Mark 14:61-62). The Gospel of John already directly speaks of Jesus' participation in the Last Judgment: it is he who will resurrect the dead (John 6:54).

The end of the world is conceived of as a sudden and total event, anticipated by the apostles. Thus, the Apostle Paul writes that " *the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we which are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall always be with the Lord* " (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The Apostle Peter testifies: " *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat, the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up* " (2 Peter 3:10). In this context, the Revelation of John the Theologian, which inspired the creators of medieval visual imagery, becomes the logical conclusion of the entire preceding centuries of eschatological tradition.

Prophecies about the End of the World are found in various places in the New Testament, so a distinction is made between the “little Apocalypse” (an episode in the synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, where Jesus speaks of the “end of the age” in abomination and desolation and of the signs of the imminent coming of the Son of Man) and the “Revelation” of John itself [9]. There are also apocalyptic texts that have been the subject of constant debate, which is why they were not included in the New Testament canon, becoming apocrypha, including the Apocalypse of Peter (2nd century AD) and the Apocalypse of Paul (3rd century AD), the Apocalypse of Thomas (2nd – 4th centuries AD), the Revelation of Bartholomew (a medieval compilation), the Apocalypse of Zephaniah (1st century AD), and the Revelation of the Most Holy Theotokos.

The ideas, images, and symbols of the Book of Revelation remain enduringly relevant in culture. However, what do we know about the text of the Apocalypse—the most famous and significant eschatological work—other than the fact that the Revelation received by John the Evangelist on the Greek (but then Roman) island of Patmos influenced the minds, hearts, and collective imagination of Christian culture?

In the manuscript tradition, there are no less than sixty variants of the name of this text, and the text of the Apocalypse itself, which we read today, has gone through a long path of development: corrections and editions.

Although Christian tradition holds that Revelation was given to John the Theologian, who wrote it down, its authorship remains unknown. Tradition has assigned it to "John"—possibly a pseudonym for an author or authors belonging to the "Johnite circle" or "school," which the apostle himself may have founded. "John" preached in Asia Minor and was a scholar, an expert on the Old Testament and apocalyptic literature. Apparently, he was a Palestinian Jew: a textual analysis of the Apocalypse has shown that it contains numerous deviations from classical Greek, a fact noted as early as the third century AD by the Alexandrian bishop St. Dionysius the Great , who noted that the author of Revelation “ *writes Greek incorrectly… and makes mistakes in the language ,* ” [10]and that the text itself contains Semitic linguistic constructions [11].

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[9] The earliest descriptions of the “end of the age” in the New Testament corpus are considered to be the words of Jesus Christ, cited in the Gospel of Mark and repeated in Matthew and Luke.

[10] Caesarea, Eusebius. Church History. Book Seven. St. Petersburg , 2013, p. 347 (26).

How the Book of Revelation of John the Theologian is structured

The text of Revelation has a clearly defined structure: an introduction (chapters 1: 1–20), seven epistles (chapters 2–3) , the main body of visions (chapters 4–21 : 9), and a conclusion (chapters 21: 10–22). The division can be narrowed down to the introduction, which recounts John's exile, his ascension by an angel "in the spirit," and his epistles to the churches. Then follows the main section, in which John becomes a "seer" of the end times and the Last Judgment. In the final section, John is given a revelation of the New Jerusalem, a command to record the truth of Revelation, and a premonition of the imminent arrival of the fateful day.

The narrative in Revelation is told in the first person — by John, who bore witness to the message given to him by God. While in a special ecstatic state (in the spirit), John heard a loud trumpet voice saying to him, " *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last* " (1:10). Turning around, John saw seven candlesticks, in the midst of which stood One like the Son of Man: " *clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire. And His feet were like fine brass* (a precious stone), *as if burning in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shining in its strength* " (1:13–16).

This fragment became part of a stable iconography, represented in both the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Catholic) traditions. The Son of Man, holding a double-edged sword, is depicted as white-haired and menacing. His specific representation alludes to the idea of the indepictable God the Father. In less dogmatically strict visualizations, one can encounter the image of the Ancient of Days [12]. The composition and structure of the icon are subject to fairly strict canons associated with the rite of sacred subject matter, but in frescoes and book miniatures, not consecrated as icons, the artist could allow himself a certain freedom, consistent with his purposes.

Here the introductory part ends and the central part of Revelation begins: finding himself "in the Spirit," John saw a throne over which a rainbow spread, and on it was One seated, surrounded by twenty-four elders in white robes with golden crowns. " *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. And seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

And before the throne was a sea of glass like crystal. And in the midst of the throne and around the throne were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And each of the four living creatures had six wings around it, and they were full of eyes within. And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come " (4: 5–9).

John saw a book sealed with seven seals, but no one could open it, which plunged the seer into grief, but one of the elders consoled him, pointing to the Lamb (the image of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice), who was able to open the book: " *And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as if it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent into all the earth* " (5:6).

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[11] Aune, DE Revelation. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas. 52 A.

[12] The Ancient of Days (from the Book of the Prophet Daniel) is a highly controversial iconographic depiction in Christian art: some see Jesus Christ in the image of the gray-haired old man, others see God the Father, and still others see the unity of the Father and the Son.

The Lamb begins to open the seals of the book, and after each of the first four seals is opened, the tetramorphs exclaim to John, " *Come and see* ," signifying the successive appearance of the apocalyptic horsemen. After opening the first seal, the Lamb releases a rider with a bow on a white horse. After opening the second seal, another horse, a red one, appears. And power was given to the one sitting on it to take peace from the earth, so that people would kill one another. And he was given a great sword. After the opening of the third seal, a black horse follows, and its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. After opening the fourth seal, a pale horse appeared, and its rider's name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with pestilence, and by the beasts of the earth. The opening of the fifth seal reveals under the altar the souls of those slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held (6:2–9).

The appearance of the apocalyptic host is perhaps the most widespread episode of Revelation. The European Middle Ages produced numerous terrifying, extraordinary, and poignant interpretations and images of horsemen, which migrate from the pages of manuscripts and frescoes into the art of subsequent centuries, right up to the present day. The symbolism of these apocalyptic warriors remains a mystery, increasingly captivating the imagination. What do their colors and attributes indicate, what is their purpose?

The first horseman appears on a white horse; white had positive connotations in the Middle Ages: the garments of the righteous and the robes of angels were white. However, is the image of a victorious horseman with a crown and bow (Rev. 6 *:* 1) positive or negative? The prominent early medieval theologian Irenaeus of Lyons (second century) believed that the horseman was Jesus himself, and the white horse was a specific medium for the spread of the Gospel. Some theologians considered this interpretation nonsense, since it would simultaneously make Christ both the Lamb and the horseman releasing himself. Furthermore, Christ on a white horse will triumphantly appear in Revelation 19.

Another interpretation of the white horseman, which has generated the most commentary, sees him as the Holy Spirit (a hypostasis of God), and the victorious bow as the apostles striking with the Spirit of the Word. However, this interpretation, in the context of the appearance and symbolism of the next three horsemen, who clearly represent the destructive principle, seems inaccurate. This leads to a negative reading of the horseman as a symbol of Roman imperial triumph (the white horse and crown are attributes of imperial majesty) or as images of false righteousness, false prophets, discord, civil war, and even the Antichrist.

The blood-and-fire color of the second horseman (with a sword in his hands, administering judgment in the name of God) has led to his association with war. Another interpretation harks back to the idea of martyrdom for Christ, who brought not peace but a sword, and the symbolism testifies to the blood of the righteous, shed for the Word of God.

The appearance of the third horseman on a black horse, holding scales, is marked in a special way: by the voice of one of the four animals, which speaks of the rising prices of barley and wheat, while emphasizing the sanctity of oil and wine. Some interpreters see in this image the idea of a supreme judgment over the mundane, as the scales in the rider's hands are a measure of human values and deeds (commodities, markets), as opposed to spiritual values, oil and wine, sacred materials used in Christian worship—symbols of human salvation. Other interpreters are inclined to see in the black horseman, bringing death, physical and spiritual hunger.

Perhaps only the fourth horseman on a pale horse provokes the least controversy and diametrically opposed interpretations, for his name is Death; he carries nothing in his hands, yet hell follows him. In the ancient Koine Greek dialect, the horseman's deathly color, "khloros," is more pronounced: ash, pale yellow, yellowish-green—and these colors characterized the pallor of a corpse.

In some translations, the horseman is sometimes called "pestilence" or "plague," and is depicted with a scythe or sword. The Book of Revelation of John was written in the first century, within the cultural framework of the Roman Empire. Christian exegesis, however, interprets the horsemen as a form of divine punishment, the sins of man. Another interpretation is positivist and historical: the horsemen are seen as either the rulers of Rome, hated by John, or specific disasters—plague, drought, famine, war. In any case, the Roman Empire's equestrians were recognizable not only for their militaristic ambitions but also for their general image of the emperor, a triumphant horseman. The apocalyptic horsemen are an allegory for God's empire, beginning its march on the world and executing its final judgment.

Fig. 10. A rider on a pale horse named Death carries a cup of hellfire in his hand. Behind him is *the gaping mouth of hell, where the devil pushes sinners. France, late 13th century. Paris . Biblioth è que nationale de France . Lat . 14410, fol . 11 r .*

The specific iconography of hell derives from the motif of soul-devouring, embodied in the images of an oven, a kitchen, or a mouth. " *Sheol and Abaddon* are *never satisfied* ," says the proverb (Prov. 27:20). The entrance to hell, or Hades in general, was depicted as an open mouth, similar to that of a lion (sometimes a wolf, a dog, a dragon, or a lion: " *Save me from the lion's mouth* " Psalm 22:22), and the source of the iconography was the literally visualized words of Scripture: " *Sheol is enlarged, and opens her mouth wide* " (Is. 5:14); " *As if we were cut in pieces and crushed, so our bones are scattered into the jaws of Sheol"* (Psalm 141:7). Early depictions of the mouth of hell date back to the 11th century: it gapes either upward, accepting and displaying sinners, or horizontally, "greeting" them *(see Figs. 32, 33, 35, 60).* The mouth of the leviathan was often understood as a metaphor for the gates of hell: " *Out of his mouth come flames, sparks of fire leap out; out of his nostrils comes smoke, as from a seething pot or cauldron. His breath kindles coals, and out of his mouth comes a flame. On his neck dwells strength, and terror flees before him* " (Job 41:11–14). The whale that swallowed Jonah was also identified with the leviathan, and its belly with hell.

