

Tales of wonder in the Chronica Maiora of Matthew Paris

Article

Published Version

Hamilton, S. L. (2000) Tales of wonder in the Chronica Maiora of Matthew Paris. Reading Medieval Studies, XXVI. pp. 113-140. ISSN 0950-3129 Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/84003/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

Publisher: University of Reading

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

Tales of Wonder in the *Chronica Maiora* of Matthew Paris

Sarah L. Hamilton

University of Reading

Matthew Paris, a monk of St Albans, was remembered by one of his contemporaries as: 'an incomparable chronicler and most excellent artist' and by another as 'an eminent historian and chronicler and a distinguished scribe.'¹ It is this combination of historian and artist which makes the study of this man and his work so interesting because, in the work of Matthew Paris, we are most fortunate to be able to access the delightful autograph texts of his principal work the *Chronica Maiora*² which was a continuation of a text begun by another monk, one Roger Wendover.³ The importance of the survival of these manuscripts lies not only in the illustration which Matthew Paris himself made to his texts⁴ but also in the fact that we can peruse Paris's text as he left it. In this article I intend to comment on the inclusion of what might be called 'tabloid events' in the normally 'broadsheet-style' chronicle of Matthew Paris. Amidst his descriptions of serious political and ecclesiastical events Paris also records strange and sometimes inexplicable phenomena. I wish to propose some possible motivations for the inclusion of these bizarre happenings or what might corporately be termed *mirabilia*.

At times he devotes several sections within the chronological events of a year to describe *mirabilia* but he also includes details of these bizarre phenomena in his conclusions to each year. These conclusions begin with an account of the overall climate of the year and a description of the harvests and continue with details of the most noteworthy events of the year. These are also sections where Paris makes his judgements on the people and events he has been describing.

Matthew Paris was intrigued by a multitude of extraordinary events embracing what we today might call natural disasters – floods, droughts, famines, plagues and earthquakes – as well as freaks of nature, miracles and astronomical events. A summary of some of the

most notable *mirabilia* follows in order to enlighten the reader as to what phenomena interested Matthew most.

Paris describes three eclipses of the sun during the period of his chronicle and he adds details of another two to the work of Roger Wendover (*CM* II.173, II.317). Paris shows a reasonable knowledge of the details of one eclipse, as he not only illustrates it with a marginal drawing⁵ but he also describes how the eclipse, although only partial in England, was a full eclipse in Spain. Eclipses of the moon are also recorded by Paris as occurring in June 1248 and June/July 1255 (*CM* V.20, V.503). Matthew recounts how the latter occurred two hours before midnight and lasted just short of four hours. Matthew Paris also registers that the shape of the moon changed four days before the day expected according to the charts. He also describes how at this time, the moon, sun and stars took on a reddish tint (*CM* V.278-9) – a phenomenon which he also describes in one of his additions to Roger Wendover (*CM* II.143).

Matthew Paris also records the appearance of a comet in 1240. He gives a description of how a dusky star, which sent out a tail towards the east, was visible in the west of the evening sky for the whole month of February (*CM* IV.4). This could possibly be identified with Encke's comet which was first officially recorded in 1786.⁶ Paris also records the sighting of two incidents of meteorite activity which might be associated with the Delta Aquarids or the Perseids but which he did not recognise as such. The first he describes as a torch, in the shape of a large-headed fish, trailing with sparks and smoke and flying across the sky. Paris judges it to be either a comet or a dragon.⁷ Later he records that the stars were seen falling from heaven, although he is fully aware that such an explanation is not satisfactory. Matthew details how things that looked like stars shot across the sky like sparks and seemed to fall towards the earth in groups of two or three.⁸ Paris had also previously reported stars falling to earth in an addition to Roger Wendover for the year 1096 (*CM* II.56). Wendover himself recorded the appearance of mock suns around the true sun but Matthew Paris elaborates the incident both with greater detail and with various marginal illustrations.⁹

The *Chronica Maiora* also gives an account of several earthquakes which took place in Europe.¹⁰ Paris records how the rocks of a mountain fell into a valley in Savoy, destroying houses and farming buildings and killing the inhabitants of several villages (*CM* V.30-1). Paris also notes the eye-witness account of the Bishop of Bath and

Wells, to an earthquake's effect on Wells cathedral. He gives details of how the stones fell from the walls and that one large stone crashed into the building from the vaulted roof. The bishop also retold how chimneys and towers elsewhere fell to the ground whilst the foundations of buildings stayed intact (*CM* V.46).

The majority of Matthew Paris's *mirabilia* are incidents of extreme weather conditions. It is possible to discuss these with reference to modern analysis of medieval climatic change but the incidents which Paris records were noted by him not in the hope of producing any meteorological charts but for the sake of historic record. He catalogues extreme weather conditions in the same way that he records earthquakes, and astronomical events. Matthew was clearly interested in the weather. He took care to reproduce a picture of a wind-rose which helped people to identify different types of winds and indeed Matthew was keen to describe the direction of winds where possible.¹¹ When the sea flooded, he described how it rose six feet beyond its usual level (*CM* V.264-5). However this may not be reliable as he also says (*CM* V.395) that another flood reached to the tops of the hills!

The Chronicle includes descriptions of strong winds which ripped up trees, blew over houses and caused shipwrecks.¹² One storm of wind was so strong that it blew a massive stone from a church tower (*CM* IV.10). On another occasion, Matthew Paris emphasises the strength of the wind by saying that an oak tree which was torn up was so large that it could not be encircled by three men (*CM* V.273). Another wind is even described as taking on a yellow tinge during a time of disease (*CM* V.495).

Matthew chronicles one instance of extreme cold which caused the deaths of young cattle and sheep with the ferocity of a plague (*CM* V.674). Another season was so cold that the birds, unable to get water, died in large numbers (*CM* IV.176-7). In an addition to Roger Wendover's chronicle, Matthew records that the frost was so extreme that the Thames froze sufficiently to be crossed by horse or on foot (*CM* II.184). Matthew also makes note of hailstones which exceeded the size of almonds (*CM* IV.568) and other stones which were the size of apples and fell with such force that they killed some of the sheep grazing in the fields (*CM* III.394). He also details instances of thunder and lightning,¹³ which caused great damage to trees and buildings. One incident of lightning split thirty oak trees and destroyed many buildings including a mill (*CM* V.263-4).

In addition to these Matthew Paris mentions a large number of rain storms. The disturbing nature of great downpours of rain is readily understood after the recent floods in Africa. Consider the greater difficulty faced by a society even more dependent on local agriculture and less sheltered from the elements. Even light rain caused problems because of the excessive amounts of mud produced¹⁴ whilst great deluges of rain resulted in severe flooding of buildings as well as fields full of crops.¹⁵ Paris describes how rivers overflowed their banks and bridges and fords became impassable.¹⁶ He gives an account of how boats were used in places which did not usually have water and that people were forced to ride on horses in the Hall of Westminster because the depth of the flood water was so great.¹⁷ Paris also details the problems of coastal and sea-storms, retelling how ships were driven from ports and people and cattle were drowned by the inundations of the sea.¹⁸

In the same way that excessive amounts of rain caused trouble, so too the lack of it led to problems. A prolonged lack of rain could result in famine and death.¹⁹ Paris chronicles one drought, omitted by Roger Wendover, when the Thames dried up because of the heat (*CM* II.141). He later tells how the water mills stood useless as there was no water in the rivers to power them (*CM* IV.369-70). The crops also suffered, as the corn did not grow to a full height whilst the fruits shrivelled up because of the heat. Matthew Paris illustrates the excessive heat by references to the flies that buzzed around and he paints a verbal picture of the birds who had ceased to sing because of the heat and sat in the trees with gaping mouths (*CM* V.317).

If the weather was unfavourable for long periods of time, the result could easily be a devastating famine. The most prolonged famine which Matthew Paris records is that in England during the last two years of his chronicle, 1258-9. Matthew tells us that fifteen thousand paupers died in London alone.²⁰ The chronicle also catalogues various diseases which afflicted society, such as the inclemency of the air in 1238 which led to disease (*CM* III.519). In 1247, Matthew Paris recounts how ten people were buried in the church at St. Albans in one day because of the severity of the plague (*CM* IV.631x40), whilst a thousand are said to have been killed by the plague in France in 1259.²¹

Amongst Matthew Paris's strange events there are also freaks of nature. In one instance, Matthew records how the trees produced a second blossom because of the strange weather conditions (*CM*

V.321). He also describes exotic animals he has not seen or heard of before, such as the unidentifiable sea-monster that found its way up the Thames (*CM* V.488). The buffaloes and the elephant which were brought to England as an interesting spectacle are also recorded because of their extraordinary nature (*CM* V.275, 489). Indeed Paris's fascination is demonstrated in his drawing of the elephant.²² A more fascinating animal story is that of the so-called 'battle' of the sea creatures when various whales and other marine animals became beached on the English coasts with injuries which Matthew Paris depicts as resulting not from man but from other animals, as he graphically illustrates with a picture of four battling fish.²³

Matthew includes descriptions of humans who are out of the ordinary. He groups together the stories of a dwarf and a giant adding to the effect of their deformity by the comparison between the two (*CM* V.82). He also chronicles two hermaphrodites who were said to have produced a child (*CM* IV.549) and makes reference with graphic illustration to the alleged cannibalistic practices of the Tartars.²⁴

Stories which involve strange incidents of fire were also reported to Matthew and he records these within his chronicle. He describes a fire at St Paul's at the time of King Stephen's coronation (*CM* II.263) as well as another at Canterbury Cathedral (*CM* II.218). Similarly, he details the inexplicable fire which was discovered in the Pope's chamber at the Council of Lyons 1245 (*CM* IV.417). A most graphic story is that retold to him by a traveller who witnessed a fire at the Temple of Mohammed in Mecca. He tells Matthew how a river of fire flowed up a hill burning not only the buildings in its path but even reaching the people who had fled to the hills because of the fire in the city (*CM* V.630). This last story is not particularly plausible but is of more significance as an anti-Islamic story which is very much in keeping with Matthew Paris's strong Christian outlook.

As a monk of St Albans, it is not surprising that Matthew Paris includes a number of stories of religious interest. He adds many details about the life and miracles of Thomas Becket to Roger Wendover's chronicle.²⁵ He also describes the miracles of saints such as Hugh of Lincoln and Edmund of Abingdon as well as many others including those performed by a two year old child.²⁶ Aside from miracles, Matthew Paris also makes a point of recording the arrival of various relics from foreign parts.²⁷ He shows especial reverence for Louis IX's exhibition of a relic of the true cross and of the crown of thorns which he illustrates in great detail.²⁸

In this religious vein, Matthew Paris also includes stories of visions within his narrative. His interest in visions is emphasised by the considerable number of them that he adds to Roger Wendover's account.²⁹ Matthew records two visions concerning the divine judgement that was to be passed on the deceased Pope Innocent IV (*CM* V.471, 491-3). He also gives details of the vision of a recluse at St Albans, presumably told to him by the visionary herself (*CM* V.729). Matthew implies that he himself witnessed the vision of an amazing ship which appeared in the sky over the chapel of St Amphibalus, although this is finally referred to as a wonderful cloud (*CM* V.422-3). A most fascinating vision is that of a mysterious writing hand seen by a Cistercian monk in 1239. The hand writes a prophetic message which implies that some form of doom will take place in eleven years (*CM* III.538). Matthew Paris includes other prophetic sections.³⁰ He describes how one Walter Pruz declared to those assembled at Westminster that there would be a terrible judgement on horned creatures (*CM* III.415); and adds further prophecies to Roger Wendover's account, such as that prefiguring the death of Simon de Montfort.³¹ Yet Paris's most interesting section on prophetic writings falls within Roger Wendover's chronicle. Wendover had recorded the Prophecy of Merlin, probably copied from Geoffrey of Monmouth yet Matthew Paris embellishes it not only with exegetical notes but also with a number of illustrations of the dragons and other creatures spoken of in the text.³²

Matthew Paris's inclusion of *mirabilia* is clearly not accidental and therefore he must have had some reason for including them. He may have been motivated by his scientific, religious or historiographical interests. Yet it is not possible to say that Matthew includes all of them for the same purposes but it is clear that there are common motivations for Paris's interest.

The inclusion of *mirabilia* in chronicles was not the invention of Matthew Paris and was therefore adopted by him, at least in part, because of an adherence to the traditions of historical writing. In distinguishing between historians and chroniclers, Gervase of Canterbury describes it as part of the task of the chronicler to recount strange events, he says:

It is proper for historians to pass on the truth to either their readers or listeners with sweet words and to note elegantly the acts, customs and life of those which he will describe, to teach

truly to include nothing unless it seems to correspond to the logic of the history. However, the chronicler calculates the years and months since the incarnation of the Lord and the calendar. He describes briefly the acts of kings and princes which come about and he also mentions other events, portents or miracles.³³

Paris seems to combine both of these, yet this definition would not have been the only historical precedent available to him.

We can discover some of the historical works Matthew Paris may have emulated by examining those to which he and his predecessor Roger Wendover make reference within the chronicle. Matthew personally cites passages from William of Malmesbury, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Bede, Peter the Lombard, Henry of Huntingdon, Ralph Diceto and the Southwark annals.³⁴ Wendover also makes references to Henry of Huntingdon³⁵ as well as to the histories of Orosius,³⁶ Isidore,³⁷ Marianus Scotus,³⁸ Florence of Worcester,³⁹ William of Jumieges,⁴⁰ and Aelred of Rievaulx⁴¹ as well as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles⁴² and many others including Gregory of Tours and Josephus.⁴³

From these two groups of historical works, Matthew Paris would have found many examples of descriptions of *mirabilia*. They are clear in the works of Josephus,⁴⁴ Gregory of Tours⁴⁵ and Bede⁴⁶ as well as in the more contemporary histories of William of Malmesbury,⁴⁷ Ralph Diceto and Geoffrey of Monmouth. Perhaps of all those listed above these last two were most influential on Matthew Paris as Matthew's in-depth knowledge of, if not keen interest in, their work is evidenced by the presence of his handwriting in manuscripts containing them.⁴⁸ Ralph describes religious phenomena in the form of prophecies,⁴⁹ visions⁵⁰ and miracles.⁵¹ He also records freaks of nature⁵² such as extreme weather conditions,⁵³ earthquakes⁵⁴ and volcanic eruptions⁵⁵ and other natural disasters.⁵⁶ Astronomical events such as eclipses of the sun and moon⁵⁷ as well as stars falling from heaven,⁵⁸ comets⁵⁹ and the *aurora borealis* also feature in his chronicle.⁶⁰ There are also examples of such things in the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth, one of the most fantastical of Matthew Paris's sources. He describes the marvels of several lakes,⁶¹ a female sea-monster,⁶² and a rain of blood⁶³ as well as many other strange things such as people eating human flesh and⁶⁴ a cloak made of beards.⁶⁵

Monmouth also records various prophecies, most particularly the prophecy of Merlin, which Paris himself recorded and illustrated.⁶⁶

Although Matthew Paris may have been influenced by the works of history contained within the library at St Albans, there is no dispute that the work of greatest influence on Matthew Paris's writing is that of his predecessor at St Albans, Roger Wendover.⁶⁷ Wendover also followed the tradition of recording unusual events. As his predecessors in the tradition of historic writing, Roger chronicles various comets⁶⁸ and eclipses⁶⁹ and extreme climatic conditions or earthquakes⁷⁰ as well as famine and plague,⁷¹ strange signs⁷² and legends.⁷³ He also records the discovery of the relics of St Alban and St Amphibalus⁷⁴ as well as various miracles,⁷⁵ visions⁷⁶ and prophecies.⁷⁷ His consideration of these events as being an important element in his historical narrative is emphasised by the statement of his intention to include them in the introduction to his section of the chronicle:

The prodigies and portentous occurrences of past days, whether in the way of pestilences, or in other chastisements of God's wrath, are not without admonition to the faithful. Therefore is the memory of them committed to writing, that if ever the like shall again occur, men may presently betake themselves to repentance, and by this remedy appease the divine vengeance.⁷⁸

Matthew's inclusion of strange events is thus following in an historical tradition established not only in general but more particularly at St Albans itself.

The influence of Roger Wendover's inclusion of extraordinary events is quite clear yet Matthew Paris's additions to Roger Wendover's record of several strange happenings show Matthew's development of Roger's tradition. In part, Matthew Paris, as an historian, was driven to detail such things as a matter of historic record. Indeed he himself says that he considers certain stories to be worthy of description for posterity. In his account of the freak fires that attacked various towns and cities in 1248, Paris shows this motivation of natural interest:

In this year, also an occurrence took place, most worthy of note, because it was wonderful, which we have thought worthwhile to insert an account of in this work, as we do not remember to have seen the like before.⁷⁹

Such descriptions are, therefore, for Matthew, a matter of recording events of interest in the same way that he records wars and other political events. In this way, the inclusion of these stories is motivated by an interest, in what can only be called, current affairs. Furthermore, he includes such current affairs because of his natural interest, as a historian and scholar, in the events of his time and because of a fascination in things that were not an everyday occurrence. This is apparent in the descriptions of events such as the appearance of strange relics and exotic creatures like the elephant.

Matthew's other academic interests can also be used as an indication of his motivation. Paris makes reference to several classical texts including Cato, Claudian, Lucan, Juvenal, Terence and Virgil.⁸⁰ Yet these are far outweighed by his references to Horace⁸¹ and even more so by the frequent allusions to the works of Ovid.⁸² His clear preference for the works of Ovid show us that Matthew was clearly very curious about things that were fantastical. Consider for example the *Metamorphoses* which deal with the changes of gods and men into plants and animals. A man interested in such tales is likely to be fascinated by other tales of strange happenings.

Another strong influence on the way Matthew Paris catalogues these events must surely be his interest in biblical, philosophical and scientific writings. Paris's addition of the technical drawing to Roger Wendover's record of the mock suns shows this scientific interest even more clearly.⁸³ Paris also writes very much in keeping with the contemporary view that a key element of scientific work and experimentation was observation. This helps us to understand his long descriptions of the events which he sees. It is because of this that he records the time of eclipses and how long they lasted.⁸⁴ He also describes the exact nature of the meteorite storm with sufficient accuracy that the modern reader – armed with the knowledge of the modern era – can easily identify them as what they really were. Similarly, he is very specific and accurate in his descriptions of the buffaloes and elephants (*CM* V.254-5, V.275, 489). It is also clear that Matthew Paris is aware of current knowledge such as the different phases of the moon, observing the proper sequence of changes – he often dates things precisely according to the phase of the moon as the calendar dictated, for example 'The moon being eight days old...' ⁸⁵ – and also he highlighted a discrepancy in the cycle as mentioned earlier.⁸⁶

In describing the storm in 1252, Matthew Paris shows knowledge of technical terms related to science as he tells us that there were 'unnatural lightnings (which natural philosophers call blasting).'⁸⁷ The word Matthew Paris uses is *uredo*. This is a term used by the Elder Pliny and by Cicero.⁸⁸ However, Matthew Paris's reading of the term is not quite precise. Pliny and others, for example Lucius Junius Moderatus, use the word to refer to a crop disease referred to as 'blight'.⁸⁹ It is most likely that Matthew Paris lifted the term from Cicero who uses it less specifically 'the gods disregard... any trifling damage done by blight or hail.'⁹⁰ From this passage, Matthew Paris may well have assumed the 'blight' Cicero referred to was one of a climatic rather than viral problem because it is juxtaposed with hail.

His scientific approach is also evident when he attempts to explain the events which he or others witness. For example, he eliminates the possibility that the accidental fires were caused by the heat and dryness.⁹¹ Similarly, when Matthew explains that the disease of cattle and the late blossom were due to the heat, he is exhibiting an elementary understanding of scientific processes (*CM* V.321). This understanding is also clear in descriptions of climatic conditions. When describing a sea flood, he says:

This is believed to have occurred in consequence of the strong wind which blew from the sea; but as it had often happened that the wind blew in strong from the sea, and yet the sea itself did not rise in such a way, even old persons were astonished at this new and unusual occurrence.⁹²

In the same way, Matthew Paris's resolution that the fantastic apparition of a ship was in fact a cloud also emphasises his eagerness to provide explanations where possible (*CM* V.422-3). His attempts to discover the causes of these events often confirm him in his opinion of them as being extraordinary. When searching for an explanation for the earthquakes in England, he describes how unlikely they are:

Inasmuch as it was unusual and unnatural in these western countries, since the solid mass of England is free from those under-ground caverns and deep cavities (in which, according to philosophers, an earthquake is generally produced), nor could any reason for it be discovered.⁹³

Matthew Paris's scholastic interest in extraordinary events is made more clear by his references, direct or otherwise, to scientific works and theories when describing them. The meteor shower of 1243 has Matthew Paris bemused even though he tries to understand it with the aid of the works of Aristotle:

But, contrary to what usually happens, not little sparks shooting after the manner of stars (which is stated as a natural phenomenon in Aristotle's book of meteors).⁹⁴

This eagerness to uncover the truth about the seemingly unnatural events reflects Matthew Paris's scientific outlook. However, Matthew Paris was not only a scientist but also a strongly religious man. The way in which he records many of the strange events shows that Matthew Paris is not exhibiting any sense of gullibility in attributing some of them to divine action. Indeed, he believes strongly in the intervention of God in the world of man. Yet, as a man interested in science, he has endeavoured – to the extent of his ability and that of his contemporaries with the scientific knowledge available to him – to find explanations for the incidents, and when none can be found he has no reservation in attributing a greater significance to them. For Matthew Paris these events are not purely of interest because they are out of the ordinary but also because they hold a deeper significance for the world.

In the same way that Matthew Paris followed contemporary scientific works so too his examination of the significant nature of events reflected the current views of society. The twelfth-century had seen a great flourishing of interest in prophecy. Gerald of Wales wrote a history connecting prophecies to historical events and many men studied the prophecies of the ancient Sybil as well as the prophecy of Merlin to which I have already alluded. Prophecies of contemporaries such as Hildegard von Bingen were also of great popular interest. However, the thirteenth century saw a change, as Southern describes when he talks about the differences between the intellectuals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The former, he says:

sought enlightenment from prophecy about the practical outcome of present events, not about the end of the world; but fifty years later when the climate of thought had changed,

Hildegard's works [and presumably other prophecies] were systematically searched for news of the final catastrophe.⁹⁵

Indeed, Matthew Paris was very much aware of the works of Joachim of Fiore who was a most notable visionary though a controversial one as, although his works were banned by several popes, they were considered worthy of examination by members of the progressive scientific movement.⁹⁶ In a letter to Robert Grosseteste, Adam Marsh commends Joachim of Fiore saying:

He is believed not without merit to understand the spirit by inspiration and produces mysterious prophecies.⁹⁷

A prophecy Matthew cites in his *Liber Additamenta* is associated with followers of Joachim although Matthew Paris was not a follower himself. This is very clear as Matthew made a thorough and unsympathetic perusal of the works of Joachim of Fiore which can be found in his *Liber Additamenta*. (CM VI.335-9). Indeed, Matthew Paris's criticism of Joachim of Fiore shows that his treatment of prophetic writing is of an academic nature. As Southern has said with reference to other learned men who studied the prophecies of the Sybil:

We are not dealing with any popular mumbo-jumbo but with matter of grave intellectual concern.⁹⁸

Thus Matthew Paris was following current intellectual trends in seeking significance in the events he described.

Like many historians before him, Matthew Paris makes comment about some of these *mirabilia* which connects them with divine action or links them to other events. He makes it clear that he considers there to be connections between various events either in predicting future happenings or reflecting current events. This reflective significance is apparent in some instances in a general way, for example, Matthew Paris sometimes depicts the natural world as a macrocosm or parallel of human affairs. For example in both 1237 and 1241, Paris connects the state of the weather with the arrival at the king's court of men he considers to be interested solely in gaining money. With reference to the arrival of Peter of Savoy, the queen's uncle, he says the weather was unpleasant, 'so that the disturbed air seemed to be in harmony with the condition of the human race.'⁹⁹

At other times, however, the reference is much more specific. Some events are clearly described as acts of divine retribution. Those workmen killed or wounded in an underground explosion of 1256 are described as receiving just deserts for working when they should have been at prayer (*CM* V.600; *MPEH* 3.206). Paris states that other occurrences are caused by *ira dei* – ‘the anger of God’. This is the suspected cause of the thunderstorm in December 1250 (*CM* V.198) and the earthquake in France:

It was said that the severity of divine punishment justly vented its fury on the abodes of the inhabitants of those parts, because they so shamelessly and indiscriminantly practised the disgraceful trade of usury, and were so contaminated with the stain of avarice, that, in order to cover their wickedness with an appearance of virtue, they did not hesitate to call themselves money-merchants...¹⁰⁰

He also attributes the accidental fires which attacked various European towns and cities in 1248 to God’s anger:

Far away, in many regions, with God being angered, pernicious fires, provoked by neither heat nor aridity, absolutely savaged cities and towns, reducing them to ashes.¹⁰¹

This ‘anger of God’ is apparent in many sections but in his description of the sea floods of October 1250, resulting from God’s anger against the wickedness of the Papacy, he combines this *topos* with a biblical reference:

The anger of God plainly appeared to mortals in the sea as well as on the land, and the punishment of sinners appeared imminent according to the prophecy of Habakkuk, “Art thou angered in the rivers oh Lord, or is thy indignation in the sea?” and what wonder? For from the Roman court, which ought to be the fountain of all justice, there emanated unmentionable enormities.¹⁰²

Through such biblical quotations this anger of God becomes associated with the idea of the final judgement. The storm on St Martin’s day in

1236 is described as resulting from God's anger but it is also placed in the context of the end of the world:

The Lord indeed seemed, owing to the sins of the people, to have sent this flood as a scourge of the earth, and to fulfil the threat contained in the Gospel "There shall be upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring."¹⁰³

It is clear therefore, that some *mirabilia* are considered by Matthew Paris to be a reflection of society or more particularly driven by divine judgement.

However Paris associates many of these *mirabilia* not with events that have already happened but with terrible events to come. The terminology Matthew used shows this intention. For example, the battle of the sea monsters is described as 'a terrible precursor.'¹⁰⁴ Such terminology is also apparent when, like Roger Wendover before him, Matthew Paris talks of thunder in winter as being a bad sign:

Indeed, the following month, that is to say the first night of December there was thunder and violent and horrible lightning together with wind and inundations of pouring rain which many heard this, sighing, as a sad auspice since wintry thunder is always accustomed to be portentous.¹⁰⁵

Matthew also tells us that the meteor shower of 1239 caused people to ponder what would happen and he infers that it was because of this event that the crops revived and produced a good harvest (*CM* III.566; *MPEH* 1.193).

Matthew Paris's portrayal of events as holding significance is also made clear by his references to those people whose task it is to discover what certain events predicted. Matthew's description of a meteor shower in 1243 concludes with just such a reference, he says:

Astrologers may examine what a portent of this kind may betoken, but to all regarding it, it seemed beyond measure wonderful and marvellous.¹⁰⁶

Also when he describes the fearful thunderstorm of December 1250 he speaks of the role of 'diviners' in discovering its significance as 'a sad

presage.¹⁰⁷ References to the work of Bernard Silvester, within the chronicle also show his interest in such things.¹⁰⁸

However, the significance Matthew attaches to events is not limited to short term consequences nor does he rely on astrologers or diviners to explain their significance but refers instead to the apocalyptic passages of the bible.¹⁰⁹ Paris explicitly associates the events he and others have witnessed with the signs before the end of the world which are described in the gospels. This is made apparent by Matthew's comments in connection with the earthquake in 1247. He describes the end of the world as being near because of 'the warnings of the gospel' in the form of the earthquake and disturbances of the sea.¹¹⁰ In recording the earthquake in 1248, Matthew Paris identifies it as an indication of the apocalypse, making direct reference to the relevant biblical passages:

The end of the world was indicated by many different signs as they are "One people will rise against another people, and there will be earthquakes in many places."¹¹¹

However he specifically refers to the end of the world as imminent when he records a quake in 1250:

On account of this it was believed that the earthquake was significant of future events. Therefore, it was thought to be a warning that the end of the world was imminent because in that year, both on the land and at sea there had been unnatural and horrible agitations according to the gospel threat which is "There will be earthquakes in divers places."¹¹²

Furthermore, when Paris records information about floods in other parts of Europe given to him by some merchants he counts these amongst the signs:

So it appeared as if a contradiction was given to what is read in the Psalms concerning the sea: "Thou hast given them a limit which they" that is to say the waters, "shall not exceed" But we must admit that, anything is possible with God which is not for man to know. But of such prodigies, God has forewarned for he says "There shall be signs in the sun etc."¹¹³

Matthew's reference to biblical passages in association with these events might well have two motivations. It could be that Matthew includes them for didactic purposes. As Roger indicated in his introduction, so too Matthew may have intended to remind people of the power and presence of God and to remind them of the need for confession and contrition in the expectation of final judgement. Yet the other motivation for associating these events with biblical citations is far more fascinating and controversial.

As many of the above references have shown, Matthew is clearly associating some of these events with the apocalypse. I do not think that these are merely coincidental. Paris frequently refers to those biblical passages which describe parables of the future kingdoms, repentance of sins and most particularly those detailing the signs before the end of the world. In addition to those cited above, the signs of the end, as described by the gospels, are also evident elsewhere in the less fantastical sections of the *Chronica Maiora*. Chapter twenty four of St Matthew's gospel describes the preaching of false Christs and false prophets who will perform miracles, as well as wars between nations, famines, earthquakes, people turning away from the faith. In his gospel, Matthew also quotes from the prophetic section of Isaiah which describes the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of stars from heaven before the world's end.¹¹⁴ As well as these things described by St Matthew, St Luke, in chapter twenty-one of his gospel, also describes the persecution of the faithful and Jerusalem being surrounded by armies. He talks of there being signs in the sun, moon and stars as well as disturbances of the sea. The sixth chapter of the book of Revelation also describes the sun turning to sack-cloth and the moon turning red.

It is all too clear from previous sections that Matthew Paris does describe signs such as these. These include the dramatic earthquakes, the eclipses and stars falling from heaven as well as the many floods. Matthew also describes the wavering of the faithful,¹¹⁵ the appearance of heresies and heretical preachers¹¹⁶ and the battles between nations which are apparent in the wars with the French.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile the attacks of the Tartars may easily be associated with the coming of the anti-Christ and the armies massed around Jerusalem.¹¹⁸ Matthew Paris's reference to biblical passages could be considered to be no more significant than his references to Aristotle; yet with all these signs being fulfilled, we must ask whether or not he considered them to be

the signs of the end or just signs *like* those which will foretell the end.

It is obviously quite apparent to us some 850 years later that the end of the world was not imminent but without the advantage of hindsight, that was not obvious to the writer at the time. There are several passages in Matthew Paris's *Chronica Maiora* which, taken together, suggest that his motivation for including some *mirabilia* might well have stemmed from a belief not only in an imminent apocalypse but from a belief that the apocalypse would come in a particular year.

The remarkable writing which Paris records as being seen in a vision by a Cistercian monk in 1239 foretells some most disastrous events:

The lofty cedar of Lebanon shall be cut down. Mars shall prevail over Saturn and Jupiter, and Saturn shall lay snares for Jupiter in all things. There shall be One God, that is a monarch. The second God has come. The sons of Israel shall be released from captivity *within eleven years*. A certain people, considered to be without a chief, shall come in their wanderings. Alas for the clergy; if it should fall, a new order flourishes; alas for the faith of church laws, and of kingdoms. Changes shall occur and the whole Saracen nation shall be subverted.¹¹⁹

This prophecy places an Isaiah-like final judgement in 1250.¹²⁰ When Paris adds an illustration of the nativity to Roger Wendover's chronicle, he embellishes it with another prophetic verse:

The tenth year following the sun and the moon
 When Christ the sacred was born to the Virgin
 Again of the same: and again with the leading of five-hundred
 years ten times
 One was absent when God was born.
 From the beginning of the world up to the annunciation of the
 blessed Virgin
 And then three times ten, one-hundred and five-hundred years
 From the primeval father are to Christ less one
 When a thousand years and two-hundred were passed
 And fifty after the part of the nourishing virgin

Then the antichrist is born full from the spirit.¹²¹

The last two lines of this verse indicate that the final judgement was due in 1250. These lines are also cited, with some differences, in his *Liber Additamenta*.¹²² Matthew may have included this prophecy merely out of interest but in, a marginal note to the full quotation, he connects the verse to the signs of the end described by Jesus in Mark's gospel. His marginal note reads: 'Note what is written in Mark concerning these things, that is to say chapter thirteen.'¹²³

This reference may be considered two ways. In Mark 13.32 Jesus asserts that no-one may know when the end of the world would be yet prior to this statement (13.5-27) he had told the disciples what signs would foretell that end. Indeed Matthew makes references to such apocalyptic passages in connection with other prodigious events and in connection with the same year, 1250. For example, he cited an apocalyptic reference in connection with the earthquake in 1250 saying: 'They warned that the end of the world was near.'¹²⁴ From this it can easily be proposed that Matthew Paris entertained the idea of an approaching end and indeed, the year agreed as the time for the end by all three prophetic citations, 1250, is the year in which he had intended to make an end to his chronicle.

Matthew's summary of 1250 is a most telling account. In it he details all those things which have indicated the coming end. Paris begins with a computation of the years and half-centuries since the birth of Christ. In doing this he describes how, more than any other half century, this last, that he details in his section of the chronicle, the twenty fifth (1200-1250), has seen more extraordinary events than any other (*CM* V.191-3). He places great emphasis on the fact that Easter day had not fallen on 27th March – allegedly its proper day – in any jubilee year except 1250. His conclusion of this summary also returns to the subject of portents: in this last section he describes how three of the four elements – fire, air and earth – had been disturbed. Strangely enough, Matthew Paris does not mention the disturbances which had been quite apparent in the fourth element, water (*CM* V.197-8). He also makes reference to a passage from the Bible which describes the signs before the apocalypse: '...except that Christ's threat was impending over man, "There shall be signs in the sun &c."¹²⁵

Naturally, even if Matthew Paris had held a firm intellectually-based view that the world would end in December 1250 before that year was

over, it is no surprise that he abandoned this view and continued life as normal after it had passed – much like some apocalyptic sects might very well be feeling now as the year 2000 progresses. As an historian it is therefore certainly safer to enlist the help of hindsight and assert that Matthew held no such view but merely recognised the signs which were *like* those which would come at the time of the apocalypse. However I think I will be uncharacteristically controversial and assert that, in my opinion, Matthew Paris did think that the end of the world was possibly imminent in 1250; and that indeed, when the end did not come in 1250 his belief in the imminence of the end was not wholly shaken as he continued to record similar signs after that year. This has often been taken as an argument against Matthew's belief in an apocalypse in 1250; but only a fool would have persisted in such a belief after the date had passed, and Matthew Paris was far from a fool. He was a Christian monk with a strong belief in the Bible and the end it foretold. He was also interested in science and was an historian with a fascination for all contemporary events, including those things which were out of the ordinary. Matthew's motivations for describing *mirabilia* were indeed various and although we cannot assert for certain that Matthew believed that the end was coming in 1250, I do not think we should exclude the possibility merely because we know that such a belief proved to be erroneous.

NOTES

¹ 'incomparabilis chronographus et pictor peroptimus' [from the *Liber Benefactorum*] & 'historiographus ac chronographus magnificus, dictator egregius' (from the *Vitæ Abbatum*, cited in Claude Jenkins *The Monastic Chronicle and the Early School of St Albans*, London, SPCK, 1922, pp.64-5). For more details of Matthew Paris's life see Richard Vaughan *Matthew Paris*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958, pp. 1-20; hereafter Vaughan *MP*.

² The standard edition is H. R. Luard, ed. *Chronica Maiora*, 7 vols. Rolls Series Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi scriptores 57, London, Longman, 1872-1884; hereafter *CM*. An English translation is also available in J. A. Giles, *Matthew Paris's English History*, 3 vols., London, George Bell and sons, 1854-93; referred to hereafter as *MPEH*. All English translations are taken from Giles unless otherwise stated.

³ For information on manuscripts see Vaughan, *MP* pp. 35-49. There are two editions of the earlier chronicle: Roger Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*

(from 477) Ed. H. O. Coxe *Rogeri de Wendover Chronica sive Flores Historiarum*, 5 vols., London, 1841-44, hereafter, *FHC*, & *Rogeri de Wendover liber qui dicitur Flores historiarum ab anno Domino MCLIV. annoque Henrici Anglorum Regis Secundi primo* = *the flowers of history from the year of our Lord 1154, and the first year of Henry the Second, King of the English*, edited from the original manuscripts by Henry G. Hewlett, *Rolls Series/Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi scriptores* 98, London, Longman, 1886; hereafter *FH*.

⁴ For examples of Matthew's artistic work I refer the reader to Richard Vaughan, *The Illustrated Chronicles of Matthew Paris: Observations of Thirteenth-Century Life*, Gloucester, Alan Sutton/Corpus Christi College Cambridge, 1993 (hereafter *Vaughan Illustrated*) and Suzanne Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Maiora*, Corpus Christi College Cambridge/University of California Press, 1987; hereafter *Lewis, Art*.

⁵ See Vaughan, *Illustrated*, p. 62.

⁶ Encke's comet has an orbital period of 3.3 years which could coincide with the comet witnessed by Matthew Paris.

⁷ *CM* III.566 This cannot be a comet, as Matthew Paris describes how it was seen to move across the sky, whereas comets cannot be seen to move. Of course, this could be classified as a UFO but the observation is indicative of a meteorite.

⁸ *CM* IV.249-50 Aristotle was aware of meteorite showers and although Matthew Paris considers this of a greater magnitude than Aristotle describes, it isn't likely to be anything other than a meteorite shower.

⁹ *CM* III.242-3. See Lewis, *Art* figs. 35, 36.

¹⁰ *CM* II.233, IV.603, V.30-1, V.46, V.187.

¹¹ *CM* IV.85, V.272-3, V.278-9, V.495. See Vaughan, *Illustrated*, p. 70.

¹² *CM* III. 379-80, III.471, III.498, IV.85, V.272-3.

¹³ *CM* IV.400, V.198-9, V.263-4, V.418, V.435, V.465, V.724.

¹⁴ *CM* III.529, V.600x674.

¹⁵ *CM* II.410, III.82, III.303, V.30, V.75, V.264-5, V.333-4, V.395, V.418, V.453, V.461, V.600, V.724.

¹⁶ *CM* III.339, III.378, III.387, V.175-7.

¹⁷ *CM* III.339. See Vaughan, *Illustrated*, p. 71.

¹⁸ *CM* III.379-80; V.176-7. See Vaughan, *Illustrated*, pp. 76 and 187.

¹⁹ *CM* IV.176-7, V.279 V.317, V.496.

²⁰ *CM* V.701 Of course, this figure and others like it may well be an exaggeration of the true numbers.

- ²¹ *CM* V.746-7. See Vaughan, *Illustrated*, p. 135.
- ²² See Lewis, *Art* figs. 177, 178. See also G. C. Druce, 'The Elephant in Medieval Legend and Art', *Archaeological Journal* 74 (1919): 1-73.
- ²³ *CM* IV.81. See Vaughan, *Illustrated*, p. xiv.
- ²⁴ *CM* IV.76-8, IV.270, IV. 298-300, IV.386-90, IV.547. See Vaughan, *Illustrated* p. 14.
- ²⁵ *CM* II.261. See Vaughan, *Illustrated*, p.73.
- ²⁶ For example *CM* IV.102-3, IV.631, V.302-2, V.419-20, V.496-7, V.620. See also Vaughan, *Illustrated* pp. 1, 9, 56, 57, 86, 96, 98, 141, 142, 147 for other religious subjects in illustrations.
- ²⁷ See Vaughan, *Illustrated*, p. 114.
- ²⁸ See Vaughan, *Illustrated*, pp. 50, 51, 176.
- ²⁹ *CM* II.112, II.480, III.12, III.127.
- ³⁰ *CM* III.550-1, IV.130, IV.494.
- ³¹ *CM* III.57 and others at II.121, II.337.
- ³² *CM* I.198-215. See Lewis, *Art*, fig. 51.
- ³³ My translation of Gervase of Canterbury, *Chronica*, edited by W. Stubbs *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury* 2 vols. *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores/Rolls Series* 73, London, Longman, 1879-80, vol. 1 p.87: 'Proprium est historici veritati intendere audientes vel legentes dulci sermone et eleganti demulcere, actus, mores vitamque ipsius quam describit veraciter edocere, nichilque aliud comprehendere nisi quod historiae de ratione videtur competere. Cronicus autem annos Incarnationis Domini annorumque menses computat et kalendas, actus etiam regum et principum quae in ipsius eveniunt breviter edocet eventus etiam, portenta, vel miracula commemorat.'
- ³⁴ See prefaces to Luard's edition.
- ³⁵ *FH* i.190, i.192, i.193 etc.
- ³⁶ *FH* i.10, i.53, i.63 etc.
- ³⁷ *FH* i.51.
- ³⁸ *FH* i.64, i.81, i.97, i.121 etc.
- ³⁹ *FH* i.247, i. 254, i.257, i.272 etc.
- ⁴⁰ *FH* i.425, i.433, i.434, i.437 etc.
- ⁴¹ *FH* i.534, i.537
- ⁴² *FH* i.329, i.402, i.428, i.432 etc.

⁴³ See prefaces to Luard's editions pp. I. xiii-xv & II. xxxv-xxxviii for a complete list of the authorities used by Wendover.

⁴⁴ Josephus records the flood at the time of Noah (I.130) as well as other so-called judgements sent from God (I.175) and the actions of a false prophet (VI.285) – a traditional apocalyptic symbol (Cf. Matthew Ch. 24 v.24)

⁴⁵ All references are to Gregory's *Decem Libri Historiarum* printed in *Gregorii Turonensis opera*, ed. W. Arndt et B. Krusch, Munchen, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1984. Readers may also consult these examples in Lewis Thorpe's translation, Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, London, Penguin, 1974. Gregory of Tours describes various plagues and diseases of men: II.18, IV.5, IV.31, V.17, V.34, V.41, VI.14, VI.33, VII.2, VIII.39, IX.21, IX.22, X.1, X.23, X.25 and of animals: VI.44, X.30. He also records strange incidents of weather: Harsh winter: III.37; Wet summer: VIII.23; Rain and floods: IV.31, V.33, VI.14, VI.25, IX.17, IX.44 X.1, X.23, X.30; Lightning: IV.51, VIII.8, VIII.42; Thunder: V.23; High Winds: V.41; Frosts: VI.44; Freaks of nature, IV.20: Swarms of locusts; VI.44: Roses bloomed in January; VIII.42: Trees blossomed in September and the second crop stayed on the trees until Christmas; In addition to these there are also stories of freak fires: II.34: V.33, VI.21, VIII.24, X.30.) earthquakes: II.19, II.20, II.34, IV.31, V.17, V.33, VI.21, VII.11 and astronomical activity: Sun eclipse: II.3, IV.31, X.23; Moon eclipse: VI.21; Comets: IV.51, V.41, VI.14; Meteors: V.23, V.33, VII.11, 10.23.

⁴⁶ Examples in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* may likewise be consulted in R.E. Latham's revision of Leo Shirley-Price's translation in the Penguin edition (Harmondsworth, 1990) or Bede, the Venerable, *Historia Ecclesiastica; Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English people*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Parallel Latin and English translation with English notes (Oxford, Clarendon, 1992). Bede described comets: IV.2, V.23 and an eclipse: III.27; in addition to violent storms: I.2, I.17, III.15, V.1, V.9; freak fires: I.19, II.7, III.10, III.16, IV.25; epidemics: I.13, III.23, III.27, III.30, IV.3, IV.14; and famine: I.4, I.13, IV.13.

⁴⁷ The following page references refer to William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, ed. J. A. Giles, London, Henry G. Bohn, 1847. William of Malmesbury records comets: pp. 251, 343; earthquakes: p. 342; eclipses: pp.488, 511; a shower of blood: p. 67; and incidents of famine: p.170.

⁴⁸ Matthew's handwriting is found in the following manuscripts, as described in N. Ker ed., *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, Royal

Historical Society guides and handbooks 3, London, Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1964: Henry of Avranches, Cambridge University Library 11.78. Peter Comestor, London, British Museum Royal 4 D.vii. William of Conches, Cambridge University, Corpus Christi College 385, pp. 89-212. Ralph de Diceto, London, British Museum Royal 13 E.vi. Geoffrey of Monmouth, London, British Museum Royal 13 D.v. Bernard Silvester, Oxford, Bodleian Ashmole 304. John of Wallingford, *Collectanea* London, British Museum Cotton Julius D.vii.

⁴⁹ Ralph Diceto, *Abbreviationes Chronicorum & Ymagines Historiarum*, ed. W. Stubbs, *Radulphi de Diceto Opera Historica* vol. 2, Vols Rolls Series 68, London, Longman, 1876 (Hereafter RD). Diceto records the Prophecy of Merlin: I.314, II.64, II.67; the Sybilline prophecies: I.37 and others: I.168.

⁵⁰ RD I.81, I.219.

⁵¹ RD I.57, I.97, I.124, I.166, I.178.

⁵² A plague of locusts: RD I.150; a rain of blood: RD II.162; a whale cast up on the shore at Naze: RD I.159.

⁵³ High winds, snow and floods: RD I.424; a stormy winter: RD I.422; floods: RD II.173; thunderstorms: RD II.171; and droughts: RD I.417.

⁵⁴ RD II.37, II.172.

⁵⁵ RD I.159.

⁵⁶ Famine: RD I.97, I.201, I.406; Plague: RD I.97.

⁵⁷ Sun: RD I.427, II.37; Moon: RD II.168.

⁵⁸ RD I.220.

⁵⁹ RD I.194, I.256.

⁶⁰ RD I.396.

⁶¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, ed. Acton Griscom with transl. by R.E. Johns, Geneva, Slatkine Reprint of 1929 London edition. Lewis Thorpe transl., *The History of the Kings of Britain*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1966 (hereafter GM) ix.7.

⁶² GM iii.15.

⁶³ GM ii.16.

⁶⁴ GM xii.4.

⁶⁵ GM x.3.

⁶⁶ GM xii.8, ix.17, vii.3; CM I.198-215. See Lewis, *Art*, fig. 51.

⁶⁷ V. H. Gailbraith's great lecture of 1944 remains unchallenged as a definitive comparison of the two men as chroniclers. V. H. Gailbraith,

Roger Wendover and Matthew Paris, Glasgow, Jackson, Son and Company, 1944.

⁶⁸ *FH* II.271/*FHC* I.73, I.167, I.218, I.355, I.372, I.418, I.512, II.182, II.188, II.191, II.237.

⁶⁹ Sun: *FH* I.194, II.384 *FHC* I.72, I.159, I.180, I.220, I.284, III.40, IV.211; Moon: II.44, II.228, III.8 *FHC* I.180, I.232, I.236, I.335, II.192, II.215, II.220, IV.37, IV.218.

⁷⁰ Floods: *FH* II.246, *FHC* I.268, I.450 III.24, III.43 IV.455. Storms: *FH* II.348, III.42, III.49, III.268-9 *FHC* I.266, II.215, II.367, III.167, III.210, IV.82, IV.171, IV.208, IV.258, IV.266. Thunder: *FH* III.61 *FHC* IV.279. Earthquake: *FH* I.139 *FHC* I.275, I.415, II.21, II.191, II.194.

⁷¹ Plague: *FH* II.311 *FHC* I.73, I.159, I.180, I.229, I.425, IV.45. Famine: *FH* II.311, III.70, III.95 *FHC* I.418, I.436, II.43, IV.289, IV.317.

⁷² *FH* I.207, II.207-8, II.270, II.323-4.

⁷³ *FHC* I.79, I.81, I.108, I.111, I.177, I.217, I.275, I.286, I.441, I.485, I.487, I.498, I.503, II.10, II.35, II.40, II.214, II.251, II.264, IV.018,-9 IV.111, IV.113, IV.176, IV.317.

⁷⁴ *FH* I.115; *FHC* I.253.

⁷⁵ *FH* I.87, I.302-310, II.270, II.274, III.107-8; *FHC* I.108, II.392-3, III.175, IV.16, IV.89, IV.331

⁷⁶ *FH* I.184-5, I.261, II.16, II.288, II.308, III.21-25; *FHC* II.391, III.28, III.97, III.112, II.190, IV.103, IV.105-6, IV.234.

⁷⁷ *FH* I.211-2; *FHC* III.58, IV.143.

⁷⁸ V. H. Gailbraith, *Roger Wendover and Matthew Paris*, Glasgow, Jackson, Son and Company, 1944, pp. 14-15 and J.A. Giles *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History* p.1. *FHC* I.1: '...prodigia autem vel portenta praeterita quae faciunt vel mortalitatem vel alia supernae flagella, fidelibus innuntiant ideo memoriae per litteras commendantur, ut si quando similia evenerint mox ad remedium poenitentiae per haec Deum placaturi festinent.'

⁷⁹ *CM* V.35-6; *MPEH* 2.278: 'Hoc quoque anno quoddam evenit notabile, quia mirabile, quod huic operi duximus annectandum; non enim hoc meminimus praevidissee.'

⁸⁰ *Distichia Catonis* i.32 see *CM* V.589; Claudian *De iv Consul Honorii* 302 see *CM* V.501, V.276; Lucan *Pharsalia* i.93 see *CM* V.77, V.131, V.280, V.528, V.603, viii.281 see *CM* V.266, V.594 viii.282 see *CM* V.266, III.384; Juvenal i.15 see *CM* V.468, x.22 see *CM* IV.173, V.401, i.169 see *CM* IV.208, V.152, viii.140 see *CM* V.153. Terence, *Andrea*

v.4,38 see *CMV*.277, V.371; Virgil, *Aeneid* i.387,388 see *CM* V.328, V.697, ii.49 see *CM* III.259, III.385.

⁸¹ *Ars Poetica* 139 see *CM* III.381, 180 see *CM* IV.538 *Epistulae* 1.i.45 see *CM* IV.120, 1.i.75 see *CM* V.207, 1.i.90 see *CM* IV.433, V.494, V.689, 1.ii.14 see *CM* V.276, V.409, 1.xviii.84 see *CM* III.489, V.218, 1.v.13 see *CM* V.490, 1.x.41 see *CM* IV.497.

⁸² *Amores* viii.62 see *CM* IV.56, i.10 see *CM* V.470, i.48 see *CM* V.470, x.48 see *CM* III.189; *Ars Amatoria* i.125 see *CM* IV.404, ii.13 see *CM* V.130, iii.9 see *CM* V.33; *Epistulae Heroidum* i.30 see *CM* IV.166, iii.11 see *CM* III.381, V.305, iii.12 see *CM* V.305, xvii.166 see *CM* IV.356; *Epistulae ex Ponto* i.2,76 see *CM* V.31, i.8,58 see *CM* V.400 [misquoted], ii.3,20 see *CM* V.427, iii.10 see *CM* IV.611, iv.3, 49 see *CM* IV.311, V.345, V.500; *Fasti* i.32 see *CM* V.473; *Metamorphoses* ii.5 see *CM* IV.157, V.22, iii.209 see *CM* IV.611, iv.471 see *CM* IV.122, V.55; *Remedia Amoris* i.119 see *CM* III.483, V.662, i. 516 see *CM* IV.191, V.445; *Tristia* iii.5,33 see *CM* IV.109.

⁸³ *CM* III.242-3 See Lewis *Art*, figs. 35, 36.

⁸⁴ For example V.503 & V.539.

⁸⁵ *MPEH* 1.451. *CM* III.339: 'luna existente nova.' See also *MPEH* V.175-77, *CM* IV.249 et al.

⁸⁶ *CM* V.278; *MPEH* 2.478.

⁸⁷ My translation of *CM* V.278: 'choruscatione innaturali quam uredinem naturales philosophi appellunt.'

⁸⁸ *Natural History* 9, 45, 68; *De Natura Deorum* 3, 35, 86.

⁸⁹ *De Agricultura* 3, 20, 1.

⁹⁰ Translation of 'di negligunt...nec si uredo aut grando quippam nocuit' from the Loëb edition, Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*; *Academica* with an English translation by H. Rackham, London, Heineman, 1961; p. 372.

⁹¹ *CM* V.35. Although this may very well have been the cause of them.

⁹² *MPEH* 2.273. *CM* V.30: 'Credetur tamen hoc per impetum venti tunc fortissimi qui de mari flavit, impetum evenisse, sed quia saepe evenit quod ab marina parte ventus desaevit, nec tamen sic pontus vehementer ascendit, de hac novitate inaudita senes etiam obstuperant.'

⁹³ *MPEH* 2.210. *CM* IV.603: 'Quia ut credebatur, significativus et insolitus in his partibus occidentalis necnon et innaturalis cum soliditas Angliae cavernis terrestribus et profundis traconibus ac concavitatibus in quibus, secundum philosophos solet terraemotus generari careat nec inde ratio poterat indagari.'

⁹⁴ *MPEH* 1. 451. *CM* IV.249: 'Non tamen ut de more contingit, quaedam faculae per modum stellarum subruentes, quod sicut determinatum est in libro *Metheorum* Aristotelis.' See Aristotle *Meteorologica*, I.4.1.

⁹⁵ R. W. Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: History as Prophecy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 22 (1972), 159-180; p. 170.

⁹⁶ For an excellently thorough study of Joachim, his works and his followers see Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, London, SPCK, 1976.

⁹⁷ Ade de Marusco *Epistolae*, *Monumenta Franciscana*, Rolls Series, London, Longman, 1858; pp.146-7.

⁹⁸ R. W. Southern, "Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: History as Prophecy" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 22 (1972), 167-8.

⁹⁹ *MPEH* 1.320; *CM* IV.85: 'ut humani generis conditioni aer conturbatus videretur concordare.'

¹⁰⁰ *MPEH* 2.274; *CM* V.30-1: 'Dicebatur enim, quod in eorundem incolarum mansiones merito desaevit divinae ultionis severitas, eo quod, iam impudenter, polluti libidinis ignominia, seque ut vitium virtutis species operiret, mercatores denariorum sophisticae non erubuerunt appellare.'

¹⁰¹ *MPEH* 2.278; *CM* V.35-6: 'Porro in multis regionibus, irato Dei, saeviebant incendia admodum dampnosa urbes et villas et favillas redigentia non tamen aestu vel ariditate provocante.'

¹⁰² *MPEH* 2.392-3; *CM* V.176-7: 'Ut manifeste ira Dei tam in mariquam in terra mortalibus appareret secundum illud in Abacuc vaticinium, vindicta videretur peccatorum imminere "Nunquid in fluminibus iratus es Domine vel in mari indignatio tua?" et quid mirum? A romana enim curia quae fons esse totius iustitiae teneretur enormitates irrecitabiles emanarunt.' with reference to Habakkuk ch. 3 v. 8.

¹⁰³ *MPEH* II.42; *CM* III.379-80 'Videbatur igitur, exigentibus peccatis populi, terram diluvio quodam particulari flagellasse et ut dici merito posset illud in evangelio comminatorum: "est in terris pressura gentium prae confusione sonitus maris et fluctuum." with reference to Luke 12.23.

¹⁰⁴ My translation of *CM* IV.81: 'terribile pronosticum.'

¹⁰⁵ *MPEH* 3.309. *CM* V.724: Mense vero subsequenti videlