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Mappaemundi and the Medieval Worldview

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the common misconceptions of medieval cartography, specifically regarding medieval *mappaemundi* within the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. I closely examine the Ebstorf Map, Psalter World Map, and Hereford Mappa Mundi in order to provide an in-depth analysis of both secular and religious implications of the medieval worldview revealed within these maps. Despite the geographical inaccuracies due to the limitations within cartography during the thirteenth through fourteenth centuries, medieval *mappaemundi* served as encyclopedic devices for their medieval audience. These particular maps contained information of all elements of the known world including people, animals, places, and more broadly, how medieval Christendom fit within the context of the known world.

While each of these maps possess distinctive characteristics, their overarching structure and purpose demonstrate the breadth of information conveyed through a cartographical medium. At a glance, these world maps communicate an overwhelming amount of information to their viewers due to the sheer physical size of the maps, but upon closer examination, it is evident that medieval *mappaemundi* were particularly powerful *tools* for knowledge dissemination. Because of their strong visual components, these *mappaemundi* enabled even illiterate audiences to easily understand the fundamental themes represented in medieval world maps.

In essence, this study seeks to examine each map as a respective primary source document, using both a historical lens and an artistic lens to identify shared themes between the maps in order to identify overlapping iconography, symbols, and even perceptions towards elements outside of the realm of medieval Christendom.



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## Chapter 1

### A Brief Overview of *Mappaemundi* from the Thirteenth through Fourteenth Centuries

Medieval world maps have been invaluable sources of information for historians. Despite the geographical inaccuracies due to the limitations within cartography during the thirteenth through fourteenth centuries, medieval *mappaemundi* served as encyclopedic devices for the medieval audience. These particular maps contained information of all elements of the known world including people, animals, places, and more broadly, how medieval Christendom fit within the context of the known world. In essence, the primary purpose of the *mappamundi* was to provide a sound, Christian historical narrative that could be displayed to both a reading and non-reading audience.

The Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford maps—the three specific maps under consideration here—possess distinctive characteristics as their overarching structure and purpose demonstrate the breadth of information conveyed through a cartographical medium. At a glance, these world maps communicate an overwhelming amount of information to its viewers due to the sheer physical size of many of these maps; upon closer examination, however, it is evident that medieval *mappaemundi* were particularly powerful tools for knowledge due to their strong visual components which enabled even illiterate audiences to easily understand the fundamental themes represented in medieval world maps.

In essence, this paper seeks to analyze each of these three maps as respective primary source documents, using both a historical lens and an artistic lens to identify shared themes between the maps in order to identify overlapping iconography, symbols, and even perceptions towards elements outside of the realm of medieval Christendom.

When we think of maps in the modern world, our minds tend to associate them with travel. Maps generally tell us how to get from point A to point B while simultaneously giving us a comprehensive view of the surrounding terrain and geography. Thus, in the modern world we see the fundamental purpose of maps as presenting known information about any given area alongside its spatial relationship to surrounding areas. Medieval *mappaemundi*, or world maps created in medieval Europe, usually have a different purpose—at least when compared to modern map usage. The word “*mappaemundi*” is derived from Latin, with *mappa* meaning “cloth” and *mundi* meaning “of the world”. These medieval maps serve as invaluable primary sources that present a significant amount of information about the medieval Christian understanding of the world. Specifically, the *mappaemundi* unveil the medieval understandings of Christianity, cosmology, cosmography, and death. Three particular *mappaemundi*—now known as the Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford maps—are representative of the various types of *mappaemundi* created during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

One of the primary purposes of this study examines the question of why. Why were these *mappaemundi* so significant and why do they remain so worthy of study in the twenty-first century? This is a complex question, but simply put, *mappaemundi* are a distinct type of map in the way information is presented to its viewers. The sheer complexity of information conveyed on a circular plane is difficult for the modern viewer to comprehend upon first glance. Specifically, *mappaemundi* do not follow the modern use of a standardized grid to divide the presented space, a technology that only developed beginning in the late thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the change in technology that developed after *mappaemundi* were created, the shape

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<sup>1</sup>John Rennie Short, *The World Through Maps: A History of Cartography* (Firefly Books, 2003), 20.

of medieval *mappaemundi* also has to do with the map's greater overall purpose. *Mappaemundi* have challenged traditional cartographical practices by blending the boundaries of space and time while providing a visual narrative of Christian history. As a result, these world maps are more concerned with storytelling rather than geographical accuracy to aid travel.

*Mappaemundi* rely heavily on the artistic choices, imagery, and spatial relationships among the various elements on each map; and therefore, they convey deeper implications of the medieval worldview. This chapter will specifically explore the origins of *mappaemundi*, looking at early iterations of these world maps, various contributions of notable cartographical figures, the characterization of time and space on a two-dimensional plane, and several artistic elements commonly used throughout all three world maps. An excellent example of this medieval combination of artistry, imagery, and spatial cues is offered in the traditional, medieval T-O maps, which are discussed below.

Despite the *mappamundi*'s unique presentation of information, access to this information was provided to both a reading and non-reading audience. Simply put, these maps were used as teaching devices for medieval, Christian society. Compared to other maps such as portolan charts that depended on a high level of geographical accuracy, *mappaemundi* have demonstrated that maps can serve purposes outside of presenting accurate, spatial realities by blending biblical, geographical, historical information to communicate to their audience.

## A Brief History of Tripartite and T-O Maps

Medieval *mappaemundi* fall into one of four categories: zonal, quadripartite, transitional, and tripartite.<sup>2</sup> The maps examined in this paper are characterized as tripartite maps, meaning that they depict the world as a circular shape that employs the tripartite schema (the “T” shape) to distinguish Asia, Africa, and Europe—hence, these maps are also referred to as T-O maps.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that T-O maps were not intended as travel guides as maps are typically thought of today. The quantity of information presented within very simple T-O maps is much more limited when compared to many other types of maps, including the more complex *mappaemundi* considered in this thesis. Yet, in order to better analyze these more complex *mappaemundi*, it is critical to understand the history of the T-O map, often known to modern scholars as the Isidorian map. Although Isidore of Seville, a renowned, seventh-century archbishop of Seville, is not attributed as the creator of T-O maps, the maps produced in his work called *De Natura Rerum* and his encyclopedic *Etymologiae* provide the earliest images of T-O maps. These tripartite maps are distinguished by the unique “T” shape that divides the spherical plane of the T-O maps produced from the seventh century and into early Modern Europe. The “T” shape represents the division of the world by the Great Sea—that is the Mediterranean basin that separates the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa from each other.<sup>4</sup> In some of these T-O maps, the three distinct divisions provide an allusion to the biblical divisions of Noah’s three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Indeed, the sons’ names appear in

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<sup>2</sup> David Woodward, “Medieval Mappaemundi,” in *The History of Cartography: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean, Vol. 1*, edited by J. B. Harley and David Woodward, 286–370 (University of Chicago Press, 1987), 296.

<sup>3</sup> David Woodward, “Reality, Symbolism, Time, and Space in Medieval World Maps,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 75, no. 4 (1985), 511.

<sup>4</sup> Naomi Reed Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought: the Hereford Paradigm* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 13.



some T-O maps, representing them as the fathers of the three known continents whereby Shem is granted the region of Asia, Japheth Europe, and Ham Africa.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the “T” in these T-O maps has often been recognized as the symbol of the cross, further implying the deeply ingrained and numerous religious cosmological implications within *mappaemundi* as a genre.

Encircling the “T” shape of these tripartite maps, the “O” indicates the Great Ocean, completely enveloping the “T”. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the division of the three continents within tripartite maps is not happenstance, but follows medieval cartographers’ understanding of the major waterways that separated the three known continents: the Tanais River running between Europe and Asia, the Nile separating Asia from Africa, and lastly, the Mediterranean Sea separating Africa from Europe.

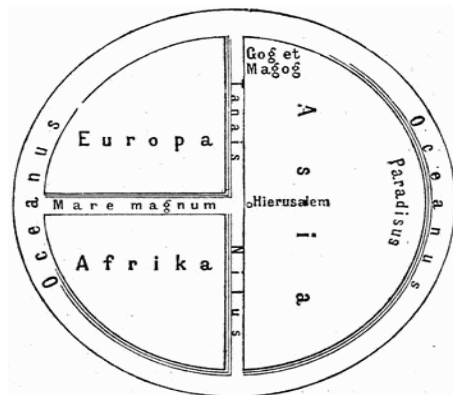


Figure 1: Idealized Tripartite Map from 1888/1895: T-O Map Showing the Division of Europe, Africa, and Asia (Accessed via [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T\\_and\\_O\\_map](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T_and_O_map))

<sup>5</sup> Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “Reading the World: the Hereford *mappa mundi*.” *Parergon* 9, no. 1 (1991), 117-135. doi:10.1353/pgn.1991.0019.

## Isidore of Seville

Isidore of Seville's knowledge of cosmology and geography were influenced by many well-known writings from Roman and Christian authors, including works by Macrobius, Orosius, Pliny the Elder, and Solinus.<sup>6</sup> Yet, because Isidore of Seville's own works of *De natura rerum* and *Etymologiae* were so popular in the Middle Ages, they are responsible for contributing to the encyclopedic knowledge towards the creation of all medieval T-O maps, including the most complex *mappaemundi*. Regarding his understanding of geographical concepts—which was influenced by earlier authors, as noted above—Isidore wrote that, “Concerning the earth we are told that it is named from its roundness (orbis) which is like a wheel; whence the small wheel is called ‘orbiculus’. For the Ocean flows round it on all sides and encircles its boundaries.”<sup>7</sup> Due to his broad influence on various elements of medieval thought, Isidore of Seville is also attributed as the earliest medieval figure to utilize the circulatory system characteristic of tripartite maps. The implications of the sphere, or the *cosmological wheel* as historian Naomi Kline indicates, is intentional for many functional purposes. Kline argues that these circular shapes were often used as educational and memory devices, intended to aid illiterate viewers of the maps, as well as beginning readers of books.<sup>8</sup> The wheel was, for instance, also commonly seen in schoolbooks during this time, further implying the significance of the wheel in medieval education.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> David Woodward, “Medieval Mappaemundi,” 301.

<sup>7</sup> Jim Siebold, “Isidore of Seville's Tripartite World (T-O) Maps.” in *Index to Maps & Monographs*. (2015-2021): <http://www.myoldmaps.com>, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 86.

<sup>9</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 18.

Just as the wheels were circular in medieval schoolbooks, so, too, the T-O maps are circular; this, of course, poses the question of how medieval cartographers understood their world. There are few historical accounts that explicitly convey the medieval belief in a spherical world. Yet, despite the use of such circular systems, as in the Wheel of Fortune discussed below, it is difficult to assume that medieval cartographers believed in a flat, circular world as depicted in the two-dimensionality of *mappaemundi*. Rather, modern historians usually attribute the absence of three-dimensionality in medieval *mappaemundi* to the lack of technology suited to the task of map-making in thirteenth-century Europe.<sup>10</sup> In addition, historian John Rennie Short asserts that the lack of a standard grid in *mappaemundi* is characteristic of early medieval maps; specifically, Short notes that “The world was held together by religious history or local lines of wind and compass directions, [and] the full gridding of the world had to await the rediscovery of Ptolemy.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, the lack of certain medieval technologies meant that, for instance, the boundaries within medieval *mappaemundi* were not clearly defined and were instead characterized by the three major waterways that separated the three continents that medieval cartographers understood to exist. And yet, Short’s comment on religious history is integral to understanding these maps because the T-O maps were never intended to simply depict the natural or real world; they were intended to represent other elements of the contemporary, medieval world—elements such as time and Christian faith.

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<sup>10</sup> Woodward, David. “Medieval Mappaemundi.” In *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 1, *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, edited by J.B. Harley and David Woodward, 286–370. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

<sup>11</sup> Short, *The World Through Maps*, 20.

## Space and Time in *Mappaemundi*

In examining the implications of space and time within medieval *mappaemundi*, it is important to define the boundaries placed within the *mappaemundi* in the cosmological context of a medieval understanding of time. For instance, the blending of both secular and religious influences within *mappaemundi* created a symbolic relationship between space and time in these medieval maps. Felicitas Schmieder has explained this concept in the context of the Christian divinity. She notes that “the medieval idea of time included its beginning when God created the world as well as its ending when He will come to earth a second time.”<sup>12</sup> In essence, *mappaemundi* were created and used as visual indicators that demonstrated the larger and longer timeline of humanity. Specifically, biblical stories and events were used—from the Creation story in the *Book of Genesis* to the Last Judgment in the *Book of Revelation*—in order to create a historical and religious narrative for the medieval audience.

These *mappaemundi* did not only depict the earth. Rather, the geographical space used to convey the enormity of the earthly realm is indicated and emphasized further by the circular frame on all three maps. The space that exceeds these boundaries of the earthly realm is an allusion to the heavenly realm. As mentioned previously, *mappaemundi* were not concerned with the geographical accuracy of locations, thus, the physical space between places and elements on the map do not reflect their location in reality. *Mappaemundi* employ the concept of space in a more symbolic way, combining space with time to illustrate the Christian narrative to its Christian audience.<sup>13</sup> David Woodward explores this idea further in his work “Reality, Symbolism, Time and Space in Medieval World Maps.” He argues that modern maps merely

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<sup>12</sup> Felicitas Schmieder, “Edges of the World--Edges of Time,” in *The Edges of the Medieval World*, edited by Gerhard Jaritz and Juhan Kreem, 4-20 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Woodward, “Reality, Symbolism, Time and Space,” 511.

present “an illusion that the objects in the landscape it portrays are cosynchronous.”<sup>14</sup> This assumption of cosynchronicity in cartography, to use Woodward’s terms, has led to misconceptions about the usefulness of *mappaemundi*. While it is clear that *mappaemundi* do not provide this cosynchronous illusion its viewers, it is unfair to entirely discredit the functionality of these world maps because of this notion as will be discussed in later chapters.

### ***Rotae, Order, and Memory***

As noted above, circular illustrations were used widely in medieval education, serving as memory devices for students and scholars to memorize cosmological concepts.<sup>15</sup> Early iterations of such *rotae* include an Isidorian zonal map of the earth, which appeared in his *De natura rerum*. The map utilizes a circular template, correlating one earthly zone to a specific finger as a memory device.<sup>16</sup> Other versions of *rotae* as both illustrations and maps depicted seasons, zodiacs, winds, and humors. In early teaching texts, these diagrams sometimes depicted the earth, surrounded by orbiting planets and by references to the four elements, with the center of these diagrams often making allusions to God in order to convey the cosmological order of creation.<sup>17</sup> For example, these diagrams would either place God within the center of the frame or at the top to denote the significance of his figure in relation to all other elements within the universe, a template that is used, for instance, in the Psalter Map.<sup>18</sup>

These *rotae* devices were commonly accompanied by descriptive texts either in the vernacular or in Latin. Because these written languages—both Latin and the vernaculars—were

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<sup>14</sup> Woodward, “Reality, Symbolism, Time and Space,” 519.

<sup>15</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 28.

often inaccessible to medieval individuals either not trained in the church or simply with little to no education, the *rotae* created a visual guide for the illiterate or semi-illiterate to retain information. At the same time, these *rotae* also made some vernacular and Latin texts more widely available for public use. This was especially important in the Middle Ages, when even the literate could rarely afford to own a book. In addition to these key functions of the *rotae* within the medieval context, *rotae* was used as a fundamental template for conveying extensive amounts of information in a straightforward manner.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 2, for instance, is titled *The Scale of Being*. This image dates to the twelfth century and details a hierarchical order of transcension where God is depicted at the top of the frame. Below him, we see a wide range of human figures that are attempting to reach the same plane as the Creator. The *rota* is understandable to both the literate and illiterate, though in this case, the image is in a manuscript that was not widely available.

### **The Wheel of Fortune**

One of the most important *rotae* used in medieval texts and maps was the so-called Wheel of Fortune. From a cosmological perspective, the history behind the Wheel of Fortune theory is a foundational element to medieval *mappaemundi*. The circle has long been considered an apparatus, which medieval cartographers could use to establish a methodical organization for religious and historical cosmology.<sup>20</sup> The Wheel of Fortune itself is a concept that likely originated in Ancient Greece. The symbolic wheel was at the mercy of the goddess Fortuna, who personified all earthly fortune and, more importantly, fate.<sup>21</sup>

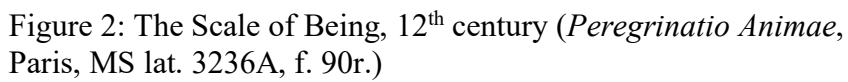
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<sup>19</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 44.

<sup>20</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 35.

<sup>21</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 36.

A number of these Wheel of Fortune images survive in medieval manuscripts, including the well-known Wheel of Fortune in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century work, *Hortus Deliciarum/ Garden of Delights* by a German abbess and nun, Herrad of Landsberg. (Fig. 3) As in Herrad's codex, images of the goddess of fortune or Fortuna, were often either superimposed on top of spheres or were rendered so that she was presiding over the world; such images demonstrated the belief that she controlled earthly fortunes. Moreover, the use of Fortuna presiding over the circle of life or of the earth was used to indicate the unpredictable nature of life. It was believed that throughout life, one would experience a rise and fall of fortune as symbolized by the turning of the wheel.





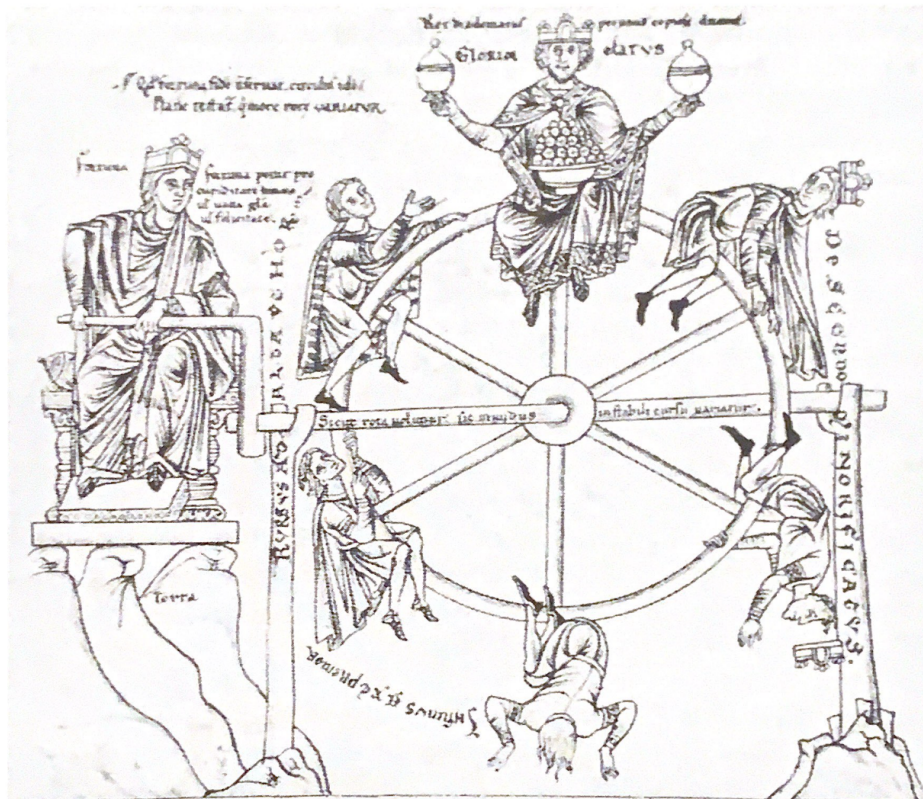


Figure 3: The Wheel of Fortune, 12<sup>th</sup> century (Herrad of Landsberg, *Hortus Deliciarum*; Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Dept. Estampes Ad 144a))



Figure 4: The Wheel of Fortune, 1230, (*Carmina Burana Codex Buranus*; Bavarian State Library, Munich Clm 4660)

Later iterations of the Wheel of Fortune in early medieval illuminated manuscripts often depict the goddess Fortuna as turning the wheel herself. This particular interpretation of the goddess Fortuna highlights her supremacy and sovereignty in relation to the earthly plane. The widespread use of the Wheel of Fortune in the Middle Ages emerged from an extremely popular text—the *Consolation of Philosophy*, written by Roman scholar Boethius in the sixth century. Boethius wrote this Christian work in which he, Boethius, has a conversation with Philosophia at

a time in his own life when he awaited his execution after being accused of treason under Theodoric the Great, the Ostrogothic King.<sup>22</sup>

Later developments in the Wheel of Fortune saw a Christianization of the goddess' spatial relationship to the rest of the world, and she was eventually replaced with a Christ-like deity that presided over the known world. Although this iteration (Fig. 5) includes more elements depicting what is beyond the earthly plane, it presents a scheme similar to that followed by medieval *mappaemundi* discussed below.

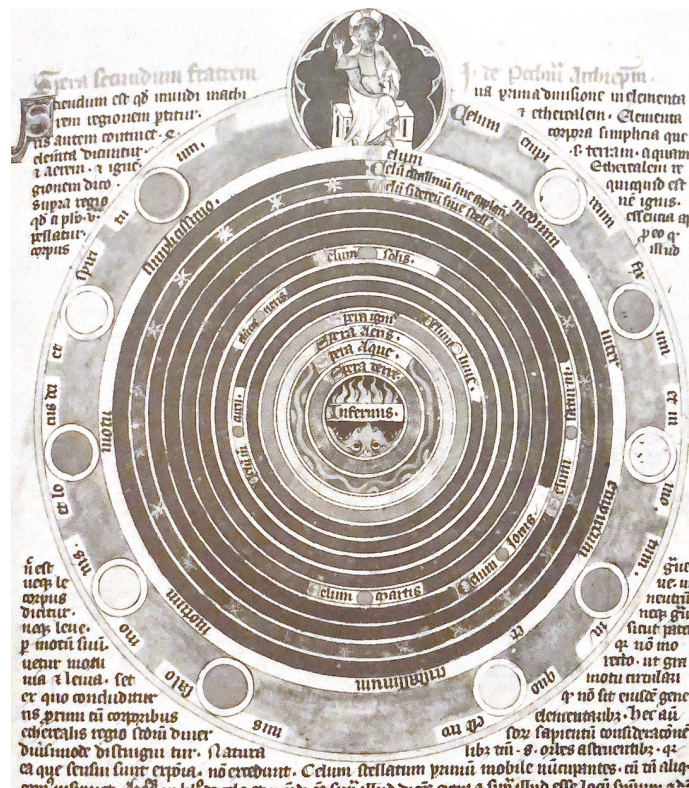


Figure 5: The Shape and Strata of the Universe, c. 1310 (Howard Psalter and Hours, British Library, MS Arudel 83 II, f. 123v.)

<sup>22</sup> John Marenbon, "Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta (2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/boethius/>

As discussed below, the Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford *mappaemundi* do not, comparatively, reveal nearly as much obvious breadth as this illumination in the *Howard Psalter and Hours*. Nevertheless, the three *mappaemundi* do employ similar artistic choices, as will be seen in the spatial relationships of cosmic elements used to demonstrate a deeper perception of *oikumene*, an ancient Greek word used to describe the known civilized world.

While the Wheel of Fortune focuses on the numerous, and often unpredictable, revolutions and on the symbolism seen in the rising and falling of fortune, the Wheel of Life is bound to one revolution, encouraging viewers to contemplate life outside the existence of time—in other words, the existence in the Christian context of life after death through salvation.<sup>23</sup> The Wheel of Life within the context of the Hereford map, and with its objective to stimulate viewers to think about life in a more abstracted, spiritual manner, begins to become less obscured in looking at the significance of The Last Judgment, as discussed further below. The elements of the Wheel of Life and the Last Judgment bring to the forefront the three medieval *mappaemundi* to which we now turn.

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<sup>23</sup> Marenbon, “Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius,” 38.



## Chapter 2

### Maps Used in This Study

While there have been numerous *mappaemundi* during the thirteenth through fourteenth centuries that could have been used for this paper, the Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford maps have demonstrated undeniable similarities that convey the overarching, medieval worldview within this timeframe. Fundamentally, all three maps are characterized as tripartite or T-O maps, meaning that the geographical information is presented in the same schematic way. These maps also place Jerusalem at the heart of the map. Allusions to the Garden of Eden, also denoted as *Paradise*, are rendered similarly throughout all three maps as well. While these consistencies may seem trivial, this chapter will explore not only how the spatial placements of these biblical locations have greater, underlying implications about their significance within a Christian context, but more broadly, how the shared characteristics of these maps have contributed to the *mappamundi*'s overall purpose as a teaching device.

It is important to underscore the small inconsistencies in the way that these maps interpret apocalyptic significance and iconography, in addition to the breadth of which these maps convey to its viewers that will be discussed in greater detail below.

### The Ebstorf Map

The Ebstorf Map is the first of the *mappaemundi* under consideration here. There is much speculation regarding the origins of the Ebstorf Map, in part because it was a formidable undertaking given the physical size of the map itself. Historians today are still debating the exact time period and authorship of the map, though it is believed to have been created sometime during the thirteenth century. The history of the map is scarce because the map was only

discovered in 1830 at the convent of Ebstorf in Lower Saxony, Germany.<sup>24</sup> The map was restored in Berlin, then broken up into thirty separate sheets of goatskin that were sewn together in order to store it away from the public. Although the map was later destroyed due to an air raid during World War II in 1943, we are fortunate that a current version of the map exists today because of the reconstruction of several reproductions that were produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively.<sup>25</sup> While the current map is incomplete, the existing copies of the pictorial frame provide a rich glimpse into the elements involved in medieval cartography and, even more importantly, into the medieval Christian worldview.

The Ebstorf Map in its full form was approximately twelve feet squared, sewn together on thirty goatskins and painted on top. The map possesses nearly 850 images along with 1,500 texts accompanying the images rendered on the map. Though most of the map remains intact from its true form, the lower left and top right corners are missing due to damage in storage.

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<sup>24</sup>Gudrun Pischke, "The Ebstorf Map: Tradition and Contents of a Medieval Picture of the World," *History of Geo and Space Sciences* 5 (2014), 155.

<sup>25</sup> Armin Wolf, "The Ebstorf "Mappamundi" and Gervase of Tilbury: The Controversy Revisited." *Imago Mundi* 64, no. 1 (2012), 1.





Figure 6: The Ebstorf Map (Accessed via [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf\\_Map](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf_Map))

Despite its incompleteness, the map provides an encyclopedic account of thirteenth century European Christendom. Similar to other Christian-influenced *mappaemundi*, the Ebstorf Map is positioned towards the east, with the holy city of Jerusalem at the map's center. However, the Ebstorf map is also rather unique in the manner in which Christ is rendered. As shown in figure 6, Christ's head is seen presiding at the top of the map while the body of the map



encompasses the space below the section of the head. In contrast to Christ's head, his feet are positioned at the bottom of the map. The spatial relationship between the head and feet was conscientiously defined by the space within the map that binds each respective section to both the celestial and earthly realm.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the representation of Christ was intentionally meant to demonstrate the duality of Christ as half God, half man. While similar tropes are depicted in later *mappaemundi*, the Ebstorf Map is distinct in the way the cartographer distinctly separates the head from feet. To the left and right edges of the map, the viewer can see the hands of Christ almost enveloping the world in his grasp, as shown in figures 8 and 9.

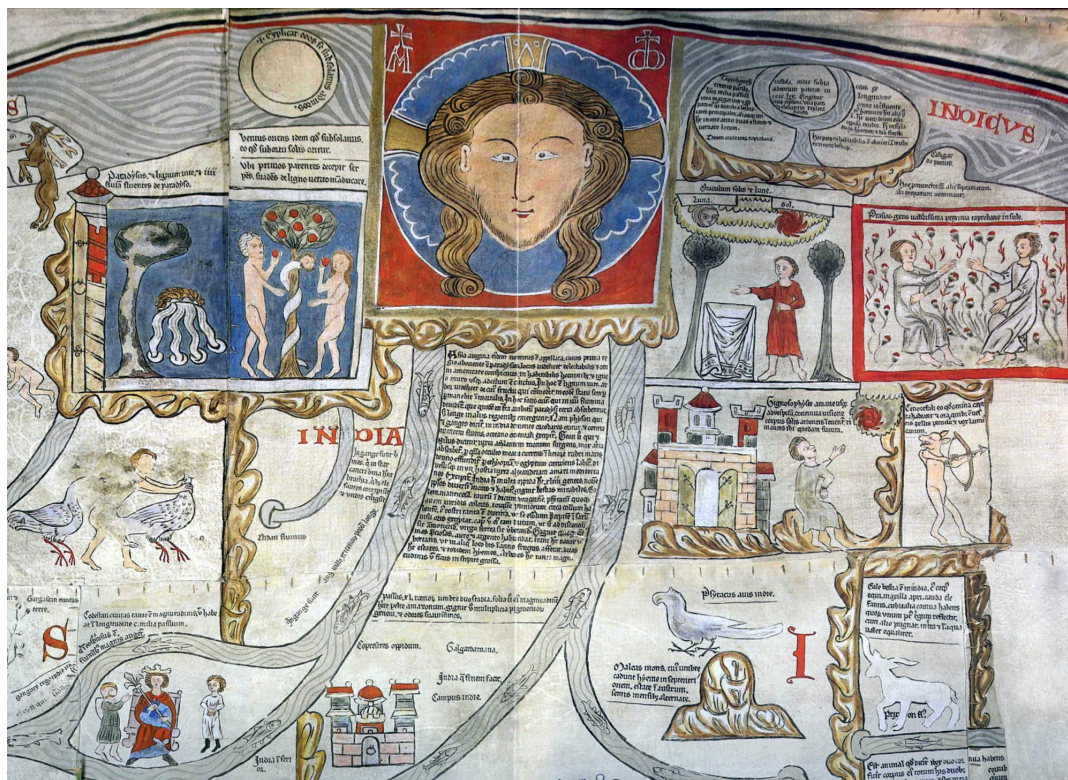


Figure 7: Christ on the Ebstorf Map (Accessed via [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf\\_Map](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf_Map))

<sup>26</sup> Marcia Kupfer, "Reflections in the Ebstorf Map: Cartography, Theology and Dilectio Speculationis," in *Mapping Medieval Geographies: Geographical Encounters in the Latin West and Beyond, 300–1600*, edited by Keith D. Lilley, 100–126 (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 109. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139568388.007, 109.



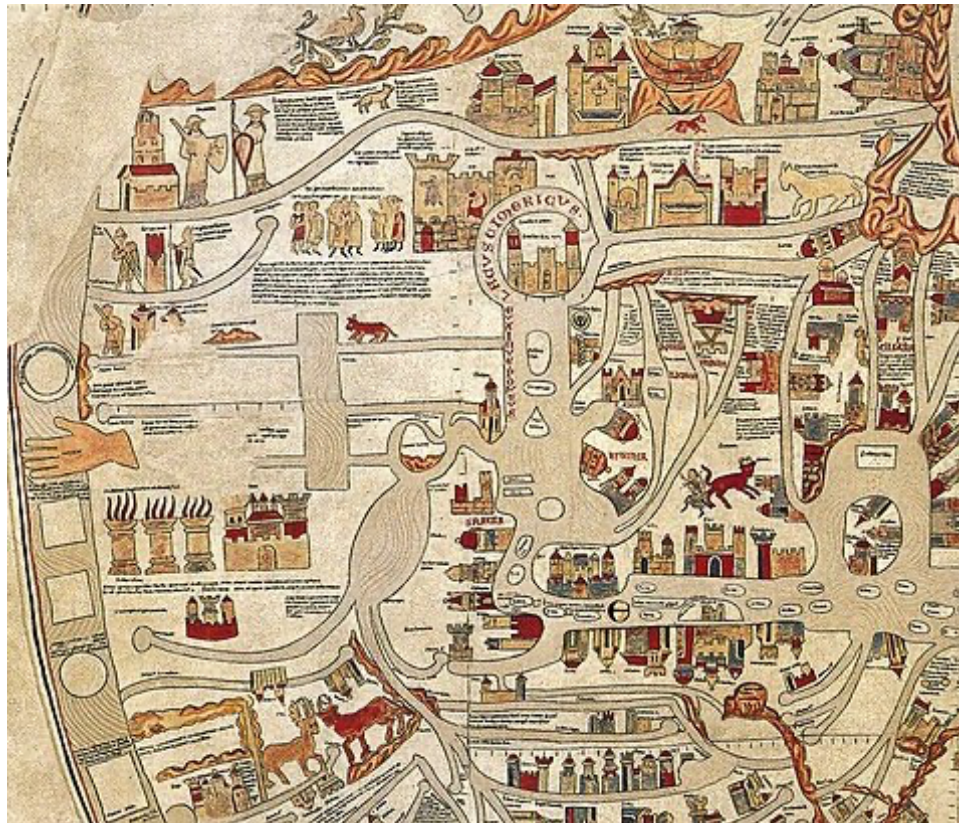


Figure 8: The Right Hand of Christ on the Ebstorf Map (Accessed via [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf\\_Map](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf_Map))

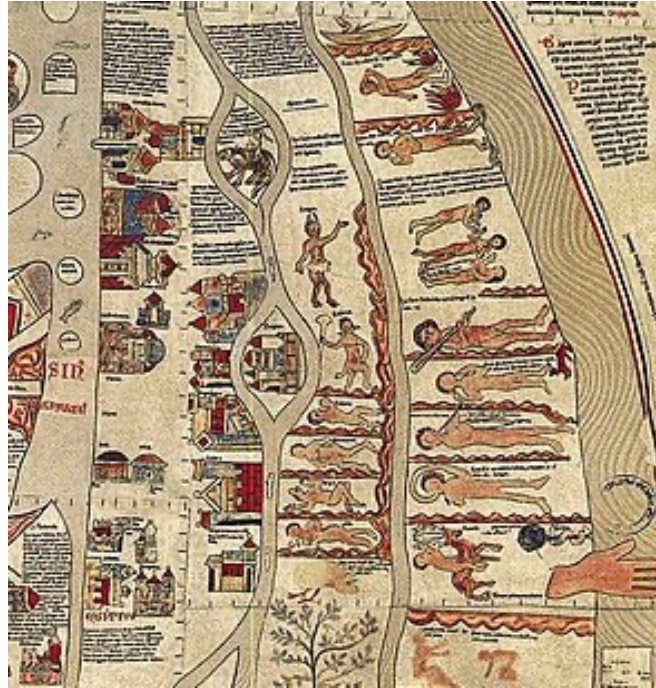


Figure 9: Left Hand of Christ (Accessed via [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf\\_Map](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf_Map))

Art historian Marcia Kupfer examines a unique characteristic of the Ebstorf Map in the way it depicts Christ within the bounds of the *oikumene*.<sup>27</sup> Of the three maps considered here, only the Ebstorf portrays Christ within the boundaries of the physical, known world. Moreover, while the massive size of the Ebstorf map has often been used to denote the significance of an object within iconographical practice, the scale at which Christ is depicted on the Ebstorf Map holds little significance.<sup>28</sup> Rather, the importance of Christ is underscored by the way his body envelopes the earthly plane and, more importantly, the way the separated members of his body are *connected* by the world. The particular artistic and stylistic choice in foregrounding the interconnectedness of Christ and His relationship to the world is unique to the Ebstorf Map, at least in the surviving medieval maps. An alternative interpretation of Christ's body on the

<sup>27</sup> Kupfer, *Reflections in the Ebstorf Map*, 105.

<sup>28</sup> Kupfer, *Reflections in the Ebstorf Map*, 106.

Ebstorf Map comes from a scholar named Bronder who proposes that the role of Christ within the map and within medieval, Christian society can be attributed to the phrase, “He holds the earth in his palm,” where the Latin inscription is placed near the left hand of Christ on the map.<sup>29</sup> Despite possessing divine sovereignty, Christ is simultaneously ingrained within the earthly realm. The Hereford and Psalter maps, for instance, both underline the transcendent nature of God, foregoing the integrated connection between God and the earthly realm. These elements are discussed further in chapter two.

Like other *mappaemundi*, the Ebstorf map is oriented towards the east. The map places particular attention to Jerusalem, which is placed in the center of the map. Upon closer inspection, Christ’s body can be seen rendered within this central frame as an allusion to the resurrection. The particular focus on Jerusalem within *mappaemundi* is common practice as it demonstrates medieval cartographers’ understanding of Jerusalem as the center of the known world. Symbolically, Jerusalem has long been considered a holy city to all three Abrahamic religions—including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The centrality of Jerusalem, thus, has been established in the typical medieval map in order to encourage the audience viewing the *mappaemundi* to envision the holy place in its sanctity, not necessarily as a navigational guide for their pilgrimage. The stylistic choices in rendering the holy city, for instance, were thus intentionally used to provoke the viewer’s imagination of the city’s holy splendor but were limited as an aid to pilgrimage and travel during thirteenth-century Europe.

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<sup>29</sup> Kupfer, *Reflections in the Ebstorf Map*, 106.

## The Psalter Map

In 1262, a (now) unknown cartographer created the so-called Psalter Map. While scholars think that the circular map originally existed on a much larger scale, the map currently exists only as a smaller copy, placed in the manuscript illumination of a medieval book of the *Psalms*. Traditionally, *Psalms* were bound together because they were foundational to both Christian and Jewish worship; the *Psalms* were often copied into a separate scroll for Jewish worship and a separate codex for Christian worship, the latter known as a Psalter. Regarding the Psalter Map, scholars have speculated that the original map was intended for King Henry III of England and that the current map within the Psalter is but a copy. The original map is believed to have been lost in 1262 in a fire, thus, the miniature version of the Psalter map is believed to have been created sometime after 1262 though it is possible the miniature printed in the illuminated manuscript may have also been a prototype for the version given to Henry III. The Psalter World Map is unique in that an accompanying list map is also included on the same folio as the world map. In essence, one of the maps is purely visual while the accompanying map is entirely composed of text.

Similar to the Ebstorf Map, the Psalter Map also depicts Christ at the apex of the map. In the Psalter, however, Christ is holding a spherical object in his right hand with one angel accompanying both his left and right side. The orb held in the left hand of Christ is representative of the globe, enforcing his position as the creator. This image is meant to mirror the first verse of *Psalms* 19, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”<sup>30</sup> Lastly, the T-shaped division included on the orb within God’s hand has often been interpreted as a reference to the T-O map, though the symbolism has been interpreted in several ways. David

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<sup>30</sup> *Psalms* 19:1, *The NIV Study Bible*, 796.







Figure 11: The Psalter List Map (Accessed via <http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/223-the-psalter-mappamundi/223-psalter.pdf>)

In regard to its audience, it is important to understand the nature of the Psalter and its map within the context of Christian devotion during the thirteenth century. Psalters were used on an individual basis for prayer and devotion. Psalters were composed of the *Book of Psalms*, a biblical book composed of 150 distinct, song-like prayers that were taught to the medieval audience. These prayers are not bound to an overarching narrative and can be read by the reader in any given order, and thus have long been used in Judeo-Christian, religious contemplations. More importantly, the *Psalms* were often the gateway opportunity for an individual to learn how



to read.<sup>33</sup> Due to the intimate relationship between a devout Christian and their Psalter, one could argue that the Psalter Map provides a more personal relationship between its viewers and the map as a visual guide—yet this map goes further than a mere visual aid for a reading audience—it becomes a devotional guide. When paired with the text within the Psalter, the Psalter map becomes an integral part of the devotional experience.<sup>34</sup>

Similar, to the Ebstorf Map, the Psalter Map distinctly separates Christ's head and torso from his feet. His feet are shown trampling two wyverns, a legendary creature that resembles a dragon. Wyverns have been used as allegorical emblems that represent Satan. The motif depicted in the map is derived from *Romans* 16:20, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."<sup>35</sup> The first allusion to the antagonism between Satan and Jesus is found in *Genesis* 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."<sup>36</sup> The implication of Christ's victory and the eventual conclusion between the hostility between man and Satan is particularly eminent in the latter half of the verse, "he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Historian Chet Van Duzer provides further insight onto the significance of the wyverns, speculating that the iconography was inspired by *Psalms* 91, which reads "Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample underfoot the lion and the dragon."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Siebold, "Psalter Mappamundi. 1225 A.D.", 2.

<sup>34</sup> Laura Lee Brott, "The Geography of Devotion in the British Library Map Psalter," *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization* 53:3 (2018), 222.

<sup>35</sup> *Romans* 16:20, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1733.

<sup>36</sup> *Genesis* 3:15, *The NIV Study Bible*, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Chet Van Duzer, "The Psalter Map (c.1262)," in *A Critical Companion to English Mappae Mundi of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, edited by Nick Millea and Dan Terkla, 179-196. (Boydell Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture) (Boydell Press, 2019), 184.

The stylistic difference from Christ's depiction in the Ebstorf Map is particularly noteworthy in that the cartographer reveals the entirety of Christ's torso and two hands within the zenith of the frame. The sphere in this case is symbolic of Christ's dominion over the earthly world, with him presiding over the map's entirety while his left hand demonstrates a cue of benediction. In the case of the Psalter List Map however, it is clear that the fragmentation of Christ's body closely mirrors that of the Ebstorf Map.

### **The Hereford Map**

The Hereford Map was created in 1300 and is currently the largest surviving medieval *mappamundi*. At five feet high and four feet across, the map was painted on a single sheet of calfskin, a precious form of medieval vellum. The sheer enormity of the map is fascinating, revealing the complexities of the minds of the medieval cartographers and scribes responsible for its creation. The map contains, for example, over a thousand texts and images.

It is rare for medieval *mappaemundi* to include evidence of its creators; however, the Hereford Map is fairly unique in that the lower-left corner of the map alludes to what appears to be the work's creator. A short introduction tells us that:

Let all who have this history,  
Or shall hear or read or see it,  
Pray to Jesus in His Divinity,  
To have pity on Richard of Haldingham and Lafford, Who has made and planned it,  
To whom joy in heaven be granted.<sup>38</sup>

Richard of Haldingham likely refers to Richard de Bello, an aristocrat and canon of Lincoln Cathedral in 1264, though a second Richard de Bello is thought to have lived after the first

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<sup>38</sup> Jim Siebold, "Richard de Bello of Haldingham, *Hereford mappamundi*, 1290," in *Index to Maps & Monographs*. (2015-2021): <http://www.myoldmaps.com>, 1.



Richard de Bello following 1278.<sup>39</sup> The context of the map's donor is critical in helping us determine the intention behind the creation of the Hereford *mappamundi*. The presence of several textural inaccuracies in Latin texts throughout the map suggest that the map was not solely intended for literate viewers, but openly welcomed any and all viewers. This implication—that is of a broad audience for the map—is further supported by the inscription left by the map's donor. While it is clear that Richard de Bello can be attributed as the map's donor, the artists who actually created the map remain unknown.

While the authorship of the map is still debated today, scholars do know that the Hereford Mappamundi was undoubtedly a costly and laborious endeavor. The paints and dyes used to illustrate and color the map came from vegetable dye that has continued to fade over time.<sup>40</sup> Due to the enormity of the map itself, it is likely that teams of individuals responsible for various functions of production such as coloring, drawing, and writing were used to complete the map.

In terms of geography, the Hereford Map is also oriented towards the east, placing Jerusalem in the center of the map with an image of the Crucifixion above the city although in a much larger format compared to the Ebstorf and Psalter Maps. The Hereford Map also utilizes the T-O system, dividing the space into three separate divisions to distinguish Europe, Asia, and Africa respectively. The apex of the map depicts a scene from The Last Judgment.

Allusions to the medieval *rotae* as presented by historian Naomi Kline underscores the underlying functions of the Hereford Map. As discussed previously, the *rotae* used within church decoration made Latin manuscripts widely available to the public. Not only does the use of

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<sup>39</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 55.

<sup>40</sup> Scott Westrem, "Making a Mappamundi: The Hereford Map," *Terra Incognitae: The Journal of the Society for the History of Discoveries* 34 (2002), 25.

circular diagrams present Latin text in a more palatable format, but it simultaneously improves accessibility to these texts to a broader audience.

There are numerous biblical images within the Hereford Map providing an account of well-known biblical stories or individuals. One such biblical image is that of the crucifixion within the city of Jerusalem. Other images include pyramid-shaped drawings of what is believed to be the Tower of Babel, the prophet Moses located on Mount Sinai where he received the tablets containing the ten commandments, Noah's ark, and an illustration of the Israelites being led across the Red Sea.



Figure 12: The Tower of Babel on the Hereford Map (Accessed via [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uO-IJUP\\_UBQ&t=131s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uO-IJUP_UBQ&t=131s))





Figure 13: Moses Holding the Ten Commandments on the Hereford Map  
(Accessed via [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uO-IJUP\\_UBQ&t=131s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uO-IJUP_UBQ&t=131s))

The Hereford Map is also unique in its inclusion of the letters MORS, the Latin word for death. These letters are placed along the pictorial frame at the map's margins; they serve as a reminder to the medieval audience that their human time on earth is temporary, ephemeral, because of the ultimate expectation of death and the Last Judgment. Biblical evidence for this can be found in *2 Corinthians* 4:18-5:1, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not

built by human hands.”<sup>41</sup> These two verses reinforce the Biblical principle that eternity awaits following death on earth. By using the image of Christ in Judgment, the Hereford Map provides strong imagery for its viewers to remind them that their earthly lives are but temporary and that judgment awaits during the second coming of Christ. Practically speaking, MORS also serves as a tool to indicate the cardinal points of the map: Oriens (west) is denoted by the M and O placement, the O and R indicate Meridiens (indicating south), R and S indicate Occidens (east), and S and M represent Septentrio (indicating north).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:18-5:1, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1768.

<sup>42</sup> Siebold, “Richard de Bello of Haldingham, *Hereford mappamundi*, 1290,” 3.





Figure 14: The Hereford Map (Accessed via [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hereford\\_Mappa\\_Mundi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hereford_Mappa_Mundi))

## The Significance of Jerusalem on Medieval *Mappaemundi*

Among the many significant elements of many *mappaemundi*, two make frequent appearances. These are Jerusalem and the heavens. The first, Jerusalem, has already been mentioned, but warrants a closer examination. The placement and particular focus of Jerusalem within the Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford *mappaemundi* offer good comparisons. The centrality of Jerusalem to the Judeo-Christian tradition is frequently referenced in the Bible, such as in the *Book of Ezekiel* where the prophet received divine exegesis, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her.”<sup>43</sup> The significance of Jerusalem lies within the biblical history of the city, where Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead. The centrality of the city within these three *mappaemundi* has biblical, historical, and even political implications that have been explored and proposed by various historians. For example, the Madaba Map, is a late sixth-century mosaic map that has influenced world maps through a biblical, historical, and political lens.



Figure 15: The Madaba Map (Accessed via [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madaba\\_Map](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madaba_Map))

<sup>43</sup> *Ezekiel 5:5, The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995, 1228.



The earliest of the three *mappaemundi*, the Ebstorf Map, places Jerusalem at the center. It portrays an image of Christ emerging from the tomb, which is included within the city's location on the map. The city itself also provides a second iteration of Christ in the image where he is seated within the walls of the city. The actual representation of the Holy City is located at the navel of Christ. Picturing both the resurrection of Christ and Christ in majesty, the Ebstorf Map portrays Christ in a highly political and ecclesiastical manner—Christ is humanized as an individual within the earthly realm, while he is simultaneously indicated as a sovereign entity.

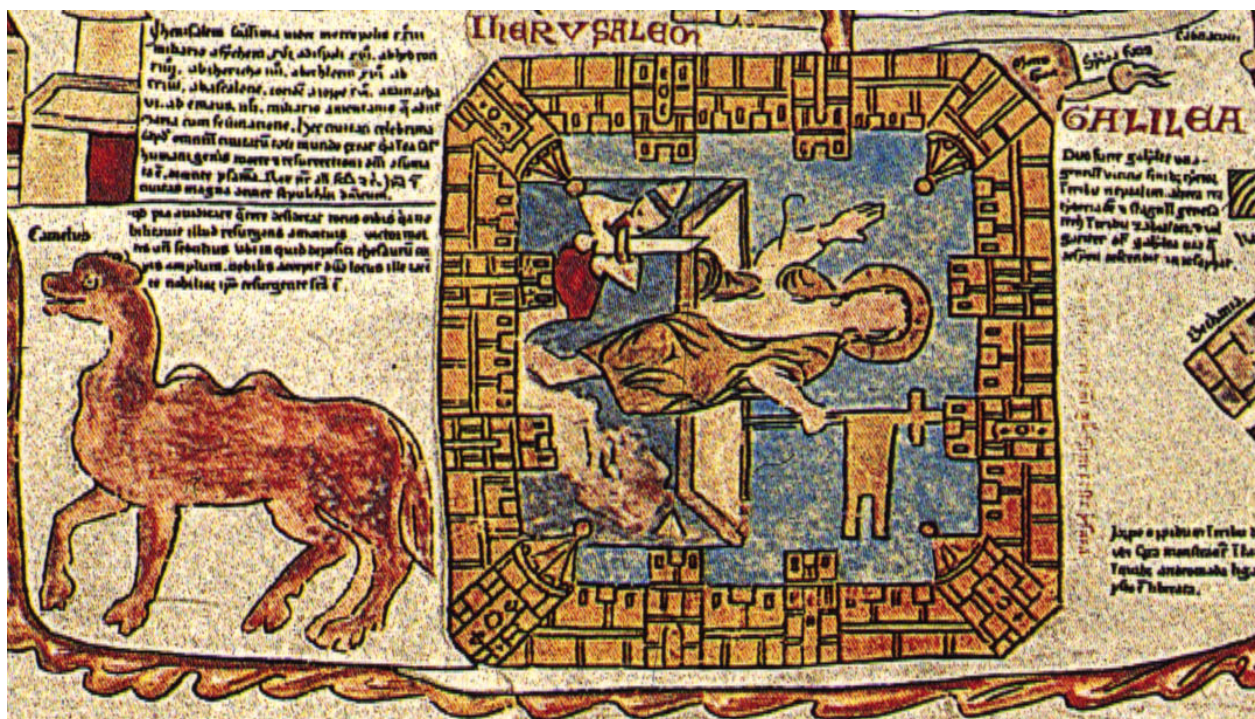


Figure 16: Jerusalem on the Ebstorf Map (Accessed via <http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/224-the-ebstorf-mappamundi/>)

In the Psalter World Map, the location of Jerusalem has an accompanying inscription, which is the largest engraving on the entirety of the map and is outlined with gold leafing. Likewise, the Hereford Map also prioritizes Jerusalem by placing the Holy City at both the center on the physical map and the center of the world. The emphasis of Jerusalem is supported

by various topographical elements such as the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee, and a portion of the Euphrates River moving east from the Holy City. The Psalter World Map is unusual in these cartographical elements which are thought to have stemmed from the cartographer's desire to underscore the significance of the city.<sup>44</sup>

Similar to the Ebstorf Map, the Hereford Map depicts Jerusalem with an accompanying image of the crucifixion. The image serves as a visual reminder to its audience of the Holy City where Christ was resurrected. On the Hereford Map, however, Jerusalem is rendered in a circular form with an image of the crucifixion presiding over the city. The recurring inclusion of the cross above the city of Jerusalem is not one of coincidence, but rather, an indication of something more symbolic. Presumably, Jerusalem was considered by its viewers to be the physical framework of the city, to which symbolic elements to the city were known, as well. Jerusalem was considered to be the place in which God would return on the day of judgment as told in the *Book of Revelation*, "And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."<sup>45</sup>

The political implications regarding Jerusalem's position at the center of these particular *mappaemundi* can likely be attributed to the Crusades, a significant event that further asserted the significance and centrality of the Holy City.<sup>46</sup> Despite the Hereford map's origins in England, the city is nowhere near the center of the map but rather, it is placed in the left-hand corner at the bottom of the map. Historian Gerald Crone proposes several possibilities for why Jerusalem has taken precedence over England in the Hereford Map. The first reason is based on the assumption that Jerusalem's location on the map was chosen as a place of pilgrimage, intended to inspire

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<sup>44</sup> Siebold, "Psalter Mappamundi. 1225 A.D.," 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Revelation 21:2, The NIV Study Bible*, 1947.

<sup>46</sup> Siebold, "Richard de Bello of Haldingham, *Hereford mappaemundi*, 1290," 4.



European Christians to travel to the Holy City. Second, Crone had observed older maps that had placed Rome at its center during a period of great political power, however, that power had shifted to Palestine closer to when the Hereford Map was created—thus, the cartographical choice in emphasizing Jerusalem’s significance could have been part of a greater, political agenda.<sup>47</sup>

To clarify, not all medieval *mappaemundi* were concerned with putting Jerusalem at its center which David Woodward argues in his work, *Medieval Mappaemundi*. The centralization of Jerusalem has helped identify maps, such as the Vercelli Map (13th century) that was created between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>48</sup> Generally, world maps following the fifteenth century did not place Jerusalem at its center.

### **Paradise in *Mappaemundi***

Another recurring theme within the three maps studied in this paper is the inclusion of Paradise. All three maps render Paradise in similar manners, conceptualizing the Garden of Eden as an earthly paradise. Biblical passages suggest that Paradise was located in the east, meaning that within these eastern-oriented maps Paradise appears at the top of the three *mappaemundi* within this study. Evidence for the potential location of Eden can be found in the biblical book of *Genesis*: “So the Lord God banishing him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed cherubim on the east side of the Garden of Eden and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”<sup>49</sup> Medieval exegesis of the Garden of Eden and Paradise is relatively complex, which

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<sup>47</sup> Siebold, “Richard de Bello of Haldingham, *Hereford mappamundi*, 1290,” 4.

<sup>48</sup> Woodward, “Medieval Mappaemundi,” 341.

<sup>49</sup> *Genesis* 3:23-24, *The NIV Study Bible*, 11.

scholars have debated whether or not Eden existed as a physical location or if it was swept away by the great flood in the *Book of Genesis* where God tells Noah, “I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.”<sup>50</sup> While there is no explicit reference to the Garden of Eden, some scholars have deduced that Eden was included in the destruction of the flood.

Essentially, Eden became a space that was made entirely inaccessible following the story of the fall of man and the great flood. Still, medieval cartographers included an interpretation of the earthly paradise as an apparatus to not only frame the timeline within medieval *mappaemundi* more importantly, to accentuate the human desire to reach for this earthly paradise.<sup>51</sup> The physical disparity between human beings and Paradise specifically within the Hereford Map is underscored by the empty channel between Paradise and the rest of the entire world. Located at the top of the map just below Christ in majesty, Eden is illustrated as an island surrounded by a ring of fire; this conveys its inaccessibility to human beings following the fall of man. Pictured on the island is an image of Eve reaching for the forbidden fruit given by Satan, represented as a serpent.<sup>52</sup>

The Psalter Map similarly places Paradise facing east as it appears at the top of the map. Hugh of St. Victor hypothesized that human history begins in the east with the story of Eden or Paradise, moving westward to represent the finality of human history which he wrote in his work *De archa Noë morali*.<sup>53</sup> At the top of the map is an illustration of both Adam and Eve within an

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<sup>50</sup> *Genesis* 6:17, *The NIV Study Bible*, 15.

<sup>51</sup> Elisabeth S. Dodd, “Mapping Paradise,” in *VCS: The Visual Commentary on Scripture*: <https://thevcs.org/expulsion-and-exile/mapping-paradise>

<sup>52</sup> *Mappae Mundi: Hereford Cathedral*: <https://www.themappamundi.co.uk/mappa-mundi/>. Accessed on: 05/23/2021 at 4:36 PM.

<sup>53</sup> Alessandro Scafi, “Mapping the End: The Apocalypse in Medieval Cartography,” *Literature and Theology* 26, no. 4 (2012), 408.

enclosure with the tree of temptation between them as the four sacred rivers listed in the book of Genesis flow from the mouth of the enclosure. These rivers are the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates.



Figure 17: Adam and Eve in Paradise on the Psalter Map ([Accessed via http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/223-the-psalter-mappamundi/223-psalter.pdf](http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/223-the-psalter-mappamundi/223-psalter.pdf))

Historically, medieval cartographers have used the Last Judgment and Christ in Majesty to denote the conclusiveness of mankind which will be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

## Chapter 3

### Apocalyptic Significance and Secular Mythmaking

This chapter explores the images and allusions of apocalyptic significance within medieval *mappaemundi*. Two common iconographical tropes—The Last Judgment and Christ and Majesty—are critical for viewers to examine in order to better understand the broader purpose of medieval *mappaemundi* as cosmological devices. These tropes not only symbolize the end of time, but also serve to reinforce the omnipotence of God, thus allowing the iconography to instruct and remind its viewers of God’s power. Moreover, images were particularly powerful channels of communication, keeping in mind that the majority of *mappaemundi* viewers—at least those viewing the larger maps—were a predominantly illiterate audience. In a broader sense, iconography was key not only to understanding *mappaemundi* in the context of their earthly timelines, but also served as memory tools. All three of the *mappaemundi* under consideration here certainly utilized their iconography in these ways.

While these medieval, Christian *mappaemundi* relied predominantly on religious iconography and imagery to communicate with their audiences, the use of a combination of secular and religious symbolism was not uncommon. This is true in the use, for example, of Gog and Magog, in these maps. As a metaphorical duo featured in the *Book of Revelation*, Gog and Magog symbolize the effect and implications of God’s wrath on mankind during the End Times. Since the biblical texts are not entirely clear about the nature of Gog and Mag, the creators of the three *mappaemundi* have rendered and stylized Gog and Magog in different ways. Examples of these differences include the stylization of the characters themselves as mentioned previously, in addition to where on the map Gog and Magog were placed.

The apocalypse in medieval *mappaemundi* is a crucial element supporting the overall cosmological nature of these maps. The indication and symbolization of the end of time through images depicting the Last Judgment, Christ in Majesty, and other elements, such as Gog and Magog, serve as a reminder for the medieval audience that the earthly world is temporary and that, most importantly, further reinforce the omnipotence of God.

### **Apocalyptic Significance in *Mappaemundi***

In examining the cosmological elements of *mappaemundi*, it is important to remember that medieval cartographers were concerned with presenting *mappaemundi* as a timeline of human history within the context of the Christian *Bible*. Yet, there was an inherent difficulty in this theologically minded history, largely because the book of *Revelation* is the only book in the Christian New Testament with references to the apocalypse, which is itself associated with the second coming of Christ. The *Book of Revelation* was particularly significant due to its prophetic nature. In a Biblical context, the implications within this second coming are important to understand in order to comprehend the complexity of interpreting *Revelation*. For instance, *Revelation* 21:1 reads, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.”<sup>54</sup> This text describes the renewal that comes with the destruction of the end times. Historian Alessandro Scafi argues precisely that within this text of *Revelation*, “We read that a catastrophe will finish off human history and destroy the universe, but eventually humanity and God will come together again, and forever.”<sup>55</sup> Scafi’s claim is supported by *Revelation* 19:19-21, where the apostle John details the conclusive battle between the beast and kings of earth:

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<sup>54</sup> *Revelation* 21:1, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1947.

<sup>55</sup> Scafi, “Mapping the End,” 400.

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.<sup>56</sup>

In considering the audience of *mappaemundi*, such explicit references to the end of time were rendered and announced via such common iconography. Such allusions were significant to medieval society. The cautionary aspect of *Revelation*, for example, was not to be ignored. Because there is no reference to when the second coming of Christ will occur, God's people must always be ready for His return.<sup>57</sup>

### **The Last Judgment and Christ in Majesty**

As noted above, the scene of the Last Judgment has been widely represented in Christian iconography. While this iconography has been commonly rendered in Christian art and architecture, particularly in wall paintings and manuscript illuminations, medieval *mappaemundi* have also commonly included an image of the second coming of Christ within the pictorial framework of the map.<sup>58</sup> Common examples of the Last Judgment in medieval art can be found in stained-glass windows such as the windows of the Chartres Cathedral in France during the thirteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, mosaics were installed in churches, such as the mosaic in the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello, Italy. This mosaic was produced during the eleventh

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<sup>56</sup> *Revelation* 19:19-21, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1946.

<sup>57</sup> *Revelation* 22:7, *The NIV Study Bible*, 767.

<sup>58</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 64.

<sup>59</sup> Sean Lawing, "Medieval Depictions of the Last Judgment: The Resurrection of the Body," *Glencairn Museum News* 2 (2018): <https://glencairnmuseum.org/newsletter/2018/3/8/medieval-depictions-of-the-last-judgment-the-resurrection-of-the-body>.



century and depicts a canonical rendering of Christ in Judgment, however, with a greater emphasis on the damned souls being tormented in Hell.



Figure 18: Souls in Hell being Tormented, 11th century mosaic at Church of Santa Maria Assunta, Italy (Accessed via <https://glencairnmuseum.org/newsletter/2018/3/8/medieval-depictions-of-the-last-judgment-the-resurrection-of-the-body>)

Allusions to the Last Judgment are also found in the Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford maps. The widespread inclusion of The Last Judgment in these *mappaemundi* reveals the deeper implications of the medieval worldview through Christian understanding and illuminates at least part of the importance of these maps.

From a cosmological perspective, the scene of Christ in Judgment has been used to convey the underlying understanding of the second coming of Christ, consequently indicating the end of time. Historian Felicitas Schneider even goes so far as to argue that Last Judgment iconography within medieval *mappaemundi* has served as political warnings from God to fulfill his commandments, the greatest of these commandments being proselytization.<sup>60</sup> The command

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<sup>60</sup> Schneider, “Edges of the World”, 6.

to spread the Christian message can be found in the *Gospel of Matthew* 28:19-20, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”<sup>61</sup>

Prior to the twelfth century, Christian people characterized their experience during the Second Coming of Christ as a collective one, where their souls would ascend to the heavenly realm to the “celestial Jerusalem.”<sup>62</sup> Similarly, medieval preaching during this time shifted from this collective outlook to an individual-based approach that urged the Christian audience to assess their individual faith. With this approach came a precautionary style of medieval preaching that emphasized when and how one’s soul would be judged.<sup>63</sup> From an iconographical standpoint, scenes from the Last Judgment were frequently rendered in religious art; however, the undeniable influence from iconography included in the three maps in this study demonstrate both the historical and eschatological implications revealed during the thirteenth through fourteenth centuries in both art and medieval preaching.

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<sup>61</sup> *Matthew* 28:19-20, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1487.

<sup>62</sup> Morgan, Alison. *The Last Judgment in Christian Iconography*. Public Lecture @ the University of Cambridge, 1987:  
<https://www.alisonmorgan.co.uk/Articles/The%20Last%20Judgment%20in%20Christian%20Iconography%20-%20lecture%20by%20Alison%20Morgan.pdf>, 4..

<sup>63</sup> Morgan, Alison, *The Last Judgment in Christian Iconography*.





Figure 19: Christ in Judgment on the Hereford Map (Accessed via <http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/226-the-herford-mappamundi/226-herford.pdf>)

Within the Hereford Map, the scene of The Last Judgment is placed at the apex of the map, picturing Christ with his arms stretched out as he displays the wounds from his crucifixion. He is seated in a throne placed among the clouds as four angels surround him. The closest angel at his right-hand side is seen holding nails and the cross, while the angel placed at his closest left side is holding the crown of thorns. Two other angels sounding a trumpet with an inscription exiting the bell of the instrument are pictured as well. The inscription accompanying the angel to his right side reads: “*Leuez-si uendrez a ioie pardurable*/Arise, and come to everlasting joy.” Contrastingly, the inscription on the left side reads: “*Leuez-si ales au-fu de enfer estable*/Rise and depart to hell-fire prepared.”<sup>64</sup>

Directly below Christ is the Virgin Mary, rendered in a vulnerable position as she reveals her breasts to Christ. Immediately to her left, an angel offers her a crown. This particular

<sup>64</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 65.

depiction of the Virgin Mary is especially puzzling. Art historian Naomi Kline argues that the vulnerable state is meant to highlight the principle of salvation through the Virgin and her mercy, a motif that was widely foregrounded during the late medieval period.<sup>65</sup>

The crucifixion wounds in tandem with the instruments of passion were often used in medieval art to represent the humanity of Christ within an iconographical context.<sup>66</sup> The inclusion of both the instruments of Passion and Christ's wounds were meant to emphasize the pain and suffering experienced by Christ on earth. The iconographical significance of The Last Judgment allows viewers of the Hereford Map to clearly understand the impending apocalypse, but the spatial relationship between the map and the placement of Christ in majesty is critical to the map's greater cosmological purpose.

Historically, scenes of judgment have been strategically placed within archways that led into sacred spaces. The spatial placement of Christ in judgment is meant to stimulate an existential experience for its viewers, underscoring not only the preeminence of God but to also illustrate the relationship between the earthly bounds with the heavenly plane.<sup>67</sup> In a temporal sense, the tympanum symbolized what is yet to come. This relates to the iconographical significance of the Last Judgment and the ways in which medieval, religious iconography triggered memory within the minds of the maps' viewers.

As noted above, this iconography does not only appear in medieval *mappaemundi*, rather, scenes of The Last Judgment are used in a variety of architectural and decorative works of medieval art. One such example is the tympanum of the Last Judgment located in the Church of Sainte-Foy in Conques, France. Created in 1107, this tympanum is regarded as the most intricate

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<sup>65</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 67.

<sup>66</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 65.

<sup>67</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 73.

portrayal of the Last Judgment in Romanesque sculpture.<sup>68</sup> We can see the striking similarities between this iteration of Christ in judgment and The Last Judgment within the Hereford *mappamundi*. Seated at the center is Christ in judgment, pointing his right hand towards the sky. Last Judgment iconography frequently (if not, always) emphasizes the correlation between the saved souls located to the right hand of Christ, while the damned are cast off to the left. The scene presents a stark juxtaposition of the jubilation for those in heaven and the despair of those cast into the mouth of Hell. In the lower left quadrant of the scene, Christ is pictured in celebration with the saved souls admitted into the gates of Heaven. The tympanum at Sainte Foy shows just this distinction between the saved and the damned.

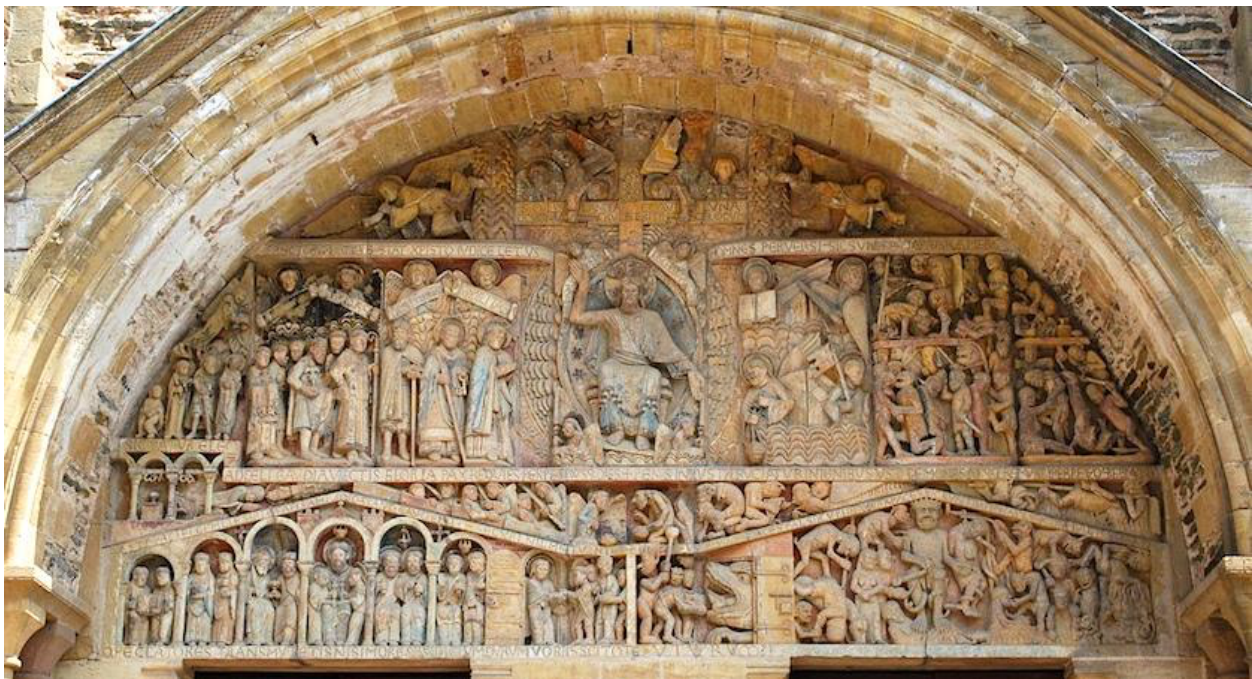


Figure 20: Last Judgment Tympanum, Church of Sainte-Foy, France, 11th century (Accessed via <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/early-europe-and-colonial-americas/medieval-europe-islamic-world/a/church-and-reliquary-of-saintefoy-france>)

<sup>68</sup> Ambrose, Kirk, "Attunement to the Damned of the Conques Tympanum." *Gesta*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2011, pp. 1–17. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/41550546](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41550546). Accessed 3 July 2021.

In examining various iterations of the Last Judgment throughout history, there has been a steady association between the left hand of God with the damned souls and the right hand of God with the saved. This pattern is consistent throughout scenes of the Last Judgment rendered on all three of the medieval *mappaemundi* examined in this paper in addition to various tympana built in medieval Europe. The origin for this relationship is understood to have biblical roots, specifically in a parable from the *Gospel of Matthew*. This parable utilizes an analogy between sheep and goat, the sheep symbolizing the saved whereas the goat represents condemned souls.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Matthew 25:31-33,41, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1477.





Figure 21: Blessed Souls in Heaven, Last Judgment Tympanum, 11th century (Accessed via <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/early-europe-and-colonial-americas/medieval-europe-islamic-world/a/church-and-reliquary-of-sainte-foy-france>)

Early iterations of The Last Judgment in a Byzantine folio from the eleventh century allude to the biblical parable as well. Both the left and right side of the figure are particularly representative of the separation between the sheep from the goat. This parable has been combined with prophecies from the Old Testament in addition to the Apostle John's account of the Revelation.<sup>70</sup>

Religious iconography was particularly significant for the illiterate audience. The use of art and imagery as a tool for religious education was an easy way to communicate biblical messages to an uneducated audience. The concept of death within medieval understanding predicated on the belief that it was inevitable and imminent. Representations of the damned souls burning in Hell and those seated at the right hand of Christ were meant to evoke powerful

<sup>70</sup> Naomi Pitamber: Dr. Pitamber offered me this information in private correspondence.



imagery that reminded the medieval audience of what was yet to come. As art historian Alison Morgan writes, “It [death] was part of life, and it was the most important moment of your life, not just that which ended it. And when you died, you would be judged.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Alison Morgan, *The Last Judgment in Christian Iconography*.



Figure 22: *The Last Judgment*, fol. 51v, second half of the eleventh century, Paris. gr. 74 (photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France)

## The End Times: Gog and Magog

As a complement to the scenes of the Last Judgment appearing in medieval *mappaemundi*, the end of the times was sometimes indicated by the use of Gog and Magog in the maps. Gog and Magog—from the *Book of Revelation*—also denoted the cosmological nature of these maps. According to biblical texts, Magog, the son of Japheth, gave his name to Indo-European people along with his brothers. This group of people was located by what is presently known as the Black Sea region though Christian Scripture refers to the region of Gog as the northernmost region.<sup>72</sup> The literary origins of Gog are harder to pinpoint than those of Magog. Reference to Gog within biblical texts do not present Gog as an identifiable individual; instead, Gog often suggests the personification of cosmic forces of evil within a single entity. The *Book of Ezekiel* is the first to mention the existence of Gog; he appears within a vision shared by the Prophet Ezekiel whereby Gog wages war on God's people. God tells Gog, "You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land".<sup>73</sup>

In imitation of references found in the biblical texts, medieval *mappaemundi* generally tend to place renderings of Gog and Magog within the north-eastern side of the map. In the Hereford Map, for instance, Gog and Magog are circumscribed within a wall, separated from the surrounding paths and cities. Likewise, Gog and Magog appear in the north-eastern corner in the Ebstorf Map, though with slightly different imagery. While the Hereford Map depicts the apocalyptic figures held within an enclosed gate, the Ebstorf Map pictures the figures eating human bodies. The curious differences between the artistic stylization of the Ebstorf, Psalter, and

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<sup>72</sup> Scafi, "Mapping the End," 409.

<sup>73</sup> *Ezekiel 38:15-16, The NIV Study Bible*, 1272.

Hereford *mappaemundi* elicit questions regarding the biblical origins of the apocalyptic figures.

*1 Chronicles* suggests background information regarding Gog: “The descendants of Joel:

Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, Micah his son, Reach his son, Baal, his son...”<sup>74</sup>

In contrast, the Psalter Map renders neither Gog nor Magog as distinct figures, but merely alludes to their existence by presenting the Gates of Alexander. These supposed brass gates were constructed by Alexander the Great, designed to contain more vaguely barbaric tribes from the north, before the day of Judgment.<sup>75</sup> As discussed below, a variety of eschatological tales perpetuated the medieval understanding that Gog and Magog were synonymous with these so-called barbaric tribes that would escape from this gate to wage war on God’s people.



Figure 23: The Gates of Alexander on the Psalter Map (Accessed via <http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/223-the-psalter-mappamundi/223-psalter.pdf>)

<sup>74</sup> *1 Chronicles* 5:4, *The NIV Study Bible*, 584.

<sup>75</sup> Woodward, *Medieval Mappaemundi*, 332.



Given their long literary history, it is unsurprising that the lore of Gog and Magog has blended into a perplexing amalgamation of Christian and secular mythmaking. Medieval Christendom had come to believe that there was a connection between Alexander the Great and Gog and Magog—a belief that predicated on the notion that Alexander was responsible for imprisoning Gog and Magog within the prison located in an otherworldly plane of existence. Alessandro Scafi, for example, brings attention to how the appearance of Gog and Magog on medieval *mappaemundi* signifies the impending cosmic renewal that will occur according to biblical scriptures but more significantly, how they are able to exist within and outside of earthly bounds. Gog and Magog exist within the Gate of Alexander until the day of judgment at which time they will be released by God to wage war. Biblical evidence of Gog and Magog’s role with the apocalypse can be found in *Revelation* 20:7-9, “When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle...they marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.”<sup>76</sup> From an iconographical standpoint, Scafi argues that Gog and Magog symbolize how time itself will cease to exist and ultimately be replaced with the principle of eternity, symbolization that can be explained by Gog and Magog’s presence within the earthly plane within their temporary enclosure.<sup>77</sup>

Similar to the Psalter Map, the Hereford Map does not explicitly depict Gog and Magog as distinct figures, but rather, allude to their existence by including a frame of cannibalistic creatures. Medieval literature often identified the Turks as direct descendants of Gog and Magog,

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<sup>76</sup> *Revelation* 20:7-9, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1946.

<sup>77</sup> Scafi, “Mapping the End,” 400.



who inhabited the *Terracontia* island.<sup>78</sup> These associations between Gog and Magog with the ‘barbaric’ groups were a result of conflated history as argued by historian Naomi Kline, who further asserts that the Hereford Map provides an apt visual representation of the Gog and Magog narrative throughout medieval history.<sup>79</sup>

The artistic inclusion of the mythical Gates of Alexander on medieval *mappaemundi* contributes an element of complexity to the greater, overall understanding of the function of medieval world maps. The legendary gates were often presented in Alexander literature, not historically accurate accounts of his accomplishments. Historians E.J. van Donzel and Andrea Schmidt explain how Alexandrian literature and Christian eschatological understanding blended together, inspiring *mappaemundi* creators to denote the gates on medieval world maps.

Up to the 7th century, Josephus, St Jerome and Isidore can be considered to be the principal authors to have made the Western Roman Empire familiar with the idea of a barrier-gate built by Alexander at the Caspian or Caucasian Gates. From the 7th century onwards ideas in the West about Alexander’s gates were inspired by Syriac traditions translated into Latin. The same Syriac Tradition played an important role in passing the Gog-Magog and Alexander motif on to the world of Islam.<sup>80</sup>

It is critical to highlight that the location of the Gates of Alexander is not consistent when viewing the Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford *mappaemundi*. The Psalter Map places Alexander’s gates in present-day Asia, often leading some of the map’s modern viewers to conflate the gates with the Great Wall of China. The Ebstorf Map similarly renders the Gates of Alexander as an enclosure to prevent the premature escape of Gog and Magog, though the Psalter Map has the

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<sup>78</sup> Siebold, “The Hereford Map,” 6.

<sup>79</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 185.

<sup>80</sup> Van Donzel, EJ and Andrea Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall*, Leiden Brill 2014, 15.

clearest depiction of these gates. In the northeastern part of the Psalter Map, a mountain range encloses a gate that clearly detaches the land within the gate from the rest of the world.

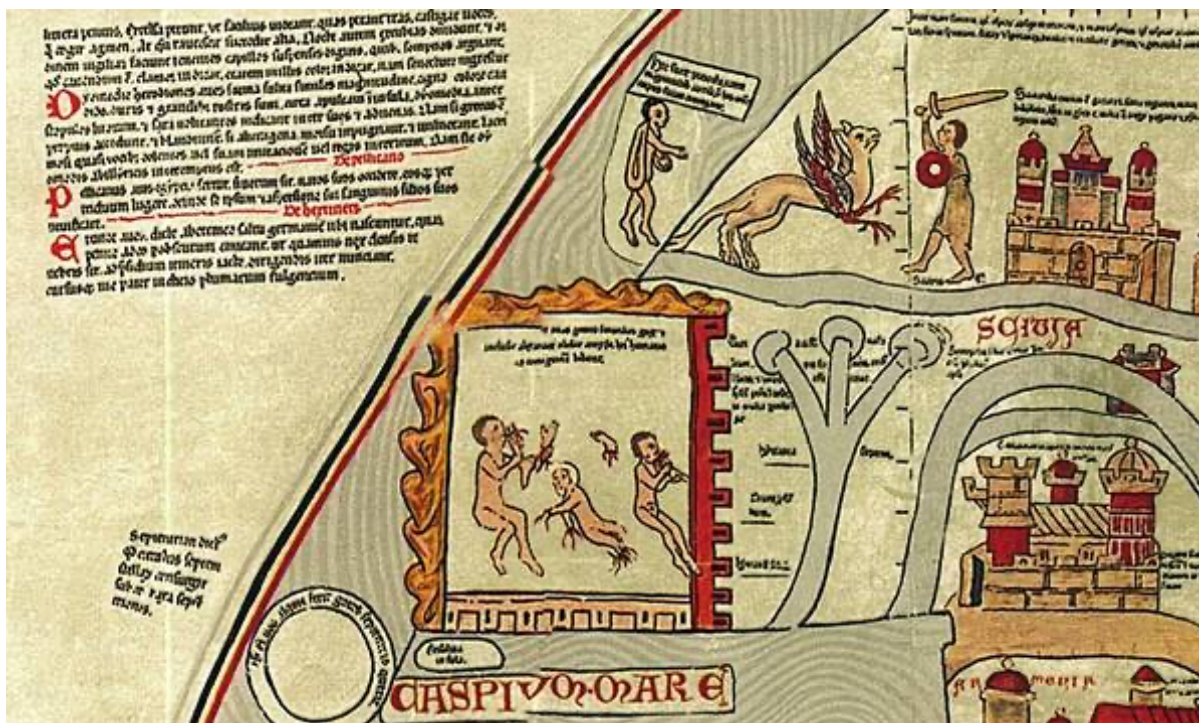


Figure 24: Gog and Magog Enclosed on the Ebbsford Map (Accessed via <http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/224-the-ebbsford-mappamundi/224-ebbsford.pdf>)

In comparing the way Gog and Magog are rendered in each of the three maps, the question remains as to why the Hereford Map is the only one of the three maps to render the actual figures of Gog and Magog. This is not the only question that must remain unanswered, as scholars are also unsure as to why the cartographer of the Psalter Map chose to represent the allegorical Gog and Magog through the gate of Alexander. There are other themes, however, that can be examined more fully, such as the relationship and connection often made between Gog and Magog and the monstrous races.

## The Monstrous Races

In studying the numerous, allegorical elements of medieval *mappaemundi*, it is important to consider the role of the monstrous races within the framework of Christian understanding during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The concept of these often-called monstrous races is a theme that appears in all three of the *mappaemundi*, prompting viewers of the maps to consider the significance of these mythical peoples within the context of each *mappaemundi*'s various functions. It is important to remember the encyclopedic nature of medieval *mappaemundi*, following, but not limited to, the examples used and promoted by Isidore of Seville, who is discussed above. When determining the significance of employing these monstrous races in the cartographic iconography, it is as important to examine the underlying objectives of each map's cartographers in their decision to include the monstrous races in each *mappaemundi*. Such iconographic inclusion would have urged the medieval viewer to grapple with the role of unknown peoples within a European and, more specifically, a Christianized society.

It is, however, important to note that medieval speculations and examinations regarding the monstrous races were neither solely created nor framed within a religious context. Medieval society was fascinated by the proposition of mythical creatures and unknown peoples. Records of monstrous races, for example, can be traced back to the fifth century BCE. Heroditus and Megasthenes are believed to have been the two individuals that traveled to India where the majority of the monstrous races are presumed to have been discovered.<sup>81</sup> This is, moreover, also evidence of further influence from Alexander the Great's takeover in India is also important to mention as well.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Woodward, "Medieval Mappaemundi," 330.

<sup>82</sup> Woodward, "Medieval Mappaemundi," 330.

The work of the third-century CE Roman grammarian, Gaius Julius Solinus, appears to have been largely responsible for the Hereford Map's iterations of the monstrous races and the inclusion of these foreign peoples in *mappaemundi*. His work titled, *De mirabilibus mundi* ("The Wonders of the World"), was integral in the identification of the monstrous races. The Hereford Map presents twenty-four distinct monstrous races that are placed along the edges of the known Asian territories. The information that was used for the Hereford Map regarding the monstrous races was retrieved from *The Wonders of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* as visual aids for medieval cartographers.<sup>83</sup> These races include the Cynocephali, Himantopodes, Blemyae, Marmini, Straw Drinkers, Hermaphrodites, Amyctyrae, Ambari, Scinopods, and Epiphagi to name a few. These races typically demonstrate blatant birth deformities and unusual practices such as cannibalism. Unlike other peoples, however, the Hereford Map does not categorize the Cynocephali groups as 'savage' as they do with other races, but rather, challenges the medieval viewer to reconcile the role of the monstrous races within the Christian context.

Within the Psalter Map, the monstrous races are similarly located at the boundaries of the continent, though in this case the boundary lies at the African continent located at the southernmost part of the map. There is little known about the specified origins of these peoples, however, surviving documents allude to the existence of these monstrous people in India rather than in Africa. Moreover, while the Hereford Map makes references to twenty-four distinct races, the Psalter Map depicts only twelve such races. And finally, the Ebstorf Map depicts the monstrous races dispersed and separated from each other, making the placement of the images different on each map.

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<sup>83</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 153.





Figure 25: Monstrous Races on the Psalter Map (Accessed via <http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/223-the-psalter-mappamundi/223-psalter.pdf>)

In broad terms, the use of the monstrous races within medieval *mappaemundi* suggest a medieval fascination with the unknown. Yet, the imagery also encouraged the medieval Christian audience to contemplate the role of these races within medieval Christendom. For the Christian viewer, the unmistakable deformities and exaggerated forms presented within the monstrous races were appalling for a multitude of reasons. Firstly, the fascination and fear of unknown peoples stemmed from the limitations of the encyclopedic value of medieval *mappaemundi*. For instance, the accessibility to the remote corners of the world that were not fully detailed nor explored by this point left scholars with holes in their information. Secondly, comprehending the existence of drastically different creatures within the same earthly dimension forced Christians to discern whether or not these races were condemned or saved by their Christian God. Historian David Woodward further explores this debate within the church regarding whether or not the monstrous races were within the bounds of proselytization and more importantly, salvation.

Passages in the Scripture command Christian believers to spread the gospel message to all. One of the most common passages about evangelization comes from the *Gospel of Matthew*, which urges Christians to: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>84</sup> Woodward argues that the biblical command to spread the Christian message was directed towards all men, to which, it was likely that the men of the monstrous races were included. Specific groups such as the Cynocephali were used as targets for conversion. The Cynocephali were a group of dog-headed people believed to have originated from either India or Ethiopia. The Cynocephali are found on all three *mappaemundi* and have previously been associated with Islam and were a targeted group for conversion efforts.

The placement of monstrous races within the Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford maps is important to highlight. As discussed previously, Jerusalem’s location on the map took precedence due to its significance throughout Christian history. The location of other elements of *mappaemundi* in proximity to Jerusalem arguably speaks to the significance of that element held within the Christian, medieval world. At first glance, the monstrous races are seemingly insignificant, cast off to the perimeters of the maps, at least spatially. And the center of the three *mappaemundi* boasts the most significant, iconographic elements, especially with reference to the location of Jerusalem. And yet, placing the monstrous races scattered around the edges of *mappaemundi* and far from the epicenter of Christian devotion in the holy city of Jerusalem begs the question of whether or not these races of strange people were, in reality, included and understood by the medieval audience as legitimate human inhabitants of the globe. The

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<sup>84</sup> Matthew 28:19-20, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1487.

confinement of Gog and Magog within these maps provides a definitive understanding of the medieval world view, particularly when examining the relationship between their confinement with the location of the monstrous races on the maps.

From an artistic standpoint, it is critical to underscore the importance of this iconography and the dichotomy between the illustrations in these *mappaemundi* of Christ in Majesty and the monstrous races. It is also important to understand that not all modern scholars share identical interpretations about the iconography of these maps. While there are no physical depictions of European people on these maps, historian Naomi Kline compares the elongated frames of the angels and Christ himself to the stunted, deformed bodies of the monstrous races.<sup>85</sup> She argues that the disparity in forms is purposeful—to visually represent not only the likeness of Christ as he is described in the Bible, but also the overarching message of Christianity. The elegant forms used to symbolize Christ in majesty and the surrounding angels simultaneously serve to reiterate his position in a hierarchical sense.<sup>86</sup>

Historian John Block Friedman, meanwhile, underscores the spatial relationship, specifically addressing the relationship between the monstrous races and Christ on both the Ebstorf and Hereford maps. Both maps place the monstrous races on the southern edge of the map, emphasizing the distance between the elements of importance placed in the center of the maps. While Christ's outstretched hands, particularly in the Psalter and Ebstorf maps, are used as visual guides to delineate *oikumene*, it is clear that the monstrous races are not included. Looking more closely at the maps, the monstrous races are placed beneath Christ's left hand specifically. Similarly, as the Last Judgment associated the damned souls with Christ's left hand, the maps also relegate the monstrous races into the bracket of ill-fated souls.

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<sup>85</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 162.

<sup>86</sup> Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, 162.

Contrarily, there are arguments that emphasize that these monstrous races are indeed included within the reach of Christ's left arm in the Ebstorf Map as presented by David Woodward in his work titled "Medieval Mappaemundi."<sup>87</sup> Woodward claims that biblical passages would have instructed Christians to preach the gospel to all nations of men which would include the monstrous races.<sup>88</sup> This command can be found in the *Gospel of Mark* as a part of the Great Commission, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."<sup>89</sup>

There is no doubt that *mappaemundi* have revealed deeper implications of the medieval world view which has been instrumental for viewers and historians alike to better understand societal norms, practices, and beliefs during the thirteenth through fourteenth centuries. While deciphering the context of the imagery shown in these maps has been difficult, modern-day preservation practices and technology have aided historians to discover more information that was inaccessible in the past.

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<sup>87</sup> Woodward, "Medieval Mappaemundi", 291.

<sup>88</sup> Woodward, "Medieval Mappaemundi," 332.

<sup>89</sup> *Mark 16:15-16, The NIV Study Bible*, 1528.



## Chapter 4

### Potential Barriers in Medieval *Mappaemundi* Studies

Thus far, this thesis has examined the ways in which the Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford Maps help to reveal the medieval worldview by comparing the overlapping iconography and themes. The most significant challenge in the study of medieval *mappaemundi* studies has been the incomplete nature of each respective map. Currently, scholars have access only to a portion of the Ebstorf Map and to a miniature copy of the Psalter Map. Similarly, while the Hereford Map is currently on display in Hereford Cathedral in England, considerable portions of the map have been obscured due to aging.

Regarding the Ebstorf Map, specifically, scholars continue to question not only the primary purpose for the map, but also why the map was abandoned in the convent of Ebstorf. One scholar, Gudrun Pischke hypothesizes that the map was left at some point during the Protestant Reformation, which ultimately led to the modifications within monasteries to Protestant institutions for women.<sup>90</sup> This may be why the map was undiscovered for so long to a modern audience.

Fortunately, digital mapping projects currently aim to restore lost portions of medieval *mappaemundi*, with the digital Hereford Map project being one of the more recent endeavors for digital mapping. While digital mapping provides accessibility for scholars and other interested individuals to view the Hereford map in vivid detail, digital mapping projects for the Ebstorf and Psalter maps currently do not exist.

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<sup>90</sup> Pischke, *The Ebstorf Map*, 160.

## Conclusion

In analyzing the three *mappaemundi* in this paper, it is clear that *mappaemundi* serve as excellent visual guides for historians and scholars alike to have a deeper understanding of both medieval spirituality and the medieval worldview. Rather than viewing maps through a modern lens, it is clear that the world maps created during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were not necessarily made useful as a result of their geographical accuracies. In fact, the reality of the geographical and spatial accuracies within these maps were quite the contrary. Despite this, medieval *mappaemundi* were still able to function as encyclopedic devices and visual aids for the medieval audience—including those that were not able to read. It is equally as important to recognize the role of iconography and artistic tropes within medieval art that have further

Despite the overwhelming evidence that these maps were deeply influenced by Christianity and arguably, functioned as an apparatus for spreading the Christian message, it is important to acknowledge the amalgamation and breadth of information that was taken from what would be considered “pagan” scholars or texts. Without classical scholars like Solinus, Herodotus, Boethius, and Megasthenes for instance, these particular *mappaemundi* would not have been able to present as much information regarding cosmology, animals, locations, etc. There is no doubt that the Ebstorf, Psalter, and Hereford world maps have contributed to the knowledge of medieval scholars today. While these maps were undeniably encyclopedic in nature, it is also important to note that these maps were mostly used to purvey the Christian message as seen in the prevalent religious themes, iconography, and symbolism present within these three *mappaemundi*. In essence, these maps have demonstrated the undeniable influence of Greek and Roman scholars on medieval society and thinking—even within a religious context.

For the modern-day viewer, *mappaemundi* have challenged the traditional misapprehensions of cartography. Maps have often been thought of as a visual aid, accurately depicting geographical space within the time the map was produced. *Mappaemundi* have challenged this conventional understanding of cartography by blending the boundaries of time and space while simultaneously presenting a historical narrative used for instructing their intended audience. Through the use of symbolism, iconography, and cartography, medieval cartographers were able to employ world maps as teaching devices for medieval society.

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### –EDUCATION–

The Pennsylvania State University  
Schreyer Honors College  
*B.A. Labor and Employment Relations*  
*B.A. History, Medieval European*

University Park, PA  
August 2021

### –AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS–

Paterno Fellow  
Recipient of Ofstie Harold Program History Award, 2020  
Recipient of Taylor Scholarship in the Department of History, 2020

### –WORK EXPERIENCE–

Centre County Historical Society  
Research Intern

State College, PA  
Jan. 2021 – May 2021

- ◇ Research and publish three short entries (500-750 words) for online historical encyclopedia on local Centre County history
- ◇ Research and publish one long entry (1,000+ words) for online historical encyclopedia

Dr. Edwin L. Herr Clinic, Penn State University  
Desk Receptionist

University Park, PA  
Oct. 2017 - May 2020

- ◇ Scheduled 10-20 daily appointments, working 20 hours per week
- ◇ Updated and maintain 10-15 patient health records daily
- ◇ Performed data entry tasks in VALT recording software

J. Crew Factory  
Seasonal Sales Associate

Pottstown, PA  
Jun. 2018 - May 2020

- ◇ Operated a cash register for cash and card transactions
- ◇ Greeted customers and improved engagement with store merchandise to contribute to daily sales goals
- ◇ Pioneered new customer accounts while maintaining a growing customer base

Frederick Law Offices, PC  
Marketing Assistant

Reading, PA  
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- ◇ Searched for 100 prospective clients daily within a legal database system
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