With the opening of the sixth seal, a great earthquake occurred: the sun darkened, the moon turned like blood, the stars of heaven fell to the earth, the sky rolled up like a scroll—an earthquake began. Then all people realized that the Day of God's wrath had come and nothing could escape Him.

Fig. 13. In the fresco of the famous Scrovegni Chapel, Giotto depicted an angel rolling up the sky like a scroll (Rev. 6:14). Giotto, detail from The Last Judgment, early 14th century, Italy, Padua.

Afterwards John saw how the elect were sealed, so that the four angels who held the winds **would** harm the sea and the land, but not them *(see Fig. 14).* It is emphasized that those who believe and suffer for Christ will be deemed worthy of contemplating Him and staying near Him. The Lamb removes the last, seventh seal... And the end of the world begins: " *there was silence in heaven, and seven angels appeared who stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. Then came another angel and stood before the altar, having a golden censer. The angel took the censer, and filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it to the earth: there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they fell to the earth; and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up (see Fig. 15, 16, 19).*

"The third angel sounded, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from heaven and fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the waters because they became bitter. The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were struck,

so that a third of them were darkened. The day did not shine for a third of the time, nor did the night either" (8: 1-12).

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and John saw a star fall from heaven to earth, and it was given the key to the pit of the abyss. Smoke came out of it, everything became dark, then locusts with the power of a scorpion came out of the smoke to the earth to torment people without God's seal on their foreheads. After him, the king of the abyss appeared - Abaddon *(see Fig. 17, 59).* Having sounded his trumpet, the sixth angel released four angels to kill a third of people. The mounted army of death had armor of fire, hyacinth, and brimstone; the heads of their horses were like the heads of lions, from their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone, which killed a third of people (9:1-18; *see Fig. 50, 55, 63, 64*).

Fig. 17. The Apocalypse of Saint-Severus depicts Abaddon and locusts. In ancient Hebrew, abaddon —place of destruction—was originally an abstract concept of the space of non-existence, a synonym for Sheol-hell (the abode of all the dead). "Sheol and Abaddon are open before the Lord; how much more the hearts of the sons of men" (Proverbs 15:11). "Sheol is naked before Him, and there is no covering for Abaddon. He stretches out the north over the void; He hangs the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:6-7) . In the Book of Job, Abaddon is identified with death. The image of an angel appointed as ruler over hell appears in the 1st Book of Enoch. In Revelation, Abaddon is finally personified, marking the bottomless pit, the abyss, and destruction. In John, the Old Testament idea is contaminated with the Greek Apollo (the cult of Apollo the Destroyer was introduced by Emperor Augustus). The figure of Abaddon is linked to the medieval concept of hell—a place not of destruction, but of eternal torment for sinners. Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 8878, fol. 145v.

Chapter 11 tells of two chosen witnesses who prophesied for 1,260 days, after which they were destroyed by " *the beast that ascends out of the abyss* ." However, after three and a half days, the prophets will ascend to heaven. An earthquake will begin, 7,000 human names will perish, the seventh trumpet will sound, and the Liturgy of the Elders will continue, falling prostrate before God and asking for Judgment: " *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail* " (11:19).

The Woman appears, clothed in the sun, with the moon at her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She is confronted by a red dragon-devil with ten horns on his seven heads crowned with diadems, who desires to destroy the Woman and the Child. But " *war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, but they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. So the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him* " (12:7–9).

In the 12th chapter of Revelation, the devil appears (goes back to the ancient Greek *διάβολος* , Latin *diaboulus* - slanderer, accuser - arose during the translation into Greek from the Hebrew *ha - satan* "Satan"), appearing in the form of a many-headed dragon, for the faces of the unclean are countless. In the Middle Ages, the devil was the most common name for the supreme spirit of evil, but other designations of the infernal pantheon could also serve as his nomination: Lucifer, Beelzebub, Leviathan, Satan, the dragon, and others. The name Lucifer— " Daystar" in the Synodal translation — is taken from the Old Testament (chapter 14 of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, translated into the Vulgate), which tells of the "son of the morning" who trampled heaven, desired to be equal to God, became proud, and was therefore cast down to hell, into the depths of the underworld. The image of the Fallen One was further contaminated with the "anointed cherub" (from the Book of Ezekiel), seduced by his own beauty and expelled from Eden— to form a single negative character. The Devil acquired another of his many names — Lucifer: once radiant and beautiful, but later disfigured by

the patina of pride, an angel fallen into Tartarus — the prince of darkness. However, until the late Middle Ages, the name Lucifer was not popular; it caused a great deal of controversy between the word's negative semantics and its positive etymology (Latin: lucifer) . - the bearer of light, which was associated with Jesus), so in the early centuries preference was given to Satan and the devil.

In his vision, John continues to behold another apocalyptic monster given power over humanity: *"And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns. On his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were the names of blasphemy. The beast was like a leopard; his feet were like a bear's, and his mouth like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority."* John saw that one of his heads seemed mortally wounded, but this mortal wound was healed.

" *And all the earth marveled, following the beast; and they worshiped the dragon, which gave authority to the beast. And they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? And who is able to make war with him?' And a mouth was given to him speaking great things and blasphemies* " (13:1–5).

The thirteenth chapter gives an image of the third beast: " *I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the whole earth and those who dwell on it to worship the first beast. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which he was granted to do in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound by the sword and lived. And he was granted the power to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would both speak and cause everyone who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads; and that no one might buy or sell except one who had the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred and sixty-six* " (13:11–18).

It's quite difficult to understand the three demonic beasts presented in chapters 12 and 13 of Revelation. Is the author of these nightmarish visions merely depicting the many faces of Satan and evil in the universe? Or does each of these beasts have a specific semantic meaning? At the very least, their descriptions vary. They appear in the text sequentially, seemingly taking over from one another in their ungodly and destructive activities.

The first beast—the red dragon—pursues the woman clothed with the sun, thirsting to devour her child. The dragon's seven heads, each with ten horns, are crowned with seven diadems, and its tail draws a third of the stars from heaven to earth. This " *old serpent, called the devil and Satan,* " is cast down from heaven to earth along with all his angels of darkness. It's not hard to see an analogy here with the Old Testament's casting down of Lucifer.

The second beast, emerging from the sea, is described in somewhat greater detail. It has the same number of heads and horns as the first beast, but the number of its crowns has increased from seven to ten. The dragon transfers its power, throne, and authority to it. The second beast resembles a leopard, a bear, and a lion all at once. The resemblance to these three animals alludes to the Old Testament symbolic representation of three powerful ancient empires: Greece (leopard; Daniel 7:6), Medo-Persia (bear; Daniel 7:3), and Babylon (lion; Daniel 7:4). Another interpretation holds that the leopard represents the cunning of the Antichrist, the bear his stubbornness, and the lion his arrogance and greedy ambition.

The third beast comes out of the earth. It has two horns like a lamb, speaks like a dragon, and compels people to worship the beast from the sea. The third beast clearly continues the dark work of the first two beasts, drawing ever closer to people. It is this beast that deceives those living on earth with miracles, for example, by bringing down fire from heaven and also by inflicting on the

right hand or forehead of those deceived the mark of the devil, the number of the beast—666. The warning about this two-horned figure as a false prophet and false Christ performing pseudo-miracles extends from the 13th chapter of Revelation, from the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy (Deut. 13:2), as well as from the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 24:24).

All three apocalyptic beasts follow one another in the order of their appearance in the text. They are largely identical, yet they also have significant differences that should inform the reader. What is that?

In the 20th century, with the ever-increasing democratization of society and the unprecedented opportunity to profess almost any views, the algorithm for depicting and describing the evil, dark, satanic, and diabolical was especially clearly, distinctly and distinctly exposed, organized not only and not so much as an alternative, as distinct from the divine, but as a direct mirror opposite to the latter, as a travesty, desecrated likeness of God or a distorted The identity of Christ. A telling example is one of the nine commandments of Anton Szandor LaVey's The Satanic Bible, which states: " *Satan represents vengeance, and does not turn the other cheek* !" Such antitheses or reversals in the representation of evil always produce a certain effect, and therefore have been appropriated as a cinematic device. For example, in Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* , the main character, whose name clearly evokes the Virgin Mary, is destined to bear and give birth to the devil's offspring—the Antichrist.

Returning to the three apocalyptic beasts, we can now assume with a fair degree of certainty that they represent a perverted model of the divine trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The dragon-like first beast is called the " *old serpent* " and was cast down from heaven to earth. Its entire image, echoing both the serpent-tempter of Eden and the rebellious Lucifer, is constructed as a blasphemous rival to the Old Testament Sabaoth, as a contrast to God the Father. The second beast—the Antichrist—is depicted as a travesty of God the Son: his healed mortal wound alludes to the resurrection of Christ. In contrast to the Son of Man, he speaks blasphemously and calls for worship not of God the Father, but of the dragon—his terrifying double. The third beast is the successor of the first two and an inseparable part of the devil's trinity: on the one hand, he is a false prophet, like a preacher who introduces the word of God to the masses and recruits followers, and on the other hand, he is like the Holy Spirit, since it is he who " *was given the power to put spirit into the image of the beast* " (Rev. 13:15).

Having described in detail the three demonic beasts in chapters 12 and 13, in chapter 14 John testifies to the great moment of the harvest of the world and human souls: "And *one like the Son of Man sits on a cloud, and on his head is a golden crown, and in his hand is a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple and cried with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in your sickle and reap, for the time has come to harvest, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' And he who sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle to the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from behind the altar, who had power over fire, and cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, 'Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.'" And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the grapes in the winepress were trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even to the bridles of the horses, for a distance of one thousand six hundred furlongs* " (14:15–22).

Fig. 27. The grape harvest symbolizes the "harvest" of the world. England , 1320-1330 London . British Library. Add . M.S. 17333, fol . 28 r .

