Title
The End of Things: Reading Exegetical Apocalypticism in the Prefatory Miniatures of Private Female Ottonian Manuscripts

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Publication Date
2016

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The End of Things: Reading Exegetical Apocalypticism in the Prefatory Miniatures of Private Female Ottonian Manuscripts

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

by

Diana Amada Navarrete

June 2016

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank my advisor and thesis chair Dr. Conrad Rudolph. His dedication to teaching and research has been an inspiration. His razor sharp insight and focused mentoring has elevated this project to its full potential. I also want to thank my other committee members, Dr. Jeanette Kohl and Dr. Kristoffer Neville. Jeanette was the first person to read any part of this thesis, and her subsequent questions were instrumental in focusing my argument. Kristoffer has been a positive force during my time at UC, Riverside and has among other things, helped me tighten my writing and understand commas.

I also want to thank Alesha Jaennette, our graduate coordinator, for more than can reasonably fit in one page. Her cheerful demeanor and genuine care for us all, both as people and academics, has made this stressful process a little sunnier. Along those lines, I also want to thank my cohort for being my fonts of laughter and tough questions.

I need to thank my family, especially my parents Juan and Rosa Navarrete for all of their support. As a first generation college student, I appreciate their support and enthusiasm as I embarked on this unfamiliar journey. Finally, I want to thank my partner Chris Rackauckas. His singular style of humor and criticism continuously reshaped my thinking and allowed me to have fun with the topic.
The End of Things:
Reading Exegetical Apocalypticism in the Prefatory Miniatures
of Private Female Ottonian Manuscripts

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Introduction

The Bamberg Commentaries (Msc. Bibl 22) and the Isaiah Commentary (Msc. Bibl 76) were created circa one thousand C.E. These manuscripts are composed of several textual elements including two commentaries by English theologian and Doctor of the Church, Bede, and two commentaries by the Church Father Jerome.¹ The commentaries are on the Song of Songs, Proverbs, Daniel, and Isaiah. Full-page prefatory miniatures presented on facing folios precede three of the four commentaries.

Historically, these manuscripts are believed to have been made as part of a set for either Otto III or his cousin and successor Henry II.² The Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary were donated to the bishopric of Bamberg during the early eleventh century where they were rebound during the fifteenth century along with other books in the library. In the nineteenth century, the manuscripts were transferred to the Bamberg state library where they are currently preserved.³

The manuscripts have been praised as outstanding examples of the Ottonian style of manuscript illumination coming from the Benedictine monastery at Reichenau. The monastery is believed to be the center for Ottonian manuscript production, and has been celebrated for developing a signature visual rhetoric, which is considered by many to be both effective and authoritative. Although their contents are studied separately, scholars

group them together stylistically along with the Bamberg Apocalypse and a few others as part of the Liuthar group of manuscripts created in Reichenau at the turn of the millennium.\textsuperscript{4} The abbey’s fame was an integral part of Reichenau Island’s admittance into UNESCO’s world heritage site lists. The Bamberg Commentaries is itself also on a UNESCO list (World Memory) for its iconic Ottonian style.

For the purposes of my thesis, I will be focusing on the prefatory miniatures, analyzing them in light of historical and religious activity that might have led to the unique visual rhetoric employed in the miniatures. To my knowledge, no scholar has attempted to link the exegetical text with the visual content of these miniatures. For my thesis, I am looking to connect the innovative illuminations of the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary with the exegetical texts they accompany along with certain religious or theological shifts, such as the rise in apocalypticism during the time of its creation.

As stated above, these manuscripts were part of a commission for either Otto III or Henry II. The commissioning of these particular commentaries suggests a possible thematic connection. The Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary were finished by the turn of the eleventh century, in my opinion due in part to the increased apocalypticism in the year 1000.\textsuperscript{5} The elaborate two-page prefatory miniatures along with the heavy emphasis on the elect, salvation, theophany, apocalypse, and eschatology lead

me to believe that the illuminations are meant to be used as a guide for the eventual end of time.

The first chapter of this thesis is a technical introduction to the manuscripts. This chapter argues that these two manuscripts should be read as a single unit. They are both thematically and formally similar and cohesive, indicating the probability that they were originally meant to either be a single manuscript or be part of the same set. In order to properly detail this connection both a historiographic introduction and an introduction to the manuscripts themselves is provided.

The second chapter dives deep into the relationship between the exegetical text and the images. Why were these images chosen as the preface for these commentaries? What significance do the exegeses have on the specific imagery used? In order to do this I will be reading Bede’s and Jerome’s commentaries along with the commentaries that they drew from. Understanding how the texts affected the illumination of the manuscript can help shed light on how the different texts are meant to be used as a single unit. This strategy is particularly productive due to the lack of adherence to a literal illustration of the Biblical text. This chapter will also explore the connections between apocalypse, eschatology, and the production of the manuscript. If there is such a connection, the iconography of the miniatures highlight what would have been considered proper and necessary behavior from those who expect to be part of the elect after the last days.

In my conclusion, I will make the case for who the original intended reader of this manuscript was. There is significant visual and historical evidence that suggests that a king like Otto III or Henry II would have little to no use for a manuscript of this kind.
The incredible familiarity with the biblical and exegetical text necessary to fully understand this manuscript is usually reserved for someone high in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The inclusion of “The Good Wife” excerpt from Proverbs as well as the emphasis on female figures in the miniatures, leads me to believe that the manuscript was originally intended for a female. Perhaps the miniature was commissioned by Otto III (or someone in his court) for his eldest sister and the Abbess of Gandersheim, Sophia I.

Taking everything into account, my research into the history and contexts of this manuscript will be a nuanced addition to the scholarship on the subject. As of now, the manuscript has been studied solely from a stylistic perspective. When it is mentioned outside of the context of Ottonian manuscript illumination, it is usually used as a small example in a larger argument, for example Kristen Collins’ use of the images in an argument about the changing visualizations of Mary in the Ottonian world.⁶ My research will provide a historical, visual, and religious studies outlook on the manuscripts that will deepen our understanding of the complexity of the Ottonian manuscripts coming from Reichenau at the turn of the millennium.

Chapter 1: A Technical Introduction to the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary

The Bamberg Staatsbibliothek contains a collection of manuscripts owned by Henry II and donated to the bishopric of Bamberg by the king in the early eleventh century. Among these books are two illuminated manuscripts containing exegetical commentary on four books of the Bible. Although their contents are studied separately, scholars group them together stylistically along with the Bamberg Apocalypse and a few others as part of the Liuthar group of manuscripts created in Reichenau at the turn of the millennium. This chapter argues that these two manuscripts, labeled Msc. Bibl. 22 (the Bamberg Commentaries) and Msc.Bibl.76 (the Isaiah Commentary), should be read and analyzed as a single unit. They are both thematically and formally similar and cohesive, indicating the probability that they were originally meant to either be a single manuscript or be part of the same set. In order to properly detail this connection both a historiographic introduction and an introduction to the manuscripts themselves is needed.

The historiographic introduction focuses solely on the integration of art historical and exegetical research concerning the manuscript illumination of the Song of Songs. The trend in the scholarship concerning the Song of Songs can be generalized for the illuminations of Daniel and Isaiah due to the necessary similarity in approach for all three frontispieces.

The manuscript introduction is a study of the arrangement of the manuscripts as well as their miniatures. A complete understanding of their composition is necessary for further analysis in this and later chapters. The chapter then argues for the unification of these two manuscripts while providing in-depth look into Bede’s and Jerome’s view on the Apocalypse.

**Historiographic Introduction**

The manuscripts in question have been praised for their adherence to the Ottonian style of manuscript illumination. Part of this is due to their attribution to the Benedictine monastery at Reichenau. The monastery is believed to be the center for Ottonian manuscript production, and has been celebrated for solidifying and disseminating the signature style. The abbey’s fame was an integral part of Reichenau Island’s admittance into UNESCO’s world heritage site list. The Bamberg Commentaries is itself also on a UNESCO list (World Memory) for its iconic Ottonian style.

To my knowledge, no scholar has attempted to link the exegetical texts to the visual rhetoric of the miniatures therein. However, I will argue that there is a connection between the innovative visual content of these manuscript illuminations with the exegetical text they accompany along with other religious or theological shifts, such as the belief in preparation for the Second Coming and the Apocalypse, happening at the time of its creation.

As for the connection between visual rhetoric and text in general, few scholars have worked on the evolution of the iconography for the Song of Songs alongside the evolution of the exegetical texts. Of those who have, their focus has been mostly on the
text itself, using few images as evidence for the exegetical shifts as opposed to exploring the connections between the two facets of manuscript illumination.

In 1975, Judith Wechler wrote an article entitled “A Change in the Iconography of the Song of Songs in 12th and 13th Century Latin Bibles,” in which she explored the major shift in the iconography of historiated initials. For her article, she studied 120 historiated initials from manuscripts all over Europe including France, England, and Italy. She discovered that there was a dramatic shift in the iconography from the first half of the 12th century to the early part of the 13th century. The traditional iconography of bride and bridegroom, also written as Sponsa and Sponsus, typified as Christ and Ecclesia, Christ and Mary, Solomon and Sheba, or Solomon and Ecclesia shifted to an iconography featuring the Virgin and the Christ child. According to Wechler, the iconographic change was a result of the shifting exegetical interpretations of the Song of Songs, with a more Marian interpretation gaining popularity in the 13th century. These claims are further strengthened by the contemporaneous rise of the cult of Mary. Wechler also discusses the popularity of the Cistercian interpretation of the Song of Songs where the poem was seen as an allegory for the sacred marriage between Christ and the anima (soul) of each individual Christian. Her approaches also necessitate that she only include historiated initials, and therefore she does not focus on any larger miniatures connected with the Song of Songs. Although it makes sense that Wechler would narrow her search to one

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image-type, it raises the question of whether or not there are other iconographic representations that are affected by other popular exegeses, both before and after the dramatic rise of Cistercian thought, a subject addressed by Michael Camille.¹⁰

Writing 12 years later, in 1987, Camille focuses his essay entitled "'Him Whom you Have Ardently Desired you May See’: Cistercian exegesis and the Prefatory Pictures in a French Apocalypse” on a set of five full-page prefatory miniatures from a French apocalypse manuscript from the end of the 13th century. Although these images are from an apocalypse manuscript, Camille argues that they conform to the Cistercian exegesis of the Song of Songs, and therefore can be seen as illuminations of the poem. Within the miniatures, there are scrolls of text, some of which are verses from the Song of Songs, which help connect the miniatures to the textual source. According to Camille, the narrative within the miniatures moves through the three stages of spiritual salvation as seen by the Cistercians: a penitential stage, an illuminative stage, culminating in a unification stage. Due to the protagonist of the narrative being a female, along with the high level of literacy needed to understand such a pictorial program, Camille asserts that the manuscript must have been made for a woman, perhaps even a Cistercian sister. If his assertion is true, it would explain the lengthy treatment of the Cistercian exegesis in pictorial form. However, it is important to note that Cistercian doctrine prohibited the use of images for spiritual growth, a fact that Camille does not address, even though there are

illuminations of other Cistercian works. Although Camille’s article is a short one, his approach allows for the consideration of a broader range of manuscript illumination in discussing the iconography associated with the Song of Songs. Camille’s use of exegetical literature allowed him to make connections across books of the Bible, in this case the Song of Songs and the Apocalypse. This combination of imagery and exegesis, where images do more than simply illustrate the text, is particularly interesting as a prefatory program to an Apocalypse due to the salvation and union with Christ that is promised in the exegetical interpretations of the Song of Songs and its possible effects on the fate of a soul during Last Judgment. Once again, manuscripts created roughly two centuries after the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary have been given a convincing treatment of exegesis and imagery. This is a recurring issue in the scholarship, especially since the full-page miniatures in the Bamberg Commentaries are considered the oldest extant miniatures on the topic.\footnote{Mayr-Harting, \textit{Ottonian Book Illumination}, 2:26.} However, the approaches used by these scholars can easily be used in discussing earlier exegesis and illuminations.

Ann Astell, writing in 1990, touches on the visual depiction of the Song of Songs within her book entitled \textit{The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages}.\footnote{Ann W. Astell, \textit{The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages}, Book, Whole (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).} She approaches the subject from the perspective of an exegetical and popular literature review regarding how the Song of Songs was interpreted throughout the Middle Ages. She begins her study with the original allegorical glossing of the Song of Songs by Origen, and she continues her exegetical exploration through the writings of Marian interpreters and Cistercian
mystical interpretation, finally ending her review with the Song of Songs’ effect on popular English poetry. Within her book, Astell spends most of her time examining the written sources, with a limited attention paid to how these written sources influenced their visual representation. In her discussion of the Marian exegetical trend, she discusses the shift in the iconography to the Virgin and Child, and ultimately comes to a similar conclusion as Wechler. Her primary source approach ultimately means that Astell, although adding significant scholarship to the understanding of different exegetical practices, does not have the room to fully explore their connection with the imagery in question. However, her synthesis of the history has proved useful to the art historians who have written on the visual imagery, almost all of whom cite her book.

Ruth Bartal is one such art historian indebted to Astell’s work. In her 1996 article she discusses the connection between the illumination of the Song of Songs and its correlation to Jewish and Christian exegetical frameworks. Within her article, she draws attention to the intimacy that is present in the Christian conceptions of the imagery, an intimacy that is strictly avoided in the Jewish visual representations of the same texts. She describes the traditional Christian historiated initial iconography of Sponsa and Sponsus as usually referring to one of two verses: Canticles 2:6 or Canticles 1:2. The first of these verses reads, “His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me” and is illustrated with bride and bridegroom shown seated dignified in a frontal pose. The second, and opening, verse reads, “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth,” and is illuminated with the bride and bridegroom closely seated, sometimes shown kissing. This stands in sharp contrast to the Jewish illuminations where the bride
and bridegroom are shown sitting on opposite sides of the illumination, often with a vine separating the two. In the Jewish initials, the emphasis is on the courtly garden setting, a fact that Bartal attributes to the prohibition of creating an image of God in Jewish law. This law forced the Jewish artists to focus on specific imagery in the text, mostly revolving around gardens, and pull from courtly marriage ceremonies for inspiration. As for the Christian artists, they were open to depict Christ, and therefore were able to more closely translate the accepted allegorical meaning into a visual image. Bartal’s comparative approach to these initials allows for the discussion the influence the Jewish interpretation of text affected the Christian reinterpretation of the text. This opens the door to talking about how the traditional iconography of the Song of Songs reflects the exegetical history on a deeper level. Bartal’s claim that each religion’s artists stayed true to the spiritual sense of their respective commentaries sheds new light on how the emotional Christian exegesis is reflected in the art. There are several scholars, including Jean Leclercq, Nicolas Perella, and Denys Turner, who take the time to explore how the sensual, intimate, and often erotic nature of the poem is challenged or upheld in its exegeses, a struggle that can be traced back to the Bamberg Commentaries’ choice to illustrate the exegesis of the Song of Songs and not the biblical text.13 Bartal’s conclusion that the imagery is specific to and emblematic of each particular religion’s exegesis is

particularly enticing when discussing the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary. The four texts are all Old Testament texts. The inclusion of the Christian exegetical analysis of the Hebrew text helps Christianize the manuscripts, a choice that is further reinforced by the miniatures of Isaiah and Daniel which blend straightforward illustration of the narratives with the Christianized understanding of those narratives.

The most recent scholarship on the subject was done by Diane Reilly, writing in 2001. She discusses how the manuscript illuminations of Romanesque Bibles reflect the monastic liturgical drama of the time. During the Romanesque period, there were a variety of rubrics attached to the Song of Songs that were used when reading or chanting the text aloud. The purpose of these rubrics was to mark which verses or “lines” were spoken by which characters. These rubrics sometimes attributed different verses to different speakers, allowing for slight differences in the overall interpreted meaning of the text. Reilly argues that the imposition of a rubric on the text influenced the artist’s choices when creating a visual representation. She claims that when there was a rubric present in the text, the monastic artist implemented an iconography that reflected an allegorical interpretation of the text, while when a rubric was absent, the artist depicted the historical meaning of the text, usually by depicting Solomon and Sheba. Ultimately, Reilly claims, the increase in monastic liturgical drama led to the increase of the complexity of the narrative imagery in Romanesque Europe. Her social-cultural approach to the imagery of the Song of Songs allows for the inspection of a wider set of

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possible influences on the iconographical choices of the artworks. This approach allows for the casting of a wider net concerning the attribution of influence of iconographic forms. The use of dramatic readings for the Song of Songs did not necessarily begin in the Romanesque period. The presence of the theatrical in the iconography is present in the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Manuscript. In the illumination for the Isaiah text, the prophet is framed by a seemingly Roman theatrical scaffolding, and the Song of Songs biblical text includes character names before each verse. This integration of extra textual information into the illuminations supports the idea that these miniatures are meant to serve as more than mere literal illustrations of the biblical text they accompany.

As stated above, I believe the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary were part of a four-book commission by Otto III. The commissioning of these commentaries share a thematic connection. The Bamberg Commentaries was finished by the turn of the eleventh century, in my opinion due to the belief in the apocalyptic year 1000. The elaborate two-page prefatory frontispieces along with the heavy emphasis on the elect, salvation, and theophany, lead me to believe that the illuminations are meant to be seen in light of the apocalyptic year and its consequences on Earth. In order to accurately explore these themes, the images must be approached from both an art-historical standpoint and that of a religious studies scholar. By combining these approaches, the beginnings of which are seen in the aforementioned scholars, the texts and images can elucidate their connections in ways that are impossible using a singular approach.
Manuscript Introduction

The four books in question are bound into two separate manuscripts. Both of these manuscripts were once part of Henry II’s collection, and were subsequently donated to his newly founded bishopric of Bamberg in 1007. Among the manuscripts donated was the now famous Bamberg Apocalypse, a lavish undertaking with 50 illustrations. The two manuscripts which hold the four books discussed here are now a part of the Bamberg Staatsbibliothek, cataloged as Msc Bibl. 22 and Msc Bibl. 76.

Msc Bibl. 22, more commonly referred to as the Bamberg Commentaries, contains the Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Daniel. Each of these biblical texts is accompanied by commentaries glossed in the margins. The Song of Songs’ and Proverbs’ commentaries are written by the Venerable Bede and Daniel is glossed by Jerome. The commentary on the Song of Songs is not the complete text by Bede, and scholars like Mayr-Harting believe that the scribes were working from a condensed version compiled by Alcuin. This form of abbreviating exegesis was fairly common in the Middle Ages, especially for texts as long as Bede’s, which in its modern English translation, spans over 200 pages for 116 verses. Jerome’s commentary is also condensed, but less so than that of Bede’s.

The Song of Songs and Daniel are prefaced by two facing full page miniatures, while the book of Proverbs has no illumination. Perhaps this is due to the short nature of

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the Proverbs excerpt, spanning only 20 verses in one chapter, a fact whose importance to
the intended audience will be discussed more below.

Msc Bibl. 76 is similar in arrangement to the Bamberg Commentaries. Its book is
Isaiah, which is accompanied by a commentary written by Jerome. Both the biblical
scripture and the patristic commentary are presented in full, which is perhaps the reason
that the quires that now make up the Isaiah Commentary were bound separately from
what is now known as the Bamberg Commentaries. The Isaiah Commentary also has a
set of full-page prefatory miniatures.

The prefatory miniatures to the Song of Songs present images of the Church
Militant and the Church Triumphant. The Church Militant, whose ranks are made of the
elect, is led by Ecclesia holding a processional cross on earth. This is directly opposed to
the facing folio showing The Church Triumphant, identifiable by the gold ground of
heaven. In this illumination Christ descending from heaven, enthroned and in triumph,
surrounded by his ranks of soldiers – the nine choirs of angels.

On the left folio, 4v (Figure 1), a group of the elect walks in a spiral composition
up towards Christ sacrificed on the cross. At the beginning point of the spiral is an image
of baptism. St. Peter, identifiable by his grey hair and beard, is shown baptizing a young
male figure who has undressed for the ceremony. Behind them stand three young male
figures of a similar age, all in various stages of undress, excitedly waiting for their
opportunity in the baptismal font. The young man in the baptismal font is shown with a
halo, signaling his belonging to the rest of the elect. The young men waiting to be
baptized are shown without a halo for this reason.
In front of St. Peter are four men in crowns. These crowns are not the crown type typically shown in Ottonian manuscripts. They instead appear closer to the crown type of the 24 elders of the apocalypse. However, the presence of only four kings more likely ties them to the Four Monarchies of the world as described in the biblical text, like the Book of Daniel. In front of the four kings stand five men, three with dark hair and two greyed. These men are difficult to identify due to their lack of outstanding features. The shoes and dress of four of the five men are slightly different than those standing around them, having white instead of black shoes and shorter tunics with pants underneath. The dress is similar to the kings behind them, perhaps signaling their connection to the secular world.

In front of these laymen is a group of three ecclesiastics, identifiable by their tonsures. Walking in front of the monks is a set of five bishop figures, identifiable by their bell-shaped chasubles. Leading the line of the elect are four women. Some scholars have claimed that the first woman in line should be read as the Virgin Mary. However, it is difficult to believe that the Virgin Mary would be shown as submissive to Ecclesia. She also is completely indistinguishable from the women behind her in terms of dress. This unnamed woman’s presence at the front of the line of the elect is a topic that will be explored further in the conclusion. Regardless, these four women lead the group to Ecclesia, the female personification of the Christian Church, and also one of the leads in the allegorical exegetical interpretation of the Song of Songs. She is shown dynamically moving towards the line of the elect with a large golden chalice, presumably recently

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17 Mayr-Harting, 2:42.
filled by the blood and water spurting from Christ’s wound on the cross that she is pointing towards. All of the figures are shown walking in the aforementioned spiral pattern on what has been described as “clods of earth” by the original modern catalogers of the Bamberg Staatsbibliothek’s collection.\textsuperscript{18} These mounds of earth are offset by a low horizon, hazy blue sky, firmly placing the image in symbolic representation of the earth, in a fantastical procession toward heaven.

The right miniature, folio 5r (Figure 2), is an image of the Church Triumphant in heaven ready to meet the theophanous Christ. Christ sits in glory enthroned within the opening initial to the Song of Songs, an “O”. He sits on a golden globe held up by cherubim, blessing with his right hand and holding a golden orb in his left. He is surrounded by nine choirs of angels, representing the heavenly army of the Church Triumphant. The addition of the final choir of the elect would signal the completion of the history of salvation and therefore the end of times. The six choirs outside of the initial all hold staffs, while the seraphim and cherubim inside the initial are directly interacting with Christ. Below Christ is a group of the elect entering heaven. They are led once again by Ecclesia, identifiable by the similar vestments. It seems that these common elect, as opposed to the Milites Christi on the facing folio, are still entering heaven, and have not yet been granted halos.

At the top of the line is a group of young people with dense curly hair and grey skin. The reason behind their coloring is uncertain, but they might symbolize people from the

four corners of the earth.\textsuperscript{19} It is possible that they also are a reference to those who had died before being baptized as discussed by Augustine as being in limbo, with their punishment being the denial of the beatific vision, as is seen by Ecclesia turning the head of the grey figure at the front.\textsuperscript{20} Behind the group of grey figures are eight ecclesiastics, walking in pairs, once again identifiable by their tonsures. Behind them is a group of four laymen, similar looking to those in the previous folio, and also shown walking in pairs. The end of the line is occupied by six women, shown in two groups of three. The last group of three women are followed by a group of three young people. Their size in comparison to the other figures in the image suggests that they are children, a fact further emphasized by the central child shown pulling on one of the woman’s robes. These children are also grey in complexion, adding weight to the theory that they are symbolic of all the world’s people. The scene is illustrated on a background of pure gold, sharply contrasting the heavenly vision of the Church Triumphant with the earthly image of the Church Militant. The ground line on which the elect stand is now no longer mounds of earth but instead something like a twisting vine, perhaps a reference to Bede’s salvific commentary on a verse about wine.

The prefatory images to the Book of Daniel contain more traditional iconography for the opening of an Old Testament text. The left folio, 31v (Figure 5), depicts the dream

\textsuperscript{19} The grey coloring is perhaps a reference to Pliny’s description of a certain race of women in India within his Natural History. In Book VI he writes, “among a certain race of India the women bear children only once in their lifetime, and the children begin to turn grey directly after birth”

of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel. In the bottom left corner lays Nebuchadnezzar, shown in the same clothing as the figures in the Song of Songs miniature, in a lavish uncovered egg-shaped bed. He is surrounded by guards, one of which is also shown sleeping. Above him is an angel, holding a rod like those in the nine choirs of heaven. Shooting up behind the bed on a pedestal is an idol. This idol is the allegorical statue interpreted by Daniel within the scripture. It is described in the biblical text as, “great and high, tall of stature, stood before thee, and the look thereof was terrible. The head of this statue was of fine gold, but the breast and the arms of silver, and the belly and the thighs of brass: And the legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part of clay” (Daniel 2:31-33). The statue has just been hit by a stone which turns into a tall outcropping of similar-looking stones. Atop the outcropping is a barefoot and haloed Christ. He is standing crowned as the king of the eternal kingdom, holding a cruciform staff, and flanked by two angels. The background is an atmospheric one, a blue sky tinged with red of the rising sun. The ground is bright green, fading into the sunrise above it.

The right folio, 32r (Figure 6), is an author portrait of Daniel. He sits atop a historiated initial “A” which begins the Book of Daniel. He is shown writing his eponymously named text while receiving guidance from an angel. The angel’s right arm is pointing open-handed towards the previous folio, drawing Daniel’s attention to the dream unraveling before him. What is on its surface a typical author portrait, is now a complex continuation of the narrative scene begun on the preceding page. Interestingly,

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21 All English biblical quotations are from the Douey-Rheims Translation unless otherwise stated.
the prefatory miniatures for Daniel seem to be mostly based on a literal interpretation of the biblical text it illustrates, while that of the Song of Songs is a visual representation of the exegetical interpretation by Bede on the subject. This trend continues in the prefatory miniatures of Isaiah.

The Isaiah miniatures present the vision of Christ as described by Isaiah and the cleansing of Isaiah’s mouth with hot coal. The right folio, 10v (Figure 9), shows Christ seated on a globe, surrounded by a double mandorla. His mandorla is composed of alternating blue and red emanations interlaid with golden flames. Outside of his mandorla are six seraphim, all motioning towards Christ in a manner that suggests their crying out of “Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord of God of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). Below Christ, framed by a semi-circular opening in the bottom of the mandorla throne, is a church. This church is presented schematically, with the focus being on an oversized altar space draped with golden cloth in a cruciform arrangement. From this altar, one of the Seraphim uses black tongs to pick up a red hot coal. The image is surrounded by an ornamented frame depicting birds and rabbits. The ornamented frame is reminiscent of the frame used on the border of the Daniel miniatures.

The right folio, 11r (Figure 10), is once again a historiated initial. Standing in the opening “V” is a barefoot Isaiah, welcoming an angel with open arms. He is shown with a long grey beard and hair, once again wearing a similar robe to those seen in the previously discussed miniatures. The angel approaching Isaiah is the Seraphim from the facing folio. He now holds the black tongs in one hand while bringing the hot coal to Isaiah’s lips with the other. Once again, the traditional author’s portrait is transformed
into a narrative set with the image preceding it. The historiated initial is framed by an
diagram consisting of four columns and a pediment like structure. The
bases of the innermost columns resemble that of the church in folio 10v, perhaps meaning
to allude to both actions taking place in the same space

**Establishing Connections between the Isaiah Commentary and the Bamberg Commentaries**

Although these four books are now bound into two separate manuscript codices,
evidence suggests that they were originally meant to be bound into one single codex. Not
only were they meant to be bound together, but they most likely were also meant to be
bound in a different order. A greater insight to the original configuration of the books can
be achieved by defining both their formal and thematic parallels.

Isaiah, Daniel, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs all speak to the end of times and
the history of salvation. The history of salvation is the notion that everything that has
happened in human history is a part of a larger narrative to reunite humanity with their
God. This history weaves itself into human history at several stages, which are believed
to be recorded in the Holy Scripture. The history of salvation first appears in the Old
Testament in Genesis with the fall of Adam and Eve. This history ends with the Second
Coming of Christ and the Last Judgement, when humanity is judged and the righteous are
at last reunited with their creator.  

Although all four texts discussed here are from the
Old Testament, Christian theologians’ exegesis on these texts elevated them past their

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literal or historical meanings to their allegorical and tropological ones. This technique allows any Old Testament text to be analyzed in the context of Christian salvation.

The exegetical texts on Daniel and Isaiah were written by Jerome, a Doctor of the Church and translator and compiler of the Vulgate Bible. Jerome’s interpretation of Daniel and Isaiah are firmly situated in Christian thought, with both books telling of the Second Coming of Christ and his dominion over the earthly world. Isaiah’s visions of the Messiah are interpreted as visions of Christ, a specifically Christian understanding of the second person of the Trinity, Christ, the Messiah. In the Book of Daniel, the prophet Daniel interprets the dream of Nebuchadnezzar as the downfall of earthly kingdoms at the hands of the kingdom of God. Jerome interprets this as Christ’s kingdom as Messiah, once again visually translated as Christ atop the stone mountain.

Daniel and Isaiah, whose exegetical claims lay the foundation for the coming of Christ and his dominion, are complemented by the Proverbs text and the Song of Songs, which are glossed by Bede. The Proverbs text is an excerpt on the “Good Wife”, a woman who successfully leads a virtuous life and in the end is granted praise at the gates of heaven. This can be read as a short guide on how to live a virtuous life as a woman in the world, useful information if the events prophesized in the previous two books should come to pass. Finally, the Song of Songs in its literal sense is an erotic love poem between a bride and her groom. However, Bede’s interpretation of this text situates it firmly in the allegorical, disallowing an erotic reading of the text and instead claiming a metaphor where the bride is the Church and the groom is Christ. Bede’s exegesis speaks
When put together, these four books tell the story of the salvation of a human soul, from the acceptance of the need for salvation, through the virtuous life of a believer, and finally to that person’s ultimate salvation in their meeting with Christ. However, just as these well-versed theologians can interpret the text in whichever way suits their historical and theological need, a thematic analysis is not enough to convincingly place these four books in an original single manuscript.

These four books are also all stylistically and formally similar. The four books are all roughly the same size, varying between 16cm x 8cm to 16cm X 11cm. The slight variations in size happen within the Bamberg Commentaries. The Isaiah illuminations and text measure 16cm X 8cm. The Song of Songs and Proverbs text and illuminations as well as the Daniel text and the right folio of its illumination measure 16cm X 8cm. The left folio of the Daniel illumination measures 16cm X 11cm. The small size makes this manuscript indisputably personal, marking it for individual use as opposed to any communal or liturgical use.

Looking closely at the opening text pages to each of the manuscripts reveals several similarities in the structure of the gloss and the script. Each opening folio begins with the first verse in capital gold lettering. The script then changes to a black ink, but still continues the capitalization of all letters. After the first verse, the script begins sentence capitalization, with the occasional use of a gold initial for the beginning of a new section of scripture. The script itself is standardized, but looks to be the work of
more than one scribe, exemplified in the difference between the kerning and the serifs of the “omni” of Daniel 32v (Figure 7) and “Omne” Isaiah 11v (Figure 11). The gloss is usually relegated to the margins of the text, although when there is more exegesis than there is marginal space, the text is continued between lines of scripture, as seen in Isaiah 11v, Daniel 34v (Figure 8), and Song of Songs 5v (Figure 3).

Turning now to the illuminations, there are several similarities that connect the three texts that have prefatory miniatures. Daniel’s author portrait and Isaiah’s author portrait are both framed within an architectural structure created by columns and either an arch or a pediment lintel. Both initials also have similar vine-like golden vegetal ornamentation. An oval with a four-petalled flower is seen in the curve of the “A” initial in Daniel and the “O” initial in the Song of Songs. Both Daniel’s and Isaiah’s narrative images are bordered by an interesting pattern of red rectangles with golden edges, overlaid with a golden diamond. This border is not seen in the Song of Songs miniature. The clothing, both in style and execution of drapery, is almost identical between each of the miniature sets. Finally, the stone seen in the Daniel narrative miniature is echoed in the Isaiah author portrait, grounding the structure on earth.

It is also worth noting that the Daniel and Isaiah miniature sets both rework the existing tradition of an author portrait. Usually, at the beginning of a text, there will be either a narrative scene or an author portrait. Rarely, the manuscript is lavish enough to have both. However, here in these manuscripts, the narrative and the author portrait interact. The author portrait performs a double function as the continuation of the narrative scene.
Given these points, it is sensible to conclude that the Isaiah manuscript was originally meant to be part of the Bamberg Commentaries. Whether these were meant to be bound into a single volume remains to be seen, but their thematic and formal continuities and similarities allow for a unified reading of both text and image. The unification of these manuscripts permits a deeper exploration of these four books and their commentaries in light of the millennium and the end of time. As a cohesive unit, these manuscripts offer a nuanced view into millennialism and apocalyptic thinking in the royal family of Otto III.

**Bede, the History of Time, and the End of Things**

The Venerable Bede is best known for his contributions to the English church. He is now considered a Doctor of the Church, an honor bestowed upon him by Pope Leo XII in 1899 for his work in creating a strong ecclesiastical community out of fairly recent English converts. Most, if not all, of Bede’s writings were meant to be practical lessons for the reader.\(^{23}\) This goal led him to study the works of the Church Fathers that came before him in an attempt to consolidate their work. Bede spent a majority of his exegetical career taking the works of patristic writers like Jerome and Gregory the Great and reconciling their contradictions for ease of study. This meant that a large volume of Bede’s work was traditionally exegetical in nature.

For example, his work on the Song of Songs is a combination of various previous writings on the subject mixed with his own interpretation and agenda. The text of the

Song of Songs itself is an erotic poem between a bridegroom and his bride, believed in the Christian faith to have been written by King Solomon. The Song of Songs has a long exegetical history stemming from centuries of revision from both Jewish and Christian scholars and theologians. Historically, the Christian interpretation of the Song of Songs has been a necessarily allegorical one. Starting in the third century C.E. with Origen, the allegorical interpretation became the standard and correct interpretation of the text. The thick Eros of the poem was thought to be confusing and difficult to confront for those who were not at a higher level of religious discipline. The fear was that a young man or woman would read the text and be tempted by carnal sins instead of connecting the text with its creator and his message of salvation. In order to curb this temptation, many theologians recommended that the text should not be read by anyone under the age of 30 unless they were being guided by an elder who understood the higher allegorical meaning of the text.  

The widely accepted allegorical meaning stated that the poem is actually about the church’s (Ecclesia’s) marriage to Christ. “The church” has been defined by exegetes in different and nuanced ways, but in general the term can be defined as the Christian elect both in heaven and on earth. Bede’s commentary is heavily influenced by previous theologians, most notably Origen, Pope Gregory the Great, and Apponius. His writings on the Song of Songs reflect his belief in ministry, providing practical advice for how the text applied to the contemporary church of believers.  

24 Bede, 20.  
verses such as the opening lines: “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth: for thy breasts are better than wine, Smelling sweet of the best ointments. Thy name is as oil poured out: therefore young maidens have loved thee” (SoS 1:1-2) and interpreted them to mean that the Bride is now asking for Christ to speak to her directly instead of through prophets as has been the case in the Old Testament.  

This allegorical interpretation leads to the tropological interpretation that the elect should strive to listen to Christ as he speaks. This type of interpretation is largely based on spiritual knowledge and moral understandings of the biblical text. Bede’s moralistic understanding of scripture is complemented by his historical, almost scientific, understanding of scripture as it pertains to ecclesiastical and salvific history.

Aside from his exegetical work, Bede is perhaps best known for his popularization of the *Annus Domini* (AD) system of counting years. He used several dating systems throughout his career, but the AD system of counting years was reserved for writings on the History of Time and the Second Coming of Christ. The AD system was a prospective chronological system that allowed people to count forward from a fixed point in time, which in this case is the Incarnation of Christ. As explained by Bedean scholar Mairin Mac Carron, for Bede AD was a way to “assert the true meaning of the Incarnation and elucidate the miracle of salvation which will be fulfilled in the heavenly celebration at the end of time.”

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26 Bede, *On the Song of Songs and Selected Writings*, 57.
28 Mairin Mac Carron, 179.
be seen in his *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*. In these texts he lays out the history of the world and the coming salvation. He treats the apocalypse as a historical moment in chapter 69 of his *De temporum ratione*.

This treatise laid out the order of events at the end of time based on biblical prophesies and patristic exegesis. He claims that the Day of Judgement would be preceded by three things: the return of the prophets Elijah and Enoch, the conversion of the Jews, and persecution by the Anti-Christ.29 Bede calculated the exact amount of time these events would take as a reading on Revelations and Malachi as well as a revision to Jerome’s commentary *In Danielem*. Jerome, in his commentaries on Isaiah and Daniel, speculated on what is expected to happen at the end of time. *In Danielem* is more focusedly concerned with the career of the Anti-Christ. In his commentary he is careful to frame his ideas as speculation, making clear that no being but God can know the true dates of the end of time.30 Bede agrees with the sentiment that the true end cannot be known by humans, but that the intermediate events that begin the end of the time can be calculated using the scripture. This fusion of allegorical and historical approaches to scripture allows for a fully formed eschatological view of the future, making the grouping of Jerome’s Isaiah and Daniel commentaries with Bede’s Song of Songs commentary an undeniable search for guidance on matters concerning the end of things.

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30 Peter Darby, 130.
Conclusion: The Millennium

If the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary contained only the biblical scripture and manuscript illuminations, it would be difficult to argue that they should be seen as a cohesive group. It would be even more difficult to argue for their treatment as a guide on the apocalypse, especially since the Song of Songs is in its literal interpretation a love poem. However, the scripture is accompanied by exegetical commentary from Jerome and Bede, considered two of the exegetes most concerned with the end of time and the apocalypse. The choice of these exegetes, as with all choices in making costly works of art, is not an accidental one, and to read it as such risks losing the complexity of the historical period of the set’s commission. The set was completed by the year 1000, a time of turmoil concerning millennialism and the end of the sixth age of Christian history. The fervor surrounding the millennium was addressed by many ecclesiastical leaders at the time, but the disavowal of millenialist thought did not ensure the eradication of such thought even in the highest realms of ecclesiastical and political power.

These books were commissioned by Otto III, either for himself or as a gift for someone important in his court. Otto III was known for his fixation on the apocalypse, going so far as to have an image from Revelation embroidered on his coronation mantle. The fact that these books speak to that anxiety is clear. The message communicated by these books can only be revealed through a careful analysis of their imagery.
Chapter 2: On Earth as it is in Heaven
An Analysis of the New Visual Commentary

In the previous chapter, I provided a technical introduction to the two manuscripts in question. Part of the introduction was a detailed description of the six frontispiece miniatures and an argument for the thematic and formal connection between the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary. From this point forward, these two manuscripts will be treated as one entity.

As mentioned before, the Biblical text and commentaries on the Song of Songs, Proverbs, Daniel, and Isaiah come together to serve as a guide for salvation in the end times for the intended audience. The order in which the texts are currently bound does not particularly serve this ultimate goal. It is my belief that the texts were originally either bound separately as a composed set or were meant to be bound into one large manuscript in a particular order. This order can be determined by uncovering the thematic connections between the works through close examination of the relationship between the Biblical text, the commentary text, and the new visual commentary of the miniatures. It is important to see the three sets of frontispiece miniatures as new visual commentary for many reasons. These images, as will be argued in more detail below, are not actually illustrations of the Biblical text they preface. In the case of Daniel and Isaiah, the miniatures bridge the gap between the Biblical text and the written commentary by reinterpreting the Biblical history with Christian traditions. If Daniel and Isaiah bridge the gap, the Song of Songs goes one step further, focusing solely on concretely visualizing the abstract allegorical interpretation of the commentary by Bede. In order to
discuss this confluence of relationships the overarching connections between these texts and images must first be discussed.

**Thematic Connections in the Biblical text**

Firstly, let us examine the Biblical texts separately from their exegetical pairings. The four texts are Isaiah, Daniel, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs. These four books of the Bible were understood to be written by men of extreme intellect and spirituality. Isaiah and Daniel are considered two of the most important prophets from the Christian Old Testament, in no small part due to their connection with God in the form of visions of heaven and the future. These were by no means the only prophets to be given visions of God but they nevertheless became two of the most popular and respected of the Old Testament prophets. Proverbs and the Song of Songs were understood to have been written by Solomon, the wise king of Israel and son of King David. Solomon’s intelligence as well as his close connection with God through the building of the Temple in Jerusalem granted him high status Biblical history. His writings are considered among the wisest of the Bible, and his Proverbs have been thought of as words to live one’s life by for millennia. Working from the Biblical text alone, it is perhaps best to place these four works into two separate groups: Isaiah and Daniel, and Proverbs and the Song of Songs.

Isaiah and Daniel are among the few books of the Old Testament that can be considered eschatological and even apocalyptic. The book of Daniel relays the story of the prophet Daniel and his trials and tribulations at the hands of the Babylonians, especially the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, along with the rest of the
Hebrews in Jerusalem, was conquered by the Babylonians. He is among the few considered intelligent enough to be trained by Babylonian prophets and intellectuals. Daniel then suffers several tests and punishments at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar due to his divinely gifted ability to interpret the dreams and visions of the king. Among these visions is the Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the four kingdoms, and his most famous punishments are his trial by fire and his placement inside the lion’s den.

Revelation and eschatology play a vital role in Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams and visions. Revelation, literally meaning “uncovering,” includes the disclosure of heavenly knowledge that helps make sense of earthly realities. These revelations, sometimes referred to as apocalyptic literature, are usually communicated through the vehicle of a dream or a vision. Eschatology is the theology of the end of things or the final events in human history. Daniel’s visions from God merge these two genres in the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the four kingdoms. Isaiah similarly connects with revelation and eschatology in his visions of the end of time and the prominence of the reign of the kingdom of God. Written during a time where the Israelites were still oppressed by the Babylonians, Isaiah’s visions illuminate and expand on the theme of the four kingdoms introduced by Daniel.

The Song of Songs and Proverbs are interesting counterparts to Daniel and Isaiah in that they do not directly discuss eschatology or revelation. Song of Songs is an erotic love poem between a new bride and her bridegroom, with no literal or surface level discussions of the themes of kingdoms, the prominence of God, or salvation through holiness. In fact, there is barely any mention of religious themes at all outside of the
description of the ceremony and the woman’s court. In the Bamberg Commentaries, Proverbs has been narrowed down to a few verses. These verses, Proverbs 31:10-31, are most well known as the proverb of the “Good Wife” although translated in the Douay-Rheims version as the “Valiant Woman.” Both the Song of Songs and the Proverbs excerpt speak to a specifically domestic and female sphere of spirituality. Their connection to the greater histories of Daniel and Isaiah is seemingly nonexistent in the Biblical text. However, when looking at the exegetical interpretations of these texts, the connections become clear.

**Thematic Connections in the Exegetical Text**

At the outset, the most obvious commonality between the four texts in question is the fact that they are all part of the Hebrew Bible later being adopted as the Christian Old Testament. Nevertheless, these four books are all commented upon by two of the most respected exegetes in the Christian tradition: Bede and Jerome. It was common practice in Christianity to read Hebrew texts as preludes and prophecies to the gospels and the rest of the Christian written tradition. This practice in no way was meant to diminish the historical or literal importance of these works, evidenced by the use of multiple levels of interpretation. Both Jerome and Bede used the literal text as the starting point for their commentary, working their way through higher and more obscure levels of interpretation including the allegorical and the anagogical. In doing so, they were able to transform Hebrew texts into Christian prophecy.

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A major theme that runs through all four commentaries is the notion of the end of time and the apocalypse. In this case apocalypse means the end of the world as it is known to humanity. Once again, the four texts are split along the same lines, with Jerome writing on Daniel and Isaiah, and Bede writing on the Song of Songs and Proverbs. Jerome’s writings focus on the end of time after the fall of the four kingdoms and the rise of the kingdom of God, in this case led by Jesus Christ. Bede’s writing complements Jerome’s in that his commentary on Proverbs and the Song of Songs speaks to the reality of that kingdom through the personification of the Church as Ecclesia. Together, the four declare the victory of Christ at the end of human history.

With all this in mind, a deeper analysis of the tri-partite interpretations of Biblical text, exegetical text, and visual commentary can begin. However, Proverbs does not lend itself to a three-part analysis. The excerpt of Proverbs in the Bamberg Commentaries is the only text without an illuminated frontispiece. The book consists of only the Biblical text and Bede’s commentary with the standard illuminated initials seen throughout the main body of text of the other three books. Whether this is a simple case of lost folios is difficult to say, and must remain a subject for future research. What is noteworthy is the particular excerpt chosen for this manuscript set. The excerpt on the Good Wife has historically been used as a moralistic text for women. Still, Bede’s interpretation of the Good Wife as Ecclesia and the Church fits rather well with the aforementioned theme. The inclusion of Proverbs in this set could serve several functions, one of which will be discussed in detail in the conclusion. It is also entirely possible that the illuminators of the
work also intended the miniatures for the Song of Songs to serve as illuminations for the Proverbs text.

Isaiah

Written between 408 and 410, immediately after his work on Daniel in 407, the Commentary on Isaiah is Jerome’s longest exegetical text. It is one and a half times the length of his commentary on Ezekiel, whose biblical text is roughly the same length. This is due in part to his innovative devotion to incorporating both Hebrew and Greek learning to his translations and exegeses. He accomplished this by both working from Origen’s Greek Hexapla text and the original Hebrew text. Jerome’s commentary functions on two levels, that of the historical and that of the spiritual. It is difficult to assign Jerome a system of exegetical interpretation as understood later than the fifth century because of his fluid terminology where he equates the concepts of allegory, anagogy, and tropology. In short, it is simplest to do as Jerome does and connect the terms to the act of “pointing the hearer upward to Christ and the Church.”

Jerome’s Exegetical Interpretations

When writing his commentary on Isaiah, he made his goals clear in his introduction. He writes, “I shall expound on Isaiah in such a way that I will show him not

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34 Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 4.
only as a prophet, but as an evangelist and apostle.”

Isaiah himself seems to take on this exegetical role after his cleansing with coals, “And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send? and who shall go for us? And I said: Lo, here am I, send me” (Isaiah 6:8). It is in fact this scene which is translated into the visual for the frontispiece. This passage, Isaiah chapter 6, marks the beginning of the third book in Jerome’s commentary. He begins with an introduction to the book and a pleading prayer to Eustochium, asking her to help him with “the exposition of the very difficult vision.”

He begins with the recapitulation of the four kings under which Isaiah was writing, attributing this vision to the reign of Jotham. He then decodes the verse “And the things that were under him filled the temple” using both the Old Testament text of Ezekiel and the New Testament texts of the Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles. Through the words of John the Evangelist, Jerome claims that when Isaiah saw the Lord, he doubtless was seeing a vision of Christ writing, “But the Son is seen in the character of one reigning.”

Arguably, his most interesting point of discussion is the nature of the seraphim described in the text. The Biblical text reads, “Seraphim were standing upon it; the one had six and the other had six wings; with two it covered his face, and with two it covered his feet and with two it flew. And one was crying to the other and saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; all the earth is full of his glory’” (Isaiah 6:2-3). Jerome starts his discussion about these seraphim by attempting to explain where they are in relation to

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38 Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 149.
39 Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 150.
40 Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 151.
Christ. He claims that the Hebrew word describes the seraphim as not being on the Lord, but around him instead.\textsuperscript{41} He also reads the “his” in “with two it covered his face” as God. With that interpretation established, he describes Christ enthroned with one six-winged seraphim covering his face and the other six-winged seraphim covering his feet. Jerome then draws the connection between the three figures and the three persons of the Holy Trinity. He finishes his discussion of this verse with the understanding that the Hebrew language is uniquely ambiguous, allowing for the possibility that the seraphim are simultaneously covering Christ’s face and feet as well as their own. Lastly, he draws a connection between the six wings of the seraphim with the six days of creation and the ages of man.\textsuperscript{42}

Jerome follows up his analysis of the seraphim with an examination of the temple in the next verse which reads, “And the lintels of the doors were moved by the voice of the one crying out, and the house was filled with smoke” (Isaiah 6:4). According to Jerome, this symbolizes the knowledge of Jesus’ Trinitarian nature made public, followed by the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{43} Once again, Jerome is painting Isaiah as what is commonly known as the “fifth gospel.”\textsuperscript{44} He claims that Isaiah’s visions are actually preambles and prophecy of Christ’s mission on earth and in human history. This is furthered by the denouncing of the popular Hebrew interpretation of the verse which

\textsuperscript{41} Jerome, \textit{Commentary on Isaiah}, 151.
\textsuperscript{42} Jerome, \textit{Commentary on Isaiah}, 153.
\textsuperscript{43} Jerome, \textit{Commentary on Isaiah}, 154.
reads the smoke in the temple as celebratory incense like that described in Exodus as the presence of the divine majesty.

He continues his commentary discussing the subject of the Isiah Commentary frontispiece miniatures: the cleansing of Isaiah. The Biblical text reads,

And I said, “Woe is me, because I have kept silent, for I am a man of polluted lips, and I dwell in the midst of people having polluted lips; and I have seen with my eyes the kind, the Lord of hosts.” And one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a pebble which he had carried from the altar with tongs, and he touched my mouth and said, “Behold, this has touched you lips, and your iniquity will be taken away, and your sin will be cleansed.” (Isaiah 6:5-7)

Jerome interprets the first verse as an admission of guilt from Isaiah for staying silent during the reign of the first of the four kings, Uzziah. Jerome follows up this interpretation with the notion that Isaiah was not necessarily actually sinful, but that he was showing humility considering himself unworthy of God’s praise. Jerome then makes the claim that the coal used to cleanse Isaiah’s lips was not necessarily an actual hot coal, but was instead a special type of stone. Calling it a carbuncle, Jerome explains that the stone is often considered “fiery on account of its resemblance to the color of flame.” He finally combines the imagery of the tongs, the coal, and the incense to conclude that in the Hebrew text, this was considered to be part of the priestly ministry.

New Visual Exegesis

How then, do the tenth-century illuminators in the abbey of Reichenau translate this difficult and complex commentary visually? They begin by creating a scene of

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45 Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 155.
46 Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 156.
47 Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 156.
continuous narrative across the two facing frontispieces. The left folio, 10v, contains the image of Christ from Isaiah’s vision and the right folio, 11r, shows Isaiah being cleansed of sin. The first notable choice made by the illuminators is the depiction of Christ atop a small temple, understood in this context as a symbol of the Church. From this simple, and seemingly natural, choice it is clear that the illuminators were not only illustrating the Biblical text held within, but also directly connecting the visual interpretation with the exegetical writing by Jerome.

Christ is sitting surrounded by smoke, a topic discussed in Jerome’s analysis of the text. He claims that the Hebrew interpretation of the smoke as a marker of the presence of the divine is incorrect, and that it more closely matches the presence of smoke at the destruction of the Hebrew high altar of worship. However, the illuminators made the choice to show Christ surrounded by the smoke, speaking more towards the Hebrew interpretation than Jerome’s own interpretation. Why would the illuminators contradict Jerome’s interpretation?

The relationship between the illuminators and Jerome’s commentary is complicated, evidenced by several other visual choices. As discussed above, Jerome mentioned that there were two seraphim, each covering either the face or feet of Christ. However, in the miniature there are six seraphim all surrounding Christ but never touching him. This is an interesting point of contradiction within Jerome’s own work. While he begins with the assertion that there are only two seraphim, he later suggests that there is a multitude of seraphim, which in his mind strengthens other textual evidence about the presence of the “multitude of angels, which has been prepared for God’s
He also mentions the Septuagint translation that reads, “Seraphim were standing round about him” claiming that if there were only two seraphim the text would have described them as being on either side of Christ. How can this version of the many seraphim be reconciled with the image of the two seraphim covering Christ as a representation of the Trinity?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to assert with confidence the thought process of the illuminators concerning this disparity. What is known is the ultimate choice that was made, which was to depict several seraphim according to Jerome’s understanding of the Septuagint. Each of these seraphim are signaling towards Christ with their hands, highlighting his presence instead of shielding the viewer from it. Whether the choice of six seraphim is a purely compositional one is debatable, especially with Jerome’s specific discussion of the number of wings each seraph has. Alternatively, perhaps these six seraphs should be read as only two in motion, circling around Christ in a whirlwind.

Regardless of the numerological importance of the seraphim, what is more striking is the complete lack of seraphim surrounding Christ’s face or feet. The illuminators chose to shift the focus from the Trinitarian evidence provided by Jerome to focus instead on the revealing, or apocalyptic, nature of Isaiah’s vision. This emphasis on the apocalyptic is furthered on the facing folio.

Folio 11r shows Isaiah being approached by a seraph holding black tongs in one hand and a “coal” in the other. The seraph is in the process of bringing the fiery stone to

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49 Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 154.
his lips as Isaiah willingly reaches towards the seraph for cleansing. The tongs and the fiery stone are first seen on the preceding folio, being lifted from the altar protruding from the Church beneath Christ’s feet. This speaks directly to the Biblical description of the moment. Yet, the lack of fire to heat the coal is notable. Once again, it is possible that the illuminators are instead depicting Jerome’s commentary on the scene which describes the coal as a pebble of carbuncle. Jerome connects this pebble to the power of God to cleanse sins. All of this cleansing must happen in order for Isaiah to receive knowledge as well as preach this knowledge to others.

Looking closely, Isaiah is at once gesturing towards the seraph and mimicking the gesture made by the seraphs on the facing folio. He is at once accepting his task and acclaiming Christ as the seraphim do. This attention paid to the act of seeing and receiving is doubtlessly connected to the similar themes seen throughout the rest of the manuscript.

**Daniel**

Before Jerome wrote his extensive commentary on Isaiah, he first wrote a much shorter commentary on the Book of Daniel. Although his commentary on Daniel is less than one sixth the length of his commentary on Isaiah, its impact is just as strong if not stronger than his much longer work.\(^{50}\) Much like in Isaiah, he treats Daniel as someone who has “so clearly spoken concerning Christ.”\(^{51}\) However, he specifically sets out to

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Jerome’s Exegetical Interpretation

He begins his commentary with a prologue which denounces the work of a scholar named Porphyry who denied that Daniel wrote the book or foretold any futures. It is this latter accusation that enraged Jerome, driving him to attest to Daniel’s prophetic gift. He claims, “For not only did [Daniel] assert that He [Christ] would come, a prediction common to other prophets as well, but also he set forth the very time as which He would come. Moreover he went through the various kings in order, stated the actual number of years involved, and announced beforehand the clearest signs of events to come.” It is for this reason that Jerome’s commentary on Daniel is one of the heaviest historically of his exegeses. In this attempt he references several aspects of ancient history, dates them, and provides quotations from early authors to support his claims. Many of the works he quotes are now lost to time and exist only in Jerome’s and other exegetes’ use of them.

As part of Daniel’s time in Babylon, he is asked to interpret one of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream on pain of death. Daniel is first asked to provide a description of the dream and only then is he asked to provide an accurate interpretation. The book’s connection to the apocalyptic genre is reinforced as Daniel’s faith proves strong and God

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53 Jerome and Gleason L Archer, *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, 16.
reveals to him the dream. When Daniel is brought before the king to give his interpretation he says, “But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. Who hath shown thee, King Nebuchadnezzar, what is going to take place in the last times.” A clear eschatological statement, it is here that Jerome attributes the beginning of Daniel’s fulfilment of his purpose someone who has “so clearly spoken concerning Christ.”

Perhaps because this marks the beginning of Daniel’s journey as a prophet, Jerome takes the time to clarify Daniel’s proclamation that God had revealed a sacred truth to Nebuchadnezzar and not Daniel himself. In his commentary on this verse he writes, “Avoiding the blemish of adulation but cleaving to the truth, he [Daniel] courteously suggests that it is to the King [God has shown these things], for it was to him [Daniel] that God had revealed secrets concerning what was to occur in the last times.” Evidently, it was problematic to Jerome that Daniel would suggest that God would reveal this crucial information to Nebuchadnezzar instead of Daniel. To avoid this issue, Jerome interprets Daniel’s words as courtesy instead of a statement of true fact, a decision he makes to ensure that Daniel is the only figure who is connected to God at this level. It is important to Jerome that Daniel be singular in this respect so that the rest of the prophecies in the book can be seen as a cohesive, united, and ultimately truthful whole.

As Daniel continues his address to the king, he speaks of the reasons for which Nebuchadnezzar was gifted the dream, citing the king’s desire to know what is to come “hereafter in the last days.” Jerome, continuing with his eschatological interpretation of

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the book, cleverly refutes claims by Porphyry and other scholars that the world will not be destroyed by saying, “For never would any days be called ‘the last days’ if the world were everlasting.” 59 Jerome’s message is clear; there will be an end of the earth and Daniel is the prophet who has been tasked with revealing this truth and its details to the world.

Perhaps the most remarkable part of his revelation to the king is his explanation for the “sculpted effigy” in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. As discussed earlier, the statue was made of four distinct parts, each made of a different material. The top most piece was the head made of gold which Daniel interpreted as representing Nebuchadnezzar himself. Jerome adds to this by explicitly stating that gold, being the most precious metal, represents Babylon as the first empire. The next section of the statue is made of silver. Daniel describes this empire as inferior to Nebuchadnezzar’s which is why it is silver. Jerome claims that the Medes and the Persians are the second kingdom because they are superior to the Babylonians but inferior to the kingdom that would follow. The third empire, symbolized by bronze, is described by Daniel as ruling over the whole earth. Jerome naturally connects the bronze to the Alexandrian empire. However, he spends the time to discuss why the Alexandrian empire would be “brazen,” relating the eloquence of the Greek language along with its fame and power to the clear ring of a bronze trumpet. It should come as no surprise that Jerome would praise the Greeks as he does here, especially due to his past interest in Plato and other ancient writings before his own vision of Christ during which he vowed to turn away from the pagan sources to study the

Bible instead. His infatuation with Greece can also be seen later in his commentary on Daniel where he uses the timeline of the Greek empire to understand the order of things to come during the last days. Finally, Daniel discusses the iron portion of the statue, which according to Jerome represents the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire is the only empire made up of two materials, iron and earthenware or clay. Jerome claims that this is particularly appropriate to the Romans because during the height of their power they were as indestructible as iron but as their reign came to an end, they became feeble like clay.  

The discrepancy concerning the place of the Persian Empire between Jerome and Daniel is an interesting one. Daniel moves through the four kingdoms with the understanding that each kingdom is weaker than the one which came before it, while Jerome’s understanding of the four kingdoms directly opposes that reading. Perhaps this is simply due to Jerome’s understanding of the history of the world thus far. However, by creating a pattern of ever more powerful kingdoms conquering those that came before it, Jerome effectively demonstrates the immense power he believes Christ’s kingdom would have at the end of the allegorical interpretation of the dream.

The end of the dream involves a stone breaking the effigy into pieces. Jerome identifies this stone as “namely, the Lord and Savior.” His justification for this is the verse that reads, “According as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands” which Jerome interprets as a prophecy for Christ writing, “cut off without hands, that is, without copulation or human seed and by birth from a Virgin’s womb.”

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60 Jerome and Gleason L Archer, *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, 32.
This segues nicely into Jerome’s ultimate claim that the dream of Nebuchadnezzar was an allegory for the ultimate dominion of Christ’s kingdom at the end of time and the ultimate destruction of the earth, as the statue was destroyed.

The revelation of the future deeply affected the king and he commanded that Daniel be made a governor over the lands of Babylon all the while praising the “God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries.” This, according to Jerome, was Daniel’s present goal. Daniel was sent to turn the Babylonian king towards the true God and away from the idolatry of the Babylonian pantheon. Thus successful, Daniel continued his relationship with the King until he was once again tested. Although the rest of Daniel’s life contains noteworthy events like his punishment by fire and lion’s den, both of which were discussed at length by Jerome in his exegesis, the illuminators did not choose to depict those scenes and instead chose to portray Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

**New Visual Exegesis**

The choice of scene to illuminate is not a trivial one. The text of the Daniel portion of the manuscript is effectively complete, meaning that the manuscript contains the entire book of Daniel and a large majority of Jerome’s commentary. By choosing the scene of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the illuminators are choosing the text that they believe is the most significant part of the book. If they are not choosing the most important section of text, they are at least choosing the most central or powerful section for their purposes. This purpose, as argued above, is to create a narrative or guide book for the end of times. The story of Daniel in the lion’s den or Daniel tested by fire legitimizes Daniel,

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proves the power of God and the power of faith, an interpretation that Jerome attests to in his commentary, but it does not speak to the themes of eschatology or apocalypse.\textsuperscript{64}

Once again, it became the task of the illuminators to translate Jerome’s complicated commentary on the chosen scene. The most striking aspects of the illuminations are the portrayal of Christ and of the statue from Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The statue is shown standing atop a pedestal with its hands in the air. The head is gold, the top half of the torso is silver, the bottom half of the torso and the thighs are bronze, and the rest of the body is iron except for the feet of clay. This attention to detail shows a clear understanding of both the Biblical text and the commentary. Interestingly, each portion is progressively larger than the last, perhaps a visual depiction of the increasing greatness of each empire as described by Jerome. A stone knocking against its leg, breaking the leg from the whole, begins the breaking process. The choice to strike the stone at the section of the statue that represents the Roman Empire connects nicely with Jerome’s comments about the end of the Roman Empire being feeble as well as the historical reality of Christianity superseding it.

Next to the statue is an image of Christ standing atop a stylized representation of a mountain. The stone shown striking the leg of the statue is visually similar to the individual stones that make up the mountain. The choice to depict both levels of interpretation in this miniature is emblematized in that detail. The illuminators chose to both depict the literal rock that strikes the statue and Jerome’s interpretation of the allegorical meaning of that rock in the form of Jesus Christ. Christ is shown haloed and

\textsuperscript{64} Jerome and Gleason L Archer, \textit{Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel}, 40–43, 66–69.
flanked by two angels who present him to the world. A third angel flies above Nebuchadnezzar and is apparently revealing the dream to him. The revelation continues on the facing folio, 32r, where another angel gestures to bring Daniel’s attention towards the scene containing both the literal and allegorical understanding of the dream.

The decisions made by the illuminators concerning the content of these miniatures communicates a desire to connect the frontispieces to one another on a thematic level. This tendency continues in what is perhaps the most radical illumination in the manuscript, that of the Song of Songs. The reason for the desire to privilege certain themes over others will be discussed once all the frontispieces have been analyzed.

**Song of Songs**

The Song of Songs text is the only of Bede’s commentaries to be illuminated in this manuscript. The illuminations are distinct in their complete disregard for the literal content of the Biblical text. As discussed previously, the Song of Songs is an erotic love poem, a fact that the miniatures show no trace of. For the illuminations of Daniel and Isaiah, it was crucial to understand the relationship between the literal history of the Biblical text and the allegorical interpretation by Jerome. In the case of the Song of Songs frontispieces, the focus must shift completely towards Bede’s exegetical understanding of the Biblical text. Bede’s exegetical understanding of the Song of Songs is not unique or necessarily original. In fact, part of what made Bede’s work so valuable to medieval culture is how his exegeses follows in the tradition of previous Christian interpretation, like that of Jerome, Gregory the Great, and Augustine.
Bede’s Exegetical Interpretation

In short, Bede interprets the Song of Songs as an allegory for the Church. He reads the bride and bridegroom of the poem as Ecclesia and Christ respectively. He sees the text as a conversation between the two characters and as a way for believers to draw themselves deeper into the conversation. Most importantly, Bede sees the Song of Songs as Apponious did before him, as a “progressive narrative of salvation history.” It is this particular theme that Bede draws on again and again in his interpretation. To understand the history of salvation as it applies to the Church in Bede’s interpretation, it is important to understand Bede’s thoughts on the composition of the Church.

Bede, as previously mentioned, was heavily indebted to the Church Fathers when it came to his own exegetical approach. He spent a significant amount of time understanding their writings and he quoted from them heavily in his discussion of Biblical texts. One of Bede’s main inspirations was Gregory the Great, and it is from him that Bede gains his understanding of the Church. Bede ascribes to the idea of the universal Church which was most famously explained by Augustine and later expanded upon by Gregory the Great. According to this notion, the universal Church includes angels and the virtuous before Christ as well as the Church which came forth from the redemption. In Bede’s own words, “Just as we believed and hoped to be saved, so

66 Bede, On the Song of Songs and Selected Writings, 29.
likewise the earlier part of the Church, awaiting the same incarnation, passion, and resurrection of the Lord, believed itself saved through his desired grace.”

Bede not only believes that the Church does include those who were righteous before Christ’s time on Earth, he also believes that the Church must include those from “far and wide throughout the world.” In fact, in his Homilies, Bede declares that the majority of the Church will be principally drawn from nations other than the Jewish nation writing, “Clearly it is prefigured here that after his passion and resurrection the Lord, in his preachers, was going to leave behind the faithless hearts of the Jews and move onto the regions of foreign nations.” However, it is still important to Bede that there be representation from both the Jews and the Gentiles. In his discussion of the verse that reads, “The joining of your thighs is like jewels that are fashioned by the hand of a craftsman” (SoS 7:1) Bede suggests that Biblical mentions of thighs are linked to the generation of offspring. In relation to this verse he writes, “The joining of her thighs, then, is the union of the two peoples (namely, Jews and Gentiles) from which the one Church universal is perfected in unity of faith and is made fruitful with spiritual offspring so that she increases unto the end of the age.”

Bede discusses how to enter the universal Church in his commentary on the Song of Songs as well as many of his other exegetical works, including his commentary on

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68 Echlin, “Bede and the Church,”, 57.
69 Bede, On the Song of Songs and Selected Writings, 209.
71 Bede, On the Song of Songs and Selected Writings, 197.
Genesis. In the Genesis commentary he compares the Church to Noah’s ark saying, “Through which sacraments (of baptism and the Eucharist) all the faithful are received into the society of the holy Church as into the interior of the ark.” Bede addresses the theme of the Eucharist, particularly of the wine of the Eucharist, within the first two verses of his commentary on the Song of Songs. In the second verse the bride says to her bridegroom, “For your breasts are better than wine” (SoS 1:2). Bede interprets this as Synagoga speaking about the first principles of evangelical faith, namely salvation through the sacraments. He says, “Therefore, the breasts of the Bridegroom are better than wine because all those whom the first principles of the New Testament regenerate by water and the Spirit (John 3:5) they afterward render fit for entrance into heavenly life, whereas prolonged observance of the old law was never able to do this.”

He continues his defense of the sacraments and the importance of Christ’s passion and crucifixion when analyzing the verse that reads, “My beloved is to me a grape-cluster from Cyprus in the vineyards of Engaddi” (SoS 1:14). Bede connects the reference of wine to the blood and sacrifice of Christ. He then turns his attention to the location of Engaddi writing,

“Nor should we neglect to mention that Engaddi is interpreted as ‘fountain of the kid’, this name obviously indicates the bath of sacred baptism into which we descended while we were yet sinners deserving to be on the left hand, but have now ascended cleansed from the filthiness of sinner and reckoned among the number of the sheep.”

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72 Bede et al., Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina (Turnholti: Typographi Brepols, 1955), 58.
73 Bede, On the Song of Songs and Selected Writings, 39.
74 Bede, On the Song of Songs and Selected Writings, 59.
The sacraments of baptism and Eucharist are clearly important to Bede, a theme that is made explicit in the visualization of his commentary.

However, although Bede believes in a universal Church, he still understands it to be split into different types throughout time including the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. The Church Militant is the part of the Church that exists on earth during time, the Church that is made up of believers which fights to continue the faith throughout the six ages of time. The Church Triumphant is the Church at the end of time once the earth has been destroyed and the reign of Christ becomes eternal. He makes note of the difference between the two Churches when examining the verse which reads, “His left hand is under my head, and his right hand will embrace me” (SoS 2:6). Bede proclaims that the left hand represents the temporal gifts and the right hand represents the blessedness of eternal life. He then delves deeper, detailing the temporal gifts as “when he raises them up through participation in his sacraments, when he gives them the pledge of his Spirit, and when he supplies them with the consolation of the sacred scriptures.”

The left hand, or the Church Militant, is crucial for the transition to the Church Triumphant as understood by Bede when he says, “for his right hand will not embrace anyone whom his left hand has not first lifted up to be caressed.” The right hand which “promises the eternal kingdom of life in heaven” is impossible to reach without first participating in the present day Church Militant through the study of scripture and the sacraments. This duality between the temporal and the eternal is central to the visual exegesis happening in the miniatures for the Song of Songs.
New Visual Exegesis

The frontispieces for the Song of Songs spans two facing folios like those of Daniel and Isaiah. However, while the Daniel and Isaiah images combined the literal and the exegetical alongside images approaching author portraits, the Song of Songs uses both of its folios to communicate Bede’s understanding of the role of the Church in the history of salvation. The visual rhetoric in these two images is dense, touching on all the points discussed above from Bede’s commentary.

The left side folio, 4v, is a visual representation of the temporal Church Militant. The right side folio, 5r, is a visual representation of its eternal and heavenly counterpart, the Church Triumphant. Regardless of whether the compositional placement of these two halves of the Church refers to Bede’s discussion of the right and left hands, it is at the very least clear that the illuminators are aware of his distinction between the two Churches and their chronological order.

The Church Militant is strewn with references to Bede’s understanding of the role and the structure of the temporal Church. At the very center of the composition is St. Peter baptizing a young male figure. The baptism grants the figure a golden halo like the rest of the elect in the image, a stark contrast to the three similar male figures standing behind the baptismal font awaiting their chance at salvation. For, according to Bede, “He indeed baptized with the Holy Spirit who pardoned sins by the favour of the Holy Spirit; and when they had received forgiveness of sins he also bestowed the grace of the same
Spirit.”75 The sacramental imagery continues at the very top of the image, directly above the baptismal font, with Ecclesia handing a chalice to a devout woman. The chalice is filled with the blood of Christ, freshly collected from the wound at Christ’s side to which Ecclesia is pointing. The devout woman drinks from the chalice, taking part in the Eucharistic sacrament. This emphasis on the sacraments, especially those of Baptism and Eucharist which are required for inclusion in the Church, alongside the sacrifice made to make those sacraments possible speak directly to Bede’s commentary on the subject. This is further strengthened by the choice of Ecclesia and St. Peter, two personifications of the Church on Earth.

The Church Militant is also composed of several types of people, including four men who do not have haloes but are wearing crowns. These crowns are not the characteristically Ottonian in style and instead speak to an archaizing attempt by the illuminator. These four men, as mentioned earlier, could represent the Four Kingdoms, which would explain their lack of haloes. The inclusion of these figures may well be an allusion to the Jewish or the “earlier part of the Church.”76 Bede describes these pre-Christians as “awaiting the same incarnation, passion, and resurrection of the Lord,” seen in the upper right hand corner of the miniature.

The Church Triumphant can be seen on the right folio once again a visual representation of Bede’s writings on the subject. Christ is now enthroned, surrounded by seraphim much like it is described in Isaiah’s vision. He is surrounded by angels split into

75 Allan, Theological Works of the Venerable Bede and Their Literary and Manuscript Presentation, with Special Reference to the Gospel Homilies, 26.
76 Echlin, “Bede and the Church,” 57.
groups all with colored haloes. As mentioned above, Bede’s Gregorian understanding of the universal Church includes the angels as well as previously depicted “virtuous before Christ”. The angels here are not just heavenly decoration to make a grander impact on the viewer; they are an integral part of the complicated conception of the Church and the nine choirs of angels. The choirs of angels are finally complete with the introduction of the tenth choir, the Church Triumphant, to heaven. The members of the eternal Church are seen being ushered into heaven by Ecclesia. There is a cluster of figures directly in front of Ecclesia whose skin is a vastly different color than that of the rest of the figures in the image. Their skin is grey, sometimes described in German sources as blue, a clear sign of their status as “other.”

It is likely that these figures are meant to represent those from “far and wide throughout the world.” The medieval understanding of foreign nations and peoples was limited at best, making it difficult for artists of any kind to depict them accurately in a convincing and easily identifiable way. While discussing this possibility in the description of these works, a reference to Pliny’s Natural History description of Indian women arose. It reads, “Among a certain race of India the women bear children only once in their lifetime, and the children begin to turn grey directly after birth.” Once again, it would be difficult to prove with any certainty that this is what the illuminators were thinking of. However, Bede in his prologue to the Song of Songs makes reference to Pliny, apologizing for his frequent citation of Pliny and Isidore writing,

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“For I have done this not out of a desire to seem presumptuous, but mindful of the ignorance that befalls me and my people as a result of having been born and bred far outside the world, that is on an island in the ocean, so that we cannot know about things that go on in the first parts of the world (I mean places like Arabia and India, Judea and Egypt) except through the writings of those who have lived there.”

Regardless of the origin of the use of grey to signify “otherness,” it is clear that the group near Ecclesia and the group of small children at the end of the line are meant to represent the far reach of Christianity and the Church Triumphant at the end of time.

Ultimately, the miniatures for the Song of Songs draw to a close the thematic narrative that has been building throughout the miniature program of the manuscript. With this frontispiece, the end of time is realized, and the elect make their way towards their heavenly eternity - with the bridegroom enthroned and the bride approaching him.

**Conclusion**

These six miniatures should not only be read for their individual contributions to the text they illuminate; they should also be read as a cohesive whole. After analyzing the illuminations there is an unquestionable theme that arises: revelation and eschatology. Isaiah begins the set with his apocalyptic view of Christ, followed by Daniel’s apocalypse of the end of time, finally ending in the Song of Songs description of how the Church will navigate these end times both on earth and after the last days.

The choice of scenes to depict were in no way accidental or inconsequential. Isaiah’s purification in order to begin his journey as an evangelist and apostle, armed with the knowledge of the truth of Christ and what befalls those who turn away from him marks the beginning of his apocalypse. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s

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interpretation of it is the exact moment in the Book of Daniel that solidifies what must happen before the end of days. As discussed in Chapter one, both Jerome and Bede spent a significant amount of time discussing the order of things to come as described by Daniel in several of their exegetical works. Bede in particular feels the need to link the Biblical past to the present, a tendency that is sometimes referred to as a “non-contemporaneous contemporaneity.” Bede and Jerome see this link and the understanding of it as crucial to their roles and duties as preachers and teachers. It is their duty to the temporal and contemporaneous Church that can be seen in the Song of Songs miniatures. The prominence given to the sacraments and the unification of the Church communicates the responsibility of those on Earth to continue evangelizing and preparing the world for its eventual salvific end. The weight repeatedly placed on what can be done on earth leads to some interesting questions regarding the purpose of this manuscript. Who in Ottonian Germany would need or make use of such an innovative miniature program which places a large value on pastoral care?

80 Allan, Theological Works of the Venerable Bede and Their Literary and Manuscript Presentation, with Special Reference to the Gospel Homilies, 35.
Conclusion: For the Abbess of Gandersheim

These past two chapters have delved into the connections between the four books included in the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary. Perhaps unfairly, the excerpt from Proverbs has not been discussed in nearly as much detail as Isaiah, Daniel, and the Song of Songs. This is due to its importance in the argument concerning the original intended audience of this manuscript group. Little information survives about the manuscripts themselves except for the records that track their movement from the library of Henry II to the new Bamberg library. In fact, as previously mentioned, it is unclear whether the manuscripts originally belonged to either Otto III or Henry II. The fact that they were completed right around Otto III’s death makes the attribution even more complicated. However, searching the manuscripts, it becomes clear that this manuscript set could not have been made for a king. It is my belief that this manuscript was intended as a gift for a high-level ecclesiastic in Otto III’s family, perhaps even his beloved eldest sister and Abbess of Gandersheim, Sophia.

Before any further discussion of the intended audience, it is useful to reflect on what has been discovered so far. The Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentaries are two manuscripts created in Reichenau and finished by the turn of the millennium. They are similar in both size and style, leading some scholars to believe that they were created as a set. This belief is further strengthened by the strong thematic connections between the manuscripts regarding their biblical text, exegetical commentary, and new visual commentary. Together these manuscripts work as a single unit to describe the best way to negotiate the end of times, and ensure your soul’s place in
heaven with the rest of the elect seen in the miniatures for the Song of Songs. This apocalyptic approach to Isaiah, Daniel, and the Song of Songs seen in the writings of Bede and Jerome works well in the year 1000, when millenialist thinking reached its high point. However, there is one text within the Bamberg Commentaries which has not yet been discussed.

The excerpt from Proverbs is unique to these manuscripts in many ways. For one, it is the only Biblical text and commentary pair without its own frontispiece. It also is the shortest book, which is a result of it being the only excerpt in the pair of manuscripts. The excerpt itself points to the possible reasoning for its choice. Proverbs 31:10-31 is most commonly referred to as “The Good Wife” passage. It is accompanied by exegesis from Bede which serves almost as a prologue to his exegesis on the Song of Songs. In short, Bede’s commentary on the Good Wife claims that she is an allegory for Ecclesia, herself an allegory for the church as described in his exegesis for the Song of Songs. Bedean scholars are unclear as to the exact dates of Bede’s exegesis on Proverbs, but many place its time of writing around the same time as his Song of Songs work. Their closeness in time helps explain the similarities in theme and allegorical interpretation between the two works. It also lends credence to the idea that the manuscript pairing was based on an adherence to an apocalyptic theme. However, the choice of this particular Proverbs

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excerpt along with the Song of Songs points to perhaps a different audience than originally thought.

Traditionally, “The Good Wife” and the Song of Songs are included in private devotional texts for women. This coupled with the somewhat uncommon iconography in the Song of Songs miniatures leads me to believe that this manuscript set was originally intended as a gift for a woman. Looking specifically at the miniature on folio 4v, the visual evidence makes it improbable that this manuscript was made for a king. The first people in line to receive the blood of Christ from Ecclesia are four women. These four women precede all of the men that follow them, including bishops, other ecclesiastics, and kings. As previously discussed, none of these women is particularly special, meaning that they are not prominent biblical figures. Otto III’s and Henry II’s other manuscripts from Reichenau show a strong emphasis on male royal figures within the miniatures, seen best in the Gospels of Otto III also finished c.1000 (Fig. 12). This strong royal male archetype is absent from all six of the miniatures. In fact, Christ is only seen crowned like an earthly king in the miniature for Daniel where he is also shown holding a scepter. Nevertheless, he is depicted as significantly smaller than both the idol and Nebuchadnezzar, connecting this compositional choice to Jerome’s exegetical discussion of Christ as the king of the Eternal Kingdom. There is no doubt that Christ is the ultimate king, communicated best in the Song of Songs miniature where his throne is the cosmos. However, kingly depictions of Christ are an expected part of depictions of heaven, and in no way speak to the place or the role of an earthly king as the other manuscript illuminations for both Otto III and Henry II do.
So, if this manuscript pair was indeed made for a woman, is it possible to know which woman it was? The passage of time makes it difficult to say with any certainty. That is not to say that there is no one who would have been important enough and learned enough to be deserving of this manuscript. In fact there was such a woman, and she was held in high esteem by both Otto III and Henry II: Sophia, the Abbess of Gandersheim.

Sophia, Otto III’s eldest sister, was veiled at the age of 12 at Gandersheim. She was immediately taken in by her father’s cousin Gerberga, who was the abbess of Gandersheim until her death in 1001. Before Sophia was made abbess, she spent two years outside of the convent, from 995-997, acting as an advisor to her brother, all the while gaining property and rights for Gandersheim. When Gerberga died, Sophia was made abbess, a role she had been groomed for by her grand-cousin since her arrival to the convent. Sophia, and her sister Adelheid, were powerful women in Ottonian Germany, going so far as to help make Henry II, their cousin, Otto III’s successor. Sophia’s intelligence is well documented. She singlehandedly grew Gandersheim’s holdings during her run as abbess as well as running two other convents at Eschwege (which she founded on her way out of Gandersheim with her brother in 995) and Essen. Her role in

85 Bernhardt, Itinerant Kingship, 148.
86 Bernhardt, Itinerant Kingship, 150.
87 Bernhardt, Itinerant Kingship, 151.
advising her brother has never been fully explored, but she was clearly respected by her brother if he was interested in bringing her along with him as an advisor.

Analyzing the illuminations as a whole, it becomes clear that they speak to someone in an ecclesiastical position. Isaiah’s miniatures begin the journey to salvation through the theophanous revealing of Christ. Christ sits in glory over the Church, an altar below him to signal his future sacrifice. On the right folio, Isaiah is cleansed and asked to move forward as the mouthpiece of Christ, as all religious leaders are asked to do. Following Isaiah, Daniel’s miniatures focus on the earthly realities of Christ’s Second Coming. Christ is shown as the king of the eternal kingdom, triumphant over the empires that crumbled before him. Christ is shown holding the same processional cross that Ecclesia is in the Song of Songs miniatures, undoubtedly a sign on the importance of the Church in the end days. It is the Church, led by Christ, which will become the eternal kingdom of heaven. This Church is realized in the Song of Songs miniatures. The Church Militant, the temporal Church, guided by the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, represents the role of someone like Sophia in the end times. It is the role of the milites Christi to fulfill the prophecies of the Church put forth by Isaiah and Daniel. It is this miniature that specifically speaks to a female ecclesiastic audience. Leading the way are four women, one in particular engaging with Ecclesia herself. It is strange that these women are placed so prominently at the head of the line, unless the choice was made to reflect the intended reader of this manuscript. In truth, this is the only place in the manuscript illuminations that a woman could be featured prominently. An illuminator would be hard-pressed to find a space for a woman in any part of Isaiah or Daniel.
However, the inclusion of female religious leadership can be placed naturally in a vision of the Church as a whole. The distinction of these women is not to be overlooked, and it is reasonable to conclude that had this manuscript been intended for a male audience, the head of the line would not be populated by women.

A manuscript pair like the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary would be perfectly natural in the hands of a royal abbess. She is important enough in the political hierarchy to be gifted manuscripts as detailed and lavish as these. She is also intelligent and scholarly enough to understand the complex theological relationship between these four books, their written commentaries, and most stunningly, their visual commentaries. Regardless of these manuscripts’ original intended owner, it is abundantly clear that they are special. They bring together three aspects of Ottonian medieval theology - the biblical, the exegetical, and the visual - that are often treated disjointedly. At the very least, the Bamberg Commentaries and the Isaiah Commentary prove that there exist manuscripts created for the sole purpose of making a cohesive theological argument before the 12th century, and that a significant amount of sophisticated thinking both on the written and artistic level were involved.
Illustrations

Figure 1: Song of Songs, 4v
  c.1000, Reichenau
  Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 22

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Figure 2: Song of Songs, 5r
c.1000, Reichenau
Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 22
Figure 3: Song of Songs, 5v

c.1000, Reichenau

Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 22
Figure 4: Proverbs, 18r

c.1000, Reichenau

Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 22
Figure 5: Daniel, 31v
c.1000, Reichenau
Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl.22
Figure 62: Daniel, 32r
c.1000, Reichenau
Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 22
Figure 7: Daniel, 32v
c.1000, Reichenau
Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 22
Figure 8: Daniel, 34v
c.1000, Reichenau
Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 22
Figure 9: Isaiah, 10v
C.1000, Reichenau
Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 76
Figure 10: Isaiah, 11r  
c.1000, Reichenau  
Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 76
Figure 11: Isaiah, 11v

c.1000, Reichenau
Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Misc Bibl. 76
Figure 12: Portrait of Otto III, 20r
Gospels of Otto III, c.1000, Reichenau
Bayerische Staatsbibliothek MSS 4453
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