

Jay Rubenstein. *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: The Crusades, Apocalyptic Prophecy, and the End of History.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. 304 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-027421-4.

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Gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay loom large in Jay Rubenstein's excellent monograph, *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*. According to the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon had a dream of a statue comprised of these elements being felled by a naturally hewn rock. Winds dispersed the shards of the statue but in their place remained the great mountain of a rock that had collapsed it. The prophet Daniel interpreted this dream as referring to four kingdoms that would rule on Earth but then be dispersed by the will of God and replaced by the great mountain that represents his rule. Rubenstein's monograph considers an intellectual trajectory that wrapped this dream of Nebuchadnezzar into larger arguments about the Apocalypse, Antichrist, and crusading some fifteen hundred years after the life of Daniel. In doing so, Rubenstein makes a lasting contribution to our understanding of crusading ideology by showing the importance of apocalyptic thought to both soldiers and spiritual thinkers involved in this nascent movement.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream is divided into four parts comprising twelve chapters. Part 1 (chapters 1-5) traces the movement of apocalyptic prophecy in the aftermath of the First Crusade from Anatolia to western Europe. The idea of inserting the crusading movement into the dream of Nebuchadnezzar came from the crusader leader Bohemond of

Antioch while he was imprisoned in Anatolia. He interpreted the crusaders as the stone that would crush the earthly empire ruling over the Holy Land (the gold empire of the Arabs), an idea that was theologically rough around the edges but compelling enough to require the attention of Christian thinkers. When Bohemond returned to Europe to muster support for a new crusade, his ideas were refined by encyclopedist Lambert of Saint-Omer, who saw the First Crusade as a climax of history. His vision of history, which drew on early Christian thinkers like Augustine and Orosius, positioned this expedition as "a moment of spiritual transformation, an event that promised to remake the entire world, starting at Jerusalem and spreading out geographically to every place touched by a victorious Christendom" (p. 48). This was an optimistic view of the Apocalypse in which the First Crusade was the "opening act of the End Time," though this perspective would fade as the success of this expedition gave way to more troubled campaigns to the Holy Land (p. 63).

Lambert of Saint-Omer's vision of the First Crusade was undermined by the actions of its participants, as Rubenstein explores in part 2 (chapters 6-7) of *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*. Upon returning to Europe, many of the supposedly penitential warriors of Christ (namely Thomas of Marle) engaged in horrific acts of violence that made Chris-

tian writers question the idea that they would automatically be granted entrance into heaven. The prevalence of crusaders behaving badly helped inspire the formation of the Knights Templar, which Bernard of Clairvaux praised using some of the apocalyptic overtones found in Lambert's writings. The disastrous Crusade of 1101 and defeat at the Battle of the Field of Blood furthered disillusionment about the merits of crusading. Even before the disaster of the Second Crusade, there was therefore real skepticism about the righteousness of the crusading cause. Nonetheless, some Latin authors still interpreted these events with an eye toward prophecy, as seen in the presentation of the Islamic ruler Tughtegin as a "servant of Antichrist" and in the fate of his ally Il-Ghazi, who "literally shat out his soul while being carried on a litter" (p. 96).

Part 3 (chapters 8-10) considers the widespread disillusionment about the idea of crusading brought about by the Second Crusade and the subsequent distancing of apocalyptic thought from this enterprise. Three authors are central to Rubenstein's analysis: Bernard of Clairvaux, Otto of Freising, and Gerhoh of Reichsberg. Bernard of Clairvaux was an outspoken advocate of the Second Crusade and saw the world as being on the cusp of entering a fourth era—that of Antichrist. As such, he "drew on the apocalyptic imagery that shaped historical readings of the First Crusade," although a lack of surviving sources makes it difficult to determine how heavily he leaned on this interpretation of world history (p. 122). Nonetheless, the failure of the Second Crusade drew criticism of both its participants and preachers. Bernard blamed the crusaders for the defeat and thought there needed to be another expedition; some theologians blamed Bernard himself and saw him as being in league with Antichrist. Otto of Freising was one such author who criticized Bernard and refuted his historical paradigm. Instead, Otto advocated a theory of history based on the translation of power (*translation imperii*) from East to West—from Babylon to Rome. This movement of imperi-

al power away from the Holy Land removed the necessity for Jerusalem (or the First Crusade) to be a central component of the Apocalypse. Gerhoh of Reichsberg expanded on this idea to argue that the Investiture Controversy was the ultimate clash of secular and ecclesiastical power. In this duel between Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII, the former "had wrecked the world and opened the door for Antichrist" in a way that was independent of the fate of Jerusalem (p. 158).

Rubenstein analyzes the rhetoric of apocalypse and holy war in the context of the Third Crusade in part 4 (chapters 11-12) of *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*. Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem in 1187 and the subsequent call for the Third Crusade required theologians to revise once again their narratives of history. Joachim of Fiore was one such theologian. He developed a vision of the past based around the idea of the Trinity with "mathematical precision unlike anything previously attempted" (p. 183). Returning to the original dream of Nebuchadnezzar, he saw the iron kingdom as that of the Muslims, which would eventually be struck down by Christianity—the naturally cut stone from the mountain. In Joachim's vision of history, the threat of the Saracens "runs throughout his many oracular pronouncements, a nightmare war between East and West that would endure, like iron, even to the Last Days" (p. 207). Joachim preached a version of this prophecy to Richard I while he was in Sicily en route to the Holy Land, thus enveloping this (ultimately unsuccessful) crusader leader into his vision of the Apocalypse.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream is as informative as it is entertaining. Rubenstein has clear mastery of a substantial corpus of medieval and historiographical sources that allows him to traverse the complex ideas of medieval theologians with grace. The above summary cannot do justice to Rubenstein's ability to synthesize the convoluted, contradictory, and ever-changing logic of Latin apocalyptic writers into modern English. He deftly navi-

gates these murky waters and convincingly shows how these authors were able to square apparent circles in logic—often with pointed humor that keeps the reader engaged. Take, for example, his acknowledgment of the medieval and modern difficulties of pinning down what was and was not a holy war: “Like pornography, you knew it when you saw it” (pp. 68-69). This book will undoubtedly become required reading for students of crusading history and inspire scholars to consider the linkages between apocalypticism and holy war. Rubenstein shows that, contrary to the assertion of previous Crusades scholars, apocalyptic ideas did not stem from despair or hysteria, but instead were spurred by a real desire to understand history and salvation (p. 214). This was a desire shared not only by theologians like Lambert of Saint-Omer and Joachim of Fiore but also warriors like Bohemond of Antioch and Richard the Lionheart. Rubenstein’s argument thus opens the door for future work to consider the previously disregarded linkages between ideologies of the Apocalypse and holy war both within and outside the context of the crusading movement.

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