Chapters fifteen and sixteen describe the judgments of the seven angels in bowls filled with God's wrath: " *The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth: and there came a grievous and disgusting sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and on those who worshiped his image. The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea: and it became blood as of a dead man, and every living thing died in the sea. The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water: and it became blood. The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun: and it was given power to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God, who had power over these plagues, and did not repent, so as to give Him glory. "The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast: and his kingdom became dark, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds. The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates: and its water was dried up, that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared."*

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. These are the spirits of demons, working signs. These go out to the kings of the earth of the whole world, to gather them together to the battle of that great day of God Almighty (The image of foul language and blasphemy is also conveyed by the image of vile frogs crawling out of the mouths, *see Fig. 2: 8). Behold, I come as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame… And he gathered them together to a place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air: and out of the temple of heaven came a loud voice from the throne, saying, It is finished. And there were lightnings, thunderings, and voices; and there was a great earthquake, such as had not been since men were upon the earth. Such an earthquake! So great! And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His anger. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And hail, about a talent in weight, fell from heaven upon men. And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail: for the plague of the hail was exceeding grievous* (16:1–21, *see figs. 29, 30).*

Then comes the punishment of the Great Whore of Babylon, riding on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns. However, this is not just a woman, but a city that must be burned, *"standing afar off for fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe to the great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come* '" (18:10, *see Fig. 32*).

After this, another thousand years will pass, at the end of which Satan will be released from prison and will once again begin to corrupt the nations. But God's wrath will destroy him once again. In fact, this is where the Last Judgment begins: the sea gives up its dead, death and hell give up their dead, so that everyone will be judged (19–20).

These chapters constitute the central corpus of John's visions, consisting of three sections: the vision of the seals (6:1–8 : 1), the vision of the trumpets (8:2–11 : 14), and the vision of the bowls (15–16 :21). The narrative is full of apocalyptic symbolism and the unified imagery of the Apocalypse and the Last Judgment unfolding on earth. Each cycle of plagues increases in scale, culminating in a war between the forces of evil and the people of God and the final Judgment. Good is contrasted with evil, Babylon with the New Jerusalem.

In conclusion, John sees a new heaven and a new earth, after the Judgment. He is given a vision of the holy city—the New Jerusalem—prepared and adorned by God, like a bride for her husband: " *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them; they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes;*

and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away " (21:3–4).

The New Jerusalem is a lofty city of pure gold, like clear glass, adorned with multicolored precious stones and pearls, with twelve gates, at which are twelve angels. The wall of the crystal city has twelve foundations, and on them are the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. The length, width, and height of the city, built of jasper (or diamond), are perfectly equal. The city itself is a divine temple, the place of human life in God.

Alpha and Omega

When was the Revelation of John written?

The text of the Apocalypse definitely existed already at the beginning of the 2nd century, it was known to Papias of Hierapolis and the martyr Justin the Martyr . The earliest direct evidence for the text is found in Irenaeus of Lyons, who believed that the revelation was received by John at the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian (81–96) . [13]Theophylact of Bulgaria, however, wrote that John was exiled thirty-two years after the ascension of Christ, that is, during the reign of Nero (54–68). Traditionally, scholars associate the time of the text's creation with the latter's reign. The image of the "beast" (17: 7–11), on which the "great harlot" sits, is associated in Revelation with the notorious persecutor of Christians—the power-hungry, voluptuous Emperor Nero. The heads of the "beast" are identified with seven kings, of whom " *five are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come, and when he comes, he will not continue for long* ." In the 3rd century AD . In his commentary on Revelation, Victorinus of Petavia, drawing on the legend of Nero's resurrection, combined the images of the emperor and the Antichrist. According to a popular theological theory that became established in the 19th century, the diabolical number 666, when written in the Hebrew alphabet, in which letters have their numerical equivalents, spells out the phrase "Nero Caesar."

As with everything related to deciphering the symbols of Revelation , this is just one version, which, upon closer examination, crumbles like the shaky houses of the two pig brothers in a popular fairy tale. Traditionally, the number of the beast in all translations is the famous number of the devil — 666 (χξς). However, in the oldest known manuscript of Revelation , Papyrus 115 (housed in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University), as well as in other ancient sources (*the Codex Ephraemi, the testimonies of Tichonius, Irenaeus, and others*), the number of the beast is given as 616 (χις). In current modern commentaries on the New Testament, the number 616 already appears as one of the options, and in the second century CE, Irenaeus of Lyons also knew of this number but considered it a copying error. In ancient times, numbers were written with letters: through a simple operation, any number could be converted into a set of letters, and vice versa, a word or phrase could easily be translated into a number. Such operations were called isopsephy (in Kabbalah, gematria) and were extremely popular in antiquity. Therefore, the question of Ephraim the Syrian (c. 306 – 373) seems quite logical: " *Did he who uttered the number of the name not know the name of the beast? First, he knew the syllables, and then he decomposed the name into letters; first he uttered the name to himself, and then, having put the letters together, he uttered the number, that is, that the letters make up six hundred sixty-six* ? [14]"

More than one theological spear has been broken over the interpretation of the number 666. The first theological discussions on the numerical decipherment of the beast's name date back to the second century CE. In his work "Against Heresies," Irenaeus of Lyons proposed several names (numbers) that added up to 666: Euthanas, Latinus, and Titan. The most convincing version was the name of a powerful and vengeful Titan, who, in Irenaeus's view, was similar to the sun and revered by

[13] Iraeneus. Adversus haereses libri V, 30. 3.

[14] Ephraim the Syrian. Creations. M., 1994. T. 3, p. 190.

many peoples and authorities. Jerome's interpretation (inherited from Irenaeus through Victorinus) repeats the Greek name " *Teitan* ," numerologically translating it into Latin as " *Diclux* " —a false sun—the Antichrist (this definition will frequently appear in Latin commentaries on Revelation). Ecumenius (6th century) proposed new readings in his commentaries on Revelation (Lampetius, Benedict) . However, he went further, reading into the cherished numerals not just proper names but also common nouns: "violent," "evil leader," "true destroyer," "vicious lamb." Primasius (6th century) deduced Anthemos—"enemy of honor," and Arume—"I deny," while Andrew of Caesarea (6th - 7th centuries) suggested that the absence of the pernicious name in the book was God's design.

In the 19th century, theologians hypothesized that the number 666 is a coded Hebrew spelling of the name "Nero Caesar." During Nero's reign in the eastern part of the Roman Empire Coins were minted with the Hebrew inscription " נרון קסר ", meaning "Emperor Nero" (Latin: *Neron Caesar*). If we consider not the letters themselves, but their numerical values (according to the rules of Hebrew gematria), their sum will be equal to 666. Strange, but true - this theory is supported by a fragment of a verse found during excavations in Oxyrhynchus , stating that the number of the devil is 616. If we take as a basis the correct Latin spelling " *Nero Caesar* " (the nasal sound "n" is not transmitted in it, unlike the Greek), then the sum of the numerical values will decrease by 50 and will be equal to 616, therefore, in either case (*Nron Qsr* - 666 or *Nrn Qsr - 616),* Emperor Nero is calculated .

The Number of the Beast is a kind of Christian MacGuffin: it's impossible to know the meaning behind the numerical sequence. For example, in the 20th century , the German theologian Ethelbert Stauffer deciphered the "Number of the Beast" as the name of Emperor Domitian , Nero's main rival for the title of Antichrist. Thus, depending on the calculation and the cultural and historical context, the symbolism of the number in different eras could point to Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, and others.

the beast's name signifies Emperor Nero, Domitian, the Pope, Martin Luther, or another powerful ruler, dictator, despot, usurper, or revolutionary remains unclear. Yet, precisely this ignorance underlies the enduring relevance of Revelation, allowing the symbolism of the Antichrist to be linked not to any specific figure, but to imbued with new, topical interpretations. In any case, the underlying thrust of marking nations is linked to the idea of worshiping the beast-Caesar as an absolute ruler, or even an allegory for the earthly empire as a whole, while swearing allegiance to it denied man's connection to the true judge and ruler — God.

The historical context of the creation of the text of Revelation refers to the opposition of Christians in the first centuries of the Roman Empire, while the opposition of the faithful and the unfaithful, the right and the wrong, remains a part of human culture.

Thus, the emergence of Revelation at the end of the first century is largely determined by historical realities, as this text encodes an image of Rome at the time as a decadent, decaying kingdom mired in sin. The image of Rome in this case is likened to that of Babylon and alludes to the events of the sixth century BCE — the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem, which rhymes with the Roman capture of Jerusalem in 70 CE, followed by the momentous "destruction of the Temple."

Other, less popular hypotheses regarding the time of the composition of the text of Revelation have been put forward: under Titus, Trajan, Hadrian—but the dating problem comes down to a choice between the early (late 60s, in any case, before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70) and late (mid-90s – late 1st century) dates [15]. Moreover, the early polemics of the patrists regarding the authorship of Revelation further complicate the picture: sometimes identifying the author with the Evangelist John [16], sometimes refuting this point of view, even attributing the text of Revelation to the heretic Cerinthus, while Dionysius the Great proposed seeing the author as the Apostle's namesake [17]. The question of the authorship of the Apocalypse remains not only open but also provides extensive field

[15] Revelation of John the Theologian // Orthodox Encyclopedia. Vol. 24, pp. 705-706.

[16] Origen. Commentary on the Gospel of John // Theological Works, No. 38, p. 112

[17] Caesarea, Eusebius. Church History. St. Petersburg, 2013, pp. 148 (26), 344 (25).

for comparative studies of the texts of the New Testament corpus, phraseology, Christology, and speculative theories.

Finding parallels with real events, on the one hand, provides dating markers, but on the other, it risks reducing the interpretation of a complex, symbolic work to a set of historical facts.

The Revelation of John the Theologian became the last book New Testament , summarizing a series Judeo-Christian texts eschatological And providentialist character . The uniqueness of the Apocalypse lies not only in its symbolic summation of eschatological prophecies, but also in the fact that the Revelation of John seems to bring the biblical story of creation, the universe, history, and humanity full circle and thus concludes it. Reflecting the beginning and summing up the conclusion, the Apocalypse became the alpha and omega of tradition and covenant. If the Book of Genesis (the first book and a kind of prologue to all Scripture) presents the process of God's creation of the world, which took seven days, then the Apocalypse (a kind of epilogue) concludes the Bible—closing the book of human existence. Revelation seems to become a mirror image of the Book of Genesis, only it tells not of the creation of the world, but of its gradual collapse in the process of apocalyptic chaos and the Last Judgment. The creation of the world is akin to an engineering feat, a structure composed of earth, sea, sky, man , order, and so on. The Apocalypse, however, deconstructs this system, dissecting and dismantling the world brick by brick, revealing the blessed infinity of the New Jerusalem to the righteous and condemning sinners to eternal hellish torment. The paradisiacal existence of the New Jerusalem is practically hidden from John, the seer of the mysteries, remaining unimaginable to the mind and inaccessible to the eye—a space of the fusion of God and man. Since human empiricism has not yet experienced such a state, its unambiguous description is impossible. The experience of the New Jerusalem is transcendental, inhuman, immaterial; its definition can only be realized through apophatic definitions: through the denial of createdness, matter, and the world as such. The presentation of the process of dismantling the world to nothing is achieved in the Apocalypse not only thanks to the shocking images of the Last Judgment and the Wrath of God, but also through the strict and harmonious structure of the text, held together by numerical and symbolic (animals, angels, luminaries, etc.) symbols, which become more complex as the narrative develops.

The uniqueness and originality of Revelation, which contains various elements of the poetics of prophecy, speech addresses, features of the epistolary genre and even tragedy, are more than obvious upon careful reading.

Metamorphoses of Perception

How did contemporaries and early church fathers perceive such a vivid and convincing work about the coming End of the World?

For two thousand years, the text of Revelation has been one of the most commented upon in the New Testament corpus. It consistently engages readers, stimulating thought and provoking diverse interpretations. Scholars and theologians continually and tirelessly ponder it, making it impossible to consider and accommodate all opinions, perspectives, and views on Revelation . However, the vast diversity of interpretations can be distilled down to just a few exegetical algorithms.

The primary question troubling everyone was when and where the Kingdom of Heaven —the New Jerusalem—would arrive. During the second century, Revelation gained widespread dissemination and acceptance. Patristians, like the apostles, were convinced that the Last Judgment and the Second Coming would not simply occur in the near future, but were already occurring "here and now." The sense of the imminent or already present End of the World has always distinguished the Christian Church from other faiths and mythologies. The most notable and important development of the Middle Ages was the development of a universal interpretation of the Apocalypse, uniting the views of many different authors (Hippolytus of Rome, Commodian, Victorinus of Petau, Methodius of Olympus, Lactantius). This view of the Apocalypse is linked to the concept of a cosmic week,

after which Armageddon will occur, but it will be preceded by a thousand years of abundance and grace — the seventh day. This formula reflects the events of the Book of Genesis: just as the world was created by God in six days, followed by a Sabbath of rest and blessing, so the world must last for six thousand years, and with their end the millennial kingdom of the saints will begin. Irenaeus Lyon , Justin Martyr and Tertullian considered , What Kingdom of Christ will triumph on earth and Christ with the righteous in the flesh will rule the world for a thousand years, after which the final battle between Good and Evil and the Last Judgment will take place.

In connection with the six-day creation of the world, the cursed six in the number of the beast also acquired new meaning. Irenaeus believed that the world, created in six days, would last for 6,000 years. Accordingly, the number of the beast, consisting of " *six hundred, six ten, and six units* ," symbolizes the complete restoration by the Antichrist of all the apostasy that occurred during the 6,000 years of the world's existence: "And therefore in the coming beast there will be a restoration of all wickedness and all deceit, so that all the power of the apostasy, having gathered and confined itself in him, will be cast into the furnace of fire. And incidentally, his name will have the number 666, because he restores in himself all the mixture of evil that existed before the flood and that arose from the angelic apostasy [18]. " In the interpretation of many medieval theologians, the number 666 symbolizes the threefold proclamation of creation without the Sabbath and the world without the Creator, which signifies the threefold and final renunciation of God.

Victory over the forces of demons and dreams of a thousand-year reign of the righteous were extremely popular and were based on a literal reading of Revelation: " *They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years* " (Rev. 20:4). The idea of this millennium is repeated six times in chapter 20. However, the Church Fathers differed in their interpretations of the details: whether the age of grace would come before or after the Resurrection, before or after the Judgment, and so on.

For the first time, the Alexandrian school of theology no longer perceived Revelation as a prophecy of a millennial reign on earth. Origen and Clement proposed an allegorical interpretation of the work, shifting the emphasis to the Christian's spiritual life not in the future, but in the present age. The theologian Tichonius, in his fragmentary extant commentaries, rejected the understanding of the millennial reign as a period following the Second Coming of Christ. It was Tichonius, who influenced Augustine's teaching, who interpreted the millennium as the period of the Church's existence on earth, the beginning of which had already been marked by the saving events of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Following this thought, Blessed Augustine believed in Chapter 20 of The City of God that the thousand-year kingdom of the righteous is the already existing Church, thus, the Last Judgment is the torment of the cross and the death of Christ, after which, for those who believed in him, and, consequently, the saved, the era of the Kingdom of Christ begins in this world, in the time and history that man lives through.

As persecution of Christians waned, and the Church became firmly established and fully recognized, interest in the Apocalypse also waned. By the fifth century, the Eastern Church Fathers began to doubt the very canonicity of the text, which became less popular in Orthodoxy than in the West, where the patristics rejected millenarianism and the idea of the End of the World as a predictable, imminent future.

Although John the Evangelist's text by no means lost its appeal in the eyes of Western theologians, it was read symbolically or as an allegory of spiritual life and the development of a Christian. Conceptually, the Apocalypse was connected to the problems of the individual soul and the paths to personal salvation in the writings of Bede the Venerable, Beatus of Liébana, Ambrose of Outpert, and Gaimon of Auxerre. Medieval intellectuals continually turned to the Apocalypse for inspiration, and new interpretations continually emerged. Some considered Revelation the only text

[18] Irenaeus of Lyons. Against Heresies. Proof of the Apostolic Preaching. St. Petersburg , 2010. Book V, Chapter XXVIII, p . 517.

written by Christ himself, while others considered it the most important book of all Christian doctrine [19], the "flower of theology [20]. "

At the end of the 12th century, Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202) perceived Revelation as a prophecy about the course of human history, to which various sections of the book correspond. Believing that he lived during the opening of the sixth seal, Joachim boldly correlated individual images with contemporary realities: in the sixth king, corresponding to the sixth head of the beast, he saw Saladin, who recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders. In each of the seven heads of the dragon, he saw a sign of the devil, realized in history: seven kings, of whom " *five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come* " (Rev. 17:10), the five "fallen" kings-antichrists — Herod, Nero, Constantius, Muhammad, Melsemut, and the Antichrist, Joachim's contemporary — Saladin. The final Antichrist is identified with the "beast from the sea" who will come in the near future. In some cases, Joachim interprets the same series of visions in relation to events from different eras. According to Joachim of Fiore, Revelation maps the course of all human history and provides the key to understanding all of Scripture. Several decades after Joachim of Fiore's death, interpretations appeared by the Franciscan Alexander Minorite and then by Nicholas de Lyra: Revelation was no longer viewed as a multifaceted symbolic-historical text, but as a reflection of specific historical events in their strict chronological sequence. Only with the onset of the Reformation did a comprehensive textual analysis of the Revelation of John the Evangelist become relevant.

The milestones in the development of theological polemics about the coming Last Judgment and the attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven were reflected in changes in Christian iconography [21].

Apocalypse in pictures: visualization

Depictions of the apocalypse are rare until the end of Constantine's reign. By the end of the fourth century, Christianity was established as the official religion of the Roman Empire under Theodosius (391): early Christian art flourished, doomed to adhere to Rome's good old imperial ambitions. The iconography familiar to Romans acquired new meanings, dissolving into Christian ritual [22]. The one Christian God increasingly manifested himself in recognizable, solemn images of emperors and pagan gods. Fresco and mosaic were Christianized, and the Fayum portrait mimicked the icon. Just as the new invisible God became visible, so the coming apocalypse acquired its visible equivalent.

However, the catacomb frescoes and sarcophagi created before Constantine contain the origins of Christian iconography and elements that would later become integral to the visual program of the Apocalypse. Individual symbols—the Alpha and Omega [23], the lamb, the palm branch, the separation of the wise and foolish virgins, the good sheep and the wicked goats (Matthew 25:1–33) —would be compositionally combined on the walls of churches in the 5th and 6th centuries in Rome and beyond. And to them will be added new images that will enter the arsenal of the artistic language of Christian culture: a lamb standing on a throne, the preparation of the throne for Christ as a sign of the Second Coming (*Hetoimasia* - the prepared throne), a scroll with seven seals, seven candlesticks, angels, the

[19] Russell, J. Commentary on the Apocalypse. Oxford, Merton College MS. 172.

[20] Deschamps, E. Oeuvres complètes de Eustache Deschamps. Paris. Vol. 2, r. 186.

[21] For the Western tradition, imagery has never been the subject of dogmatic debate, as it was in the East. The Roman Church declared illustration secondary to the text of Holy Scripture; drawing is complementary, "pleasing the eye and soul" of the reader with visual images. This is why many illuminated manuscripts have survived, including Apocalypses.

[22] The depiction of the theophany, the image of God in triumph and heavenly glory, is a striking example of the Roman imperial tradition and new, Christian motifs.

[23] The Greek letters A—the first in the alphabet—and Ω—the last—refer to the omnipotence of Christ, who encompasses all of creation, from the beginning of time to its end. These two letters appear repeatedly in the text of the Apocalypse, as well as in early Christian art.

worship of Christ by 24 elders in the form of homage to the emperor, rooted in the court ceremonial of antiquity (*A urum coronarium*).

The mosaic of the Roman basilica of Santa Pudenziana from the late 4th - early 5th centuries, meticulously restored in the 16th century, nevertheless preserved the idea of representing the Last Judgment: Christ sits among the apostles, above him is depicted a vision of Jerusalem merging with Golgotha, on which stands a monumental cross - a symbol of death and resurrection, beginning and end, surrounded by the Four Living Creatures in the rays of the setting sun.

The appearance of the Four Living Creatures, quite common in Christian art, is unusual. It derives from the description of a single creature, the tetramorph, from the prophecy of Ezekiel (ancient Greek: *τετρά-μορφος*— "four-shaped, four-formed"), combining four faces: a man, a lion, a bull, and an eagle. In chapter 4 of Revelation, John the Theologian continued this tradition, but describing each of the four creatures separately—the guardians of the four corners of the Lord's Throne and the four boundaries of Paradise. These animals were later interpreted as symbols of the four evangelists.

The triumphal arch above the apse of the 5th- century Basilica of San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome features the adoration of the Lamb by the 24 Elders at its center—just like the old façade of St. Peter's . And the mosaic of [24]the 6th- century Church of St. Cosmas and Damiano abounds with signs of the Second Coming in numerous visual references to the text of the Apocalypse: a lamb on a throne, a scroll with seven seals, seven candlesticks, and the four living creatures.

sixth- century monuments continue the eschatological baton: in the dome of the Basilica di San Vitale, a lamb in a medallion, carried by four angels, recalls the Last Judgment. On the north wall, angels hold an apocalyptic cross. In Theodoric's Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, the Passion of Christ, the Resurrection, and the parable of the separation of the good sheep from the wicked goats capture the Gospel eschatology: to the right of Christ is a red angel, guarding the sheep (the righteous), and to the left, next to the goats (the sinners), is a blue one (Matthew 25: 31–33 , *see Fig. 42)* . The Basilica of St. Michael in Africisco (Chiesa San Michele in Africisco) depicts Christ seated on a throne, surrounded by seven angels with trumpets, complementing the apocalyptic narrative. On the façade of the basilica in Poreč, Croatia, from the sixth century, apocalyptic images of seven candlesticks testify to the anticipation of the Last Judgment.

A collective eschatological statement that had developed by the 9th century. The scene in the conch of the apse depicts the coming Second Coming of Christ. The Lamb standing on a mountain, the tree of life, and the rivers of paradise express the idea of the heavenly Jerusalem. In the center is depicted the Savior walking on red, blue, and green clouds. In his left hand, Christ the Lawgiver holds a scroll (*traditio) . legis*) with the Greek letters A and Ω. This image illustrates the beginning of the Apocalypse: " *Behold, He comes with clouds, and every eye will see Him, including those who pierced Him... I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End* " (Rev. 1:7-8) . Christ's right hand is raised, bearing the marks of the nails—stigmata—a symbol of torment, death, and resurrection. The scroll with seven seals and the lamb surrounded by the Four Living Creatures, the empty throne awaiting Christ, symbolizing his reign and the Second Coming, Christ himself standing among the apostles—all these are vivid images of the End of the World, visualized in mosaics and on the pages of manuscripts.

The abundance of apocalyptic motifs in early Christian art can be interpreted as a reflection of eschatological reflections on the actual arrival of the last day, expected relatively soon after the already accomplished Resurrection of Christ. The timeless, triumphal character of the images affirmed by the representation of Christ is linked to the interpretation of the "true parousia"—a concept in Christian

[24] Survived image see : Eton College Library. MS. 124, f. 122r.

theology that originally denoted both the invisible presence of the Lord in the world from the moment of His appearance and His coming into the world at the end of time.

On the one hand, the abstraction and dehistoricization of the Apocalypse was the result of the exegesis of Tichonius and Augustine. On the other hand, theology linked the heavenly and earthly worlds—not least through the fusion and identification of the image of the ruler with that of Christ. The concept of the divine origin of kingship acquired strength and significance. This process resulted in changes in iconography: the idea of God—and especially Christ—was personified not in the good shepherd, but in the emperor, the Pantocrator-Almighty [25]. Not only iconography changed, but also the very understanding of the world: everything physical acquired its metaphysical dimension. Christian culture was enriched and filled with signs, symbols, and interpretations, the decipherment of which depended on knowledge of Holy Scripture. The world was conceived through text. The word, possessing a sacred nature, became fundamental to understanding all of life and the structure of existence. Therefore, contemplative study, meditative copying and contact with the sacred text were embodied in the cult of the manuscript book, as well as in the beauty of the miniatures that accompanied it.

Although the development of manuscript culture—the creation and reproduction of sacred texts—was one of the most important components of Christianity, illuminated Apocalypses from the early Christian period and late antiquity have not survived, but they certainly existed from the fifth century onward. However, later works inherited the earlier imagery, allowing us to reconstruct two traditions: first, early Christian Romanesque prototypes, which influenced the iconography of Central Europe and the early medieval Spanish tradition; second, North African prototypes of the fifth and sixth centuries, reflected in the Apocalypse of Beatus [26].

Even Constantine the Great, who had conceived the idea of creating a second capital for the Roman Empire, chose between the contenders Milan, Trier, Troy, and Byzantium. The choice fell on the latter, which was immediately renamed Constantinople in honor of the emperor. In the 9th century, Charlemagne, crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III , proclaimed Aachen, located near Trier, as his capital. The so-called "Carolingian Renaissance" had begun. Charlemagne's imperial ambitions inspired him to turn to the established formulas of Roman and early Christian art: the lost mosaic of the dome of the imperial chapel in Aachen depicted the well-known scene of the adoration of the throne by the 24 elders (*a urum) . coronarium*), also recorded in the depiction of the adoration of the lamb in the late Carolingian Codex Aureus of Emmeram (Aureus of Saint Emmeram , circa 870) [27].

The influence of the late antique tradition is also found in other Carolingian monuments. For example, the Prologue of St. John from the Gospel of St. Medard (Plures fuisse É vang é liaire de Saint - M é dard de Soissons (early 9th century) [28]shows a free depiction of the early Christian worship of the lamb, combined with a late antique image of the sea (" *and before the throne a sea of glass like crystal* ," Rev. 4:6) and architectural motifs symbolizing the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse in the form of a richly decorated permanent backdrop of the ancient theater (*scaenae) frons* — the backdrop of an ancient theatre, *see Fig. 4 4) [29].*

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[25] Apocalyptic imagery in monumental art from the 9th to early 12th centuries remained virtually unchanged. The motifs of the elders' adoration of the lamb and the "transmission of the laws" described above are represented in numerous monuments in Rome and beyond: in the hall of the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano, in Santa Cecilia in Trastevere and Santa Maria in Trastevere, in San Marco, San Giovanni a Porta Latina, the Church of San Sebastian on the Palatine Hill, and the Basilica of San Clemente. They are also found in the apse of the Basilica of San Elias near Nepi, San Pietro in Tuscania, the Church of San Sebastian in Tivoli, and elsewhere.

[26] Klein , PK Der Apokalypses-Zuklus der Roda-Bibel und seine Stellung in der ikonographischen Tradition // Archivo espanol de Arqueologia , 1974, p . 45-47. Klein, PK La tradicion pictorica de los Beatos // Adas del simposio para el estudio de los codices del Commentario al Apocalipsis de Beato de Liebana, 1980, p . 99-104.

[27] Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000.

[28] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 8850, 1v, 180v.

[29] TO to others early medieval cycles relate monuments Carolingian period — Ottonian And Romanesque cycles VIII–XII

As a result, the image of the Roman Empire, which is depicted in the Revelation of John exclusively in monstrous allegories, became an integral part of the discourse of power and the iconography of the Apocalypse.

An outstanding example of medieval Romanesque art is the Apocalypse, now housed in the Trier Library [30]. This early ninth- century manuscript, created in the northern scriptoria of the Charles Empire, in the Abbey of Saint-Martin in Tours, or in the city of Cambrai, where a partial copy survives [31], contains 74 full-page miniatures and is considered the earliest and most complete illustrated Apocalypse to have survived from the Carolingian era. The Trier Apocalypse, while not entirely based on an ancient manuscript, absorbed the late Roman visual tradition, adapted for Christian expression: Satan traces the image of Bacchus, and the angel traces the goddess of victory, Nike. The images of paradise and the lamb are borrowed from Roman mosaics, as are many other details: the earth is represented by a human figure, and God's punishments and evil are represented by a dragon, depicted as a winged serpent. The Whore of Babylon riding the Beast harks back to the iconography of the goddess Isis riding the dog Sirius on Roman Gnostic coins *(see Fig. 45)* . A book is depicted as an ancient scroll, and the painful expressions of the tragic faces are reminiscent of ancient theatrical masks. The personified winds are depicted as naked busts with winged heads, a reference to the wide-brimmed winged hat "petasus" of Hermes (sometimes medieval artists depicted horns instead of wings, misunderstanding the origins of the iconography). The Apocalypse unfolds in the architecture of ancient cities; the angels are dressed in Roman togas, with laurel wreaths adorning their heads. The specific arrangement of the illustrations within the text also harks back to late antique examples [32]. However, despite the direct connection with the ancient tradition, the text itself is written in the Vulgate and a specific Carolingian minuscule (font) [33].

Among the entire tradition of visualizing the Apocalypse, the Beatus cycle stands out , having appeared in Spain in the 8th – 9th centuries. It is distinguished by its schematic illustrations, reminiscent of the distinctive graphics of Dendy video game consoles. The first versions of these were created during the lifetime of Beatus, a priest who wrote a commentary on the text of the Apocalypse [34]. The combination of bright, primitive images with Beatus' commentary on the main text transformed Revelation into an entertaining and instructive "comic," while the distinctive iconography "preserved" an early North African type of imagery, also present in the Coptic tradition. Such visual interpretations reflected the mnemonic technique of the Benedictine monastic practice (*Lectio Divina*), which consisted of reading and memorizing the text, meditating, and reflecting on its content.

It is much more difficult to determine the origin of the medieval image of Christ in Majesty (*Majestas Domini*), inspired by the vision of God in the Apocalypse (chapters 4-5) , as opposed to the Eastern Byzantine type, drawn from the visions of Ezekiel.

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centuries : Apocalypse from Liege 9th century (Valenciennes Bibliothèque municipale. MS. 99) and Carolingian Apocalypse of the 10th century (Bibliothèque nationale, MS. nouv. acq. lat. 1132). Both based on Northumbrian samples of the 8th century .

[30] Trier, Stadtbibliothek. Codex 31 .

[31] Cambrai, Bibliotheque municipal MS.386.

[32] See characteristic For Carolingian apocalypses iconography And location in Virgilius Magiana. Rome, Vat.lat.MS. 3225.

[33] Klein, P. K. Die Trierer Apokalypse. Graz, 2001, pp . 148-163.

[34] Twenty-six manuscripts from the 9th – 12th centuries (from Spain, primarily from monasteries in Catalonia, Aragon, and Navarre) have survived, either completely or in fragments. They are named after Beatus of Liebana (Latin: *Beatus Liebanensis* , Spanish: *Beato de Liebana* ; c. 730–after 798), a monk from the monastery of Santa Maria in the Liebana Valley (Spain), who wrote a commentary on Revelation, "Commentary on the Apocalypse," in 776. This "Commentary" was supplied with numerous illustrations, executed, apparently, on the instructions of the author or with his participation. The work enjoyed great popularity in Spain in the 10th–12th centuries.

The Western prototype is present in early medieval manuscripts depicting Christ with a book sealed with seven seals, seated on a globe or throne, surrounded by the Four Living Creatures (symbols of the Evangelists). If we compare the Christ in Powers from the Codex Amiatinus (c. 700) [35]and the early Trier Apocalypse (early 9th century) [36], both based on Italian models of the 6th century, we can see how the Western, "Roman" type was combined with the "Eastern," Byzantine type of depicting Christ in Powers. It was in the second quarter of the 9th century that a unique Carolingian style was created in the scriptoria of Tours. Such enduring visual symbols emerged as the mandorla (a distinctive halo surrounding Christ), the rainbow throne (on which Christ sits), the arched throne, and the Four Living Creatures framing the image.

A consistent iconography of the Apocalypse is recorded in numerous manuscripts and monumental art of the "Carolingian Renaissance," which influenced the artistic canon of churches in Germany, France, and Italy from the 9th to the 13th centuries. [37]Isolated scenes from the Apocalypse are also found in illuminated manuscripts [38]. These typically consist of a depiction of the Son of Man amidst seven candlesticks (1: 12–20) and an apocalyptic-decorative initial in Romanesque bibles. Sometimes Christ was depicted in power, seated on a globe (either a globe or a rainbow, holding a book in his hands, surrounded by a mandorla), as in the 11th- century "Maximinian" Gospel [39]or the Admont Bible, which depicts Christ from the vision of the prophet Ezekiel [40].

In both imagery and interpretation, the Church lived with a premonition of the Second Coming, placing its hopes and aspirations in the Last Judgment as the triumph of justice and faith in Christ. Early Christians keenly sensed the coming Kingdom of Heaven, the Judgment, punishment, and retribution. Justin Martyr (110–165) wrote: " *I and other sensible Christians throughout the world know that there will be a resurrection of the body and a millennium in Jerusalem, which will be built, adorned, and exalted* . " [41]However, the Second Coming, expected any day, never arrived, so its arrival was delayed for 1,000 years. The change of millennia has always been painful and fatal for humanity, a striking example being the transitional year 1000 and the dates surrounding it [42].

Bernard, a Thuringian hermit, took these words of Revelation: " *And I will strike her children dead: and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will render unto every one of you according to your works* " (Rev. 2:23), " *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away: and there is no more sea* " (Rev. 21:1) as the text of a sermon, and in about 960 publicly declared that the End of the World was near. Bernard even gave the exact date of the fateful day, which was to occur when the date of the Annunciation coincided with the date of Good Friday, and such a day was to fall in 992.[43]

The eschatological monk Drutmar of Aquitaine, abbot of the Benedictine monastery in Corbie, predicted the end of the world for March 24, 1000. In many cities [44], belief in the impending apocalypse was so strong that people sought refuge in churches to spend the night in prayer to the

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[35] Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana. Codex Amiatinus, fol. 796 v.

[36] Trier, Stadtbibliothek. VS. 31. Weitzmann K. Late antique and early Christian book illumination. NY, 1977, p . 24.

[37] Baumstark , A. Die karolingisch-romanische Majestas Domini und ihre orientalischen Parallelen. Or. Christi. , 1927 , pp . 240-260.

[38] Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana. M5. B. 25.2.

[39] Berlin, Staatsbibliothek. Gültbuch von St. Maximin Trier. MS. Teol. lat. fol. 283.

[40] Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. Cod. ser. nov. 2701, 206r.

[41] Justin Martyr . Dialogue With Tryphon // Monuments of ancient Christian literature in Russian translation. Vol . 3. M. , 1862 , ch . 80 .

[42] Read more research eschatological eschatology : Landes R., Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography, 100-800 CE // The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages. Leuven, 1988.

[43] See : Lemprière J. Lempriere's universal biography. NY, 1826, b. 220. Michelet J. L'histoire de France. Paris, 1835, 2:132. Landes R. The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000 // Speculum, Vol. 75, 2000, r . 97-145.

[44] Druthmar Christian. Expositio in Matthaeum Evangelistam, 24.42.

saints at their relics and crosses. The first page of a manuscript by monk Raoul Glaber describes a premonition of the imminent arrival of Satan, " *as John foretold, when the thousandth year shall come, and that shall be now* . " [45]Sylvester II , Pope under Otto III, calculated the official date of the apocalypse, which reinforced the terrifying mood in Europe. During his reign, the famous illuminated manuscript, which vividly depicted images of the coming Day of Judgment, was produced - the Bamberg Apocalypse [46], as well as the later Carolingian Apocalypse from Munich (both were created in Reichenau) [47].

Another important and frequently encountered theme in connection with the apocalypse is the image of the Last Judgment and the Archangel Michael defeating the dragon (serpent). Since the 9th century, scenes of the Last Judgment have adorned the western walls of cathedrals. The earliest surviving example is the frescoes from the church of the Benedictine monastery of St. John in Müstair (Benediktinerinnenkloster St. Johann , Müstair, early 9th century, Switzerland). Unlike the Byzantine iconography of the Last Judgment, the Western one is much closer typologically to the representation of the Apocalypse. Forming a single motif, two angels with books are depicted on either side of the Judge (Rev. 20:12), St. Michael piercing the dragon with a spear, saints accompanied by angels, Heavenly Jerusalem, and the bride of the lamb (Rev. 21–22). Later, the image of the Last Judgment became more complex due to the addition and detailing of scenes.

Under the influence of book miniatures, monumental art—fresco—developed. The baptistery of the cathedral in Navarra (Italy) depicts majestic scenes from the Revelation of John, dating from the 11th century. Extraordinary 11th-century Lombard frescoes, preserved in northern Italy at the Abbey of St. Peter in Civate (Abbazia di San Pietro al Monte), depict Eden, the rivers of paradise, evil in the form of griffins and chimeras in the narthex , the Archangel Michael and his companions defeating the dragon on the western wall of the choir , and the Adoration of the Lamb by eighteen persons, including eight women and ten men, in the dome of the ciborium above the altar. The surviving scenes from the Apocalypse in the central nave of the French abbey of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe (Vienne, 1100) immerse the viewer in the figurative world of Romanesque emblematic monumental art.

The late 10th and early 11th centuries were a terrifying time in European history. Between 980 and 1040, it seemed as if the angel of death himself had spread his wings over the world: famine reigned, pestilence swept across Europe, and a disease known as St. Anthony's Fire—ergotism, a gangrenous disease of the extremities that burned away people's bones—raged. Sufferers besieged the roads leading to holy sites, especially the relics of St. Anthony, filling churches with the stench and the spirit of death. The passions of this disease are captured in Hieronymus Bosch's triptych, "The Temptation of St. Anthony." As a result of the crisis of hygiene and medicine, unable to cope with the human plague, approximately 40,000 people fell victim to the plague in the Aquitaine region of southern France. The Black Death decimated vast swathes of Europe, and then came famine. From 987 to 1060, a long period of famine and epidemics raged. The Hungarian invasion began, and the horrors of Attila the Hun returned: the Hungarians represented a different anthropology and an alien culture, leaving a frightening, terrifying, and terrifying impression on the inhabitants of Europe, whose territories were devastated. Raoul Glaber describes scenes of a terrible state of decline and human impotence, including cannibalism. Historical circumstances were perceived as the beginning of an apocalypse. In proportion to the popularity of eschatological ideas, a figurative tradition also developed: from the 11th century onward, an increasing number of manuscripts were created on the

[45] Glaber Rodulfus. Historiarum libri quinque ab anno incarnationis DCCCC usque ad annum MXLIV.

[46] Kaiser-Heinrich-Bibliothek der Staatsbibliothek Bamberg. MSc. Bibl. 140.

[47] The Northumbrian model of the Apocalypse manuscripts dates back to the 8th century; the Anglo-Saxon abbot Benedict Biscop (c. 628–690) brought this tradition to England in 676 from his travels to Rome, which served as the source of the iconography for the Bamberg Apocalypse, the frescoes on the north wall of St. Peter's Cathedral V Monkwearmouth (Abbey Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Monkwearmouth–Jarrow) and many others monuments .

theme of the Revelation of John. A vast Romanesque cycle of apocalypses emerged, dominating medieval Europe from the late Carolingian period until the beginning of the Gothic era (9th – 13th centuries). These manuscripts are united by a common style of majestic and large-format illustrations; their number grew, the drawings became more detailed, acquiring exegetical significance. The images of the Romanesque cycle can be found not only on the pages of manuscripts: wall frescoes, decoration, and church sculpture also developed within the same paradigm. Early precursors of the Romanesque tradition in manuscripts are scenes from the Apocalypse from Carolingian bibles: the Moutier-Grandval Bible (Tours, 830–840) [48], the Vivian Bible (Tours , 846) [49], and the Bible from San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome (Reims, circa 870) [50]. Their frontispieces depict the Lamb and the Lion, the Holy See (Rev. 5), angels, or an image of a church symbolizing the messages (Rev. 2:3).

As if taken from the pages of Romanesque manuscripts, the frescoes of the Abbey Church of Saint-Chef (third quarter of the 12th century, France) depict monumental scenes from the Apocalypse on a large scale: the 24 Elders, Christ in His Might, the Judgment, and the Heavenly Jerusalem. The much less well-preserved frescoes of the Church of St. John the Baptist in Clayton (England, second quarter of the 12th century) are executed in the same stylistic manner , as are the majestic fresco fragments from the Abbey of Saint-Polycarpe (Aude, France, second half of the 12th century). Grandiose frescoes adorn the interior of the Romanesque double church of St. Mary and Clement in Bonn (Doppelkirche St. Maria und Clemens, Germany, second half of the 12th century).

From the late 12th to the 13th centuries, the iconography of the apocalypse continued to develop, with scenes and images becoming more complex: adoring elders sat on thrones in a semicircle around Christ, holding cups or musical instruments in their hands. One of the earliest examples is Saint-Sever Beatus (mid- 11th century) [51].

In the 12th century, transformed elders appear in images of the missal in the treasury of the Abbey of Saint-Germain in Auxerre (Abbaye Saint Germain d ' Auxerre) and on the tympanums of the portal of the Abbey of St. Peter in Moissac (Abbaye Saint Pierre de Moissac). The most striking examples from the Romanesque cycle are the Bible from the monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes (Girona, Spain) [52]and the Lombard Beatus from Berlin [53], which differs from the pectoral Spanish tradition described above.

Around the beginning of the 12th century, a unique cycle of frescoes was created in the crypt of the Cathedral of Anagni (Italy)—one of the most important surviving ensembles of the Middle Ages [54]. Scenes from the Apocalypse are integrated into a complex narrative about the microcosm and macrocosm. Man, his creation, and natural history are linked with the events of Holy Scripture and the lives of heavenly beings. The fresco scenes depict the signs of the zodiac, Noah's Ark, and the prophets. In the apse itself, over the story of the martyrdom of St. Magnus, the patron saint of Anagni, scenes from the Apocalypse are depicted: four living creatures surround a lamb with seven horns, seven eyes, and a sealed book, while elders, holding cups, address it in prayer. The eastern, rather than the western, part of the crypt depicts the Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the opening of the seals, and the Son of Man with hair as white as snow, fiery eyes, and a double-edged sword protruding from His mouth . He sits on a rainbow with keys in his right hand—a symbol of the keys of heaven and the keys of hell, where evil will be imprisoned after the Judgment.

[48] London, British Library. MS Add.10546

[49] Bibliothèque nationale de France. MS lat. 1

[50] Cardinali, M. La Bibbia carolingia dell'Abbazia di San Paolo fuori le Mura . Vatican, 2009.

[51] Saint-Sever Beatus. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 8878.

[52] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Manuscript. lat. 6.

[53] Berlin, Staatsbibliothek. Theol.lat., fol. 562.

[54] Ravasi, G. The Crypt of the Cathedral of Anagni. Genova, 2012, p. 10.

Other Italian monuments also date back to this period: frescoes conveying early Italian imagery in the transept of the Basilica of St. Elias near Lake Nepi (Basilica di Sant ' Elia), poorly preserved frescoes in the nave of San Severo in Bardolino (Chiesa di San Severo, Bardolino, second half of the 12th century) and two manuscripts of the New Testament by Veronese (early 13th century) [55].

The Romanesque tradition is represented not only in Italian monuments, but also in the cycles of miniatures of Central Europe: the commentaries on the Apocalypse of Archbishop Haimon of Auxerre (Haimo Autissiodorensis, ca. 865) [56]and the encyclopedia "Book of Flowers" (*Liber floridus*) [57]Lambert of Saint-Omer (Lambertus de Sancto Audomaro (1120), containing approximately 60 scenes from the Apocalypse [58]. A characteristic feature of the style of these manuscripts is their abundant illustrations: a page offers numerous images, accompanied by a few inserted quotations from the text of Revelation. The frescoes in the gallery of the cathedral in Gurk (Dom zu Gurk, Austria, 1260–70) are also executed in a similar style.

Influenced by the intensive development of apocalyptic imagery in manuscripts of the 12th and 13th centuries, church decoration, including bas-reliefs and sculpture, also became more complex. From now on, scenes of the Last Judgment on the tympanums of Gothic cathedrals loom grandly over the congregation; inside, demons writhe and grimace from the capitals, tormenting sinners, while Archangel Michael pierces Lucifer with a spear. Furthermore, many apocalyptic scenes are depicted in carved bone reliquaries.

The Romanesque capitals of the portico of the Abbey of Saint-Benedict on the Loire (Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, France, second half of the 11th century) depict a scene with the four apocalyptic horsemen, while the capitals of the southern galleries of the aforementioned monastery in Moissac (Cloître de l'abbaye Saint-Pierre de Moissac, 1100) represent the four horsemen and the apocalyptic beast. The tympanum of the portal of the Church of Saint-Pierre in La Lande-de-Fronsac, Gironde (Église Saint-Pierre de La Lande-de-Fronsac, 12th century) depicts Christ with a double-edged sword. On the vaults of the porch of the Romanesque abbey church of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe (France, circa 1100), the New Jerusalem, represented as the bride of Christ, and a choir of the saved are carved in stone.

Certainly, exegetical practice had a primary influence on the formation of the iconography of the Apocalypse: different biblical images could be combined, and the new synthetic image, in turn, generated new meanings. For example, in the fresco in the apse of the Church of St. Pere (10th - 11th centuries), the Archangel Michael fights with a seven-headed dragon. This image is placed next to the Adoration of the Magi. The dragon spews water from its mouth, aiming at Mary from the adoration scene. The fusion of two different plots is associated with one medieval interpretation of the Apocalypse (Chapter 12), voiced by Ambrosius Outpert . Autpertus , 730–784) [59], and his followers, Gaimo of Auxerre and Berengaudus (Berengaudus , *Expositio super September visions libri Apocalypsis , see Fig. 8, 27*) [60], who identified the Mother of God with the Woman from the Apocalypse, clothed in the sun, and Herod with the seven-headed dragon *(see Fig. 22).*

A unique frontispiece to St. Augustine's manuscript of The City of God, housed in Oxford (c. 1130–40), depicts Christ enthroned among the apostles beneath the City. Below and to the left, the Christ-like Archangel Michael casts the defeated Satan out of the Heavenly City with his spear (Rev. 12:7–9), while to the right is the gracious Church, represented as a Woman (the Virgin Mary) clothed

[55] Rome, Cod.Vat.lat.39.

[56] Oxford, Bodleian Library. MS. 352

[57] Ghent, University Library. MS. 92

[58] Scenes of the apocalypse from the Book of Flowers are available in multiple copies.

[59] Commentary on the Apocalypse. Ambrosius Autpertus Bibl. Patrum, xiii. 403. Haimo of Auxerre. PL 117:1085, Berengaudus. PL 17:876f.

[60] Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Berengaudus, fl. ca. 859.

in the sun. In her arms, she holds, protectively, newly baptized souls, reborn from sin and immune to Satan's attacks, while the old body of a newly baptized soul lies nearby (Rom. 6:22) [61].

12th- century fresco from the crypt of St. Stephen in Auxerre Cathedral reveals a confluence of imperial ambitions and theological ideas in the image of Christ the Equestrian, seated on a white horse (Rev. 19:11–16). Christ is depicted in the context of the ceremony of Rome's triumphal entry into the city (*Adventus* : in ancient Rome, the formal greeting of the emperor after a military campaign) facing a frontal depiction of a huge cross and accompanied by a heavenly army of riding angels.

Christ on horseback can also be seen on the capital of the choir of the church of Saint-Nectaire (Puy - de -Dôme, France, 12th century): the Savior, dressed in a red toga and seated on a white horse with a bow and arrow, is combined with an image of the Last Judgment carried out by the Archangel Michael. And on the capital of the choir of the church of St. Peter in Chauvigny (É glise Saint - Pierre de Chauvigny , France, 12th century) Archangel Michael, carrying out the Last Judgment, is combined with the image of the Babylonian harlot and the fall of Babylon itself - the idea of the collapse of evil.

Around 1130, a magnificent tympanum, one of the masterpieces of Romanesque sculpture, was created on the theme of the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of Autun, France (Cathédrale Saint-Lazare d'Autun). At the very center of the composition, in a mandorla, surrounded by angels, sits Christ on a throne. To the right, the righteous enter the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, opened by the Apostle Peter. To the left, the Archangel Michael, on one side, and the devil, on the other, weigh the souls of men. Above this scene is an inscription stating: "Let the horror of these images terrify sinful, earthly people, for all the terrible things depicted here will truly happen [62]." The judgment is surrounded by scenes from the Apocalypse. The arches of the vault above Christ are decorated with zodiac signs and medallions depicting the seasons and seasonal activities. The existence of the planets and natural cycles—the time of the world—is subordinated to its Creator and moves toward an inexorable end that will expose all human deeds. The relief's symbolism consistently reflects the theological views expressed by Honorius Augustodunensis (c. 1080–1156), a medieval scholastic, historian, and philosopher. The third book of Honorius's encyclopedia, Elucidarium (*Lamp*), enthusiastically discusses Christian eschatology. In the spirit of Socratic dialogue, it discusses the Antichrist, the Second Coming, the Last Judgment, and Purgatory, demonstrating the torments of hell and the joys of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Honorius's ideas are also linked to the interpretation of the Woman Clothed with the Sun as the Church-ecclesia. This interpretation of the Virgin Mary is presented in the famous "Garden of Delights" (*Hortus deliciarum*) — the first encyclopedia written by a woman, Herrada of Landsbergensis (1130–1195), a Benedictine nun and abbess of the Hohenburg Monastery. Completed in 1185, the manuscript was one of the most famous of its period, a compendium of 12th- century knowledge. However, in 1870, the manuscript perished, surviving only in copies. In addition to encyclopedic topics, the text contained excerpts from Greek and Arabic authors, Herrada's poems set to music, and numerous illustrations, 336 of which covered a variety of topics: theosophical, philosophical, literary, including discussions of the Apocalypse.

The popularity of medieval interpretations of the Apocalypse was also reflected in monumental art: in unique iconographic programs, such as the frescoes of the All Saints' Chapel in Regensburg (Allerheiligenkapelle, Germany, circa 1165). They depict motifs from the Liturgy of All Saints, based on the commentaries of Honorius and Rupert of Deutsch on scenes from chapter 7 of Revelation: angels hold back the winds from the four cardinal directions, the sealing of the sons of Israel, Christ Pantocrator ascending in the dome, and a choir of the elect before the throne of God. These scenes

[61] Oxford, Bodleian Library . MS Laud misc. 469.

[62] Kleiner, F. Gardner's Art through the Ages: The Western Perspective Volume 1. Boston, p . 317-319.

are executed according to the canon of Byzantine iconography and are analogous to the mosaics of the Palatine Chapel in Palermo [63].

The progress of the 12th and 13th centuries affected various areas of applied culture: ceramics, blacksmithing, and glassmaking. The windows and stained-glass windows of monumental Gothic cathedrals were decorated with scenes from biblical lore, including apocalyptic scenes. Daylight shimmered through the stained glass (light, beauty, and harmony are emanation from God, according to the scholastic project realized in Gothic art), illuminating images of the Last Judgment drawn from manuscript miniatures [64].

During the 13th century, cities flourished across Europe, stimulating the development of universities, the arts, and intellectual culture [65]. Images of the Last Judgment appeared with renewed vigor in the architecture of Gothic cathedrals: they adorned the central portal of Notre-Dame de Paris, later the north portal of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Reims, St. Stephen's Cathedral in Bourges, and many others.

The extraordinary rise in culture was also reflected in the tradition of illuminated manuscripts, in particular the apocalypses of France and England in the 13th and 14th centuries, executed in the Gothic style to match the new, elevated type of architecture.

The Gothic type of Apocalypse arose around the 1240s in England in the context of discussions about the End of the World, inspired by the sermons of Joachim of Fiore (Gioacchino yes Fiore). Besides him, many European thinkers expected the coming of the Antichrist around 1260.

The "Morgan group," a collection containing similar illustrated copies of the Apocalypse, is [66]an example of the Gothic cycle . In the first versions, the illustrations were accompanied by commentary by Berengadus, and later the text of Revelation itself was added. In copies from 1245–55, the images occupy a significant portion of the page and are more colorful and detailed. The text of Revelation and its commentary are placed beneath the three-dimensional image, appearing as a modest addition. The total number of images in these manuscripts ranges from 80 to 100. Scenes depicting the deeds of the Antichrist and the apocryphal life of John were added to the traditional visual set of Revelation illustrations of the Romanesque period [67].

The exquisite Gothic style began to spread throughout northern France and Flanders in the late 13th century, and soon captivated other European nations. The extensive "Morgan Group" comprises approximately 100 manuscripts from the 13th to 15th centuries, produced throughout Europe. Initially, they were intended for monasteries, as the illustrations conveyed theological thought. However, commissions for these new apocalypses increasingly came from the aristocracy and the court, resulting in exegetical picture books being transformed into exquisite tomes for personal use, increasingly embracing entertainment and decoration, intricacy and luxury.

From this extensive family of European Gothic manuscripts, a specifically English tradition of apocalypses is distinguished: the "Metz group," which arose in the mid- 13th century; the "Westminster group," to which the Apocalypse from The Cloisters Museum (New York) , created in Normandy, [68]belongs [69]. The Trinity College Apocalypse, Cambridge, summarizes the early English Gothic tradition *(see Fig. 4, 11).*

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[63] Traeger , J. Mittelalterliche Architekturfiktion: Die Allerheiligenkapelle am Regensburger Domkreuzgang. Munich, 1980, p . 34 - 77. Visser D. Apocalypse as Utopian Expectation (800-1500): The Apocalypse Commentary of Berengaudus of Ferrières and the Relationship Between Exegesis, Liturgy, and Iconography. Brill , 1996, pp. 3-4.

[64] Eco, U. History of Beauty. Moscow, 2014, p. 89.

[65] Goff, J. L. Intellectuals in the Middle Ages. St. Petersburg , 2003.

[66] See : Morgan Librart, MS. 524, Bodleian Library MS Auct.D.4.17., Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 403.

[67] Morgan, N. Early Gothic Manuscripts. Oxford, 1988, p. 158.

[68] Metz, Biblioteque municipal. MS. Salis 38. London, Lambeth Palace MS.209. Getty Museum, MS Ludwig III, Oxford, Bodleian

Magnificent Gothic manuscripts of the Apocalypse inspired artists in Foggy Albion to create frescoes in Westminster Abbey, and in France , the creators of the grandiose "Apocalypse of Angers." The Gothic Cathedral of Saint-Maurice in Angers was adorned with a series of unique tapestries depicting numerous scenes from the Apocalypse, woven from wool and silk (between 1373 and 1381) for Louis I of Anjou by his court weaver, Nicolas Bataille.

At the same time, on the continent, independently of England, its own Gothic tradition was developing. The Bible, moral or popular (*Bible The Biblia pauperum (moralis é e , Biblia pauperum*) is a voluminous illustrated tome commissioned by the French royal family between 1220 and 1230 in Paris—a striking example of medieval art. The manuscripts contained both the text of the Bible and commentary-illustrations in the form of small medallions, one after the other. The pictorial tradition of moral bibles influenced many medieval monuments: miniatures, decoration, including the sculptures of Reims Cathedral, which depict over a hundred scenes from the Apocalypse.

Some 85 miniatures illustrating the commentaries of the Franciscan monk Alexander of Bremen (Minorite, c. 1242) continued the tradition of historical interpretation of the Apocalypse in the German Gothic cycle. Alexander's work, inspired by the views of Joachim of Fiore, provoked the development of a visual tradition that synthesized historical facts and apocalyptic symbols: Roman emperors became horsemen of the apocalypse, heresiarchs sounded their trumpets as apocalyptic angels, and real figures from chronicles were portrayed as demonic monsters. Historical figures appear as equivalents [70]: in the scene with the four winds (Rev. 15), the angel bearing the seal of the Living God is interpreted as Constantine the Great, and the two-faced angels trampling the winds, depicted as animal heads, are interpreted as the pagan emperors Maximinus, Maxentius, Licinius, and Severus [71]. This manuscript survives in various copies and may have influenced later works, such as the 45 panels on the Apocalypse from an altarpiece created around 1400 by the Master of Bertam.

The iconography of some other German Apocalypses may also have reflected specific political or spiritual ideas. Heinrich Hessler (Heinrich von Hesler , a poet from a noble and influential family, wrote a verse rendering of the Apocalypse, popular within the Teutonic Order, where manuscripts of his works, complete with miniatures, were produced [72]. The illustrations reflect the specific ideology of the Teutonic Order: one miniature depicts knights in the Order's armor, alongside the Prince of the End Times, fighting against Gog and Magog , while the next image depicts the baptism of Jews by a priest of the Teutonic Order *(see Fig. 62)* [73].

Manuscripts and copies of the Apocalypse were created across Europe, and cathedrals were erected, replete with visualized scenes of the Last Judgment and the New Jerusalem. Years of unending premonition of the apocalypse dragged on. The Black Death (the plague of 1346–1353) raged , giving [74]rise to images of a macabre dance in which the Bony One indiscriminately carried away tsar, merchant, priest, and peasant. The idea of the inevitability of pain, suffering, and death, as well as the equality of every person, regardless of status, in the face of this inevitability, exerted a

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Library, MS Douce 180. Cambridge, Trinity College, MS. Roy. 16.2.

[69] Deuchler, F.; Hoffeld, J.M.; Nickel H. The Cloisters Apocalypse. An early 14th manuscripts in fact. NY, 1971.

[70] Prague, Kaptulni knihovna, MS Cim. 5. Dresden, Staatsbibliothek, MS. A. 117. Wroclaw, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Ms. IQ19. Cambridge, University Library, MS. Mm. V. 31.

[71] Cambridge, University Library, MS Mm.5.31, 32v.

[72] Mentzel-Reuters, A. Bibeldichtung und deutscher Orden: Studien zur Judith und zu Heinrichs von Hesler Apokalypse // Daphnis, 26, 1997, p . 209-261. Klein, K. Zur Überlieferung der Apokalypse Heinrichs von Hesler // Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, 1999, p . 66-72.

[73] Stuttgart, Wurttembergische Landesbibliothek, MS. Hb. XIII. Helm K. Die Apokalypse Heinrichs von Hesler aus der Danziger Handschrift. Berlin, 1907.

[74] Over the next several centuries, the plague did not leave the European continent; until the 15th century, epidemics broke out here and there every 6 to 12 years, and sometimes even more frequently.

powerful influence on the medieval mentality, gradually eroding and destroying faith in the salvific chosenness of the clergy, who perished just like the most hardened sinners. Salvation from the Black Death depended on luck, hygiene, and immunity—but not prayer. Skepticism and hopeless irony permeate Boccaccio's Decameron, in which ten representatives of the "golden youth" of 14th- century Italy organize a "feast during the plague" in order to brighten the painful expectation of imminent death with frivolous and entertaining stories.

The 14th century was marked by cataclysms : the Great Famine, which began in 1315, gave way to the Black Death, the Guelph-Ghibelline feud in Italy, the Hundred Years' War in France, and the Tatar-Mongol yoke in Eastern Europe. These disasters were understood as apocalyptic punishments, giving rise to unique religious movements and doctrines. News of yet another catastrophe, spreading throughout towns and villages, provoked outbreaks of both deeply Christian and anti-Christian beliefs, often leading to collective psychoses that expressed themselves, on the one hand, in extreme piety and asceticism, and on the other, in Sabbaths, ecstatic dances, and the mass murder of Jews. Ancient superstitions, tabooed by the church, were resurrected: spells, magic, witchcraft, sorcery, and witchcraft—the devil surged into the everyday world with renewed vigor, tempting us with temptation at every turn; and religious extremes, in turn, became a frantic reaction to all this outrage.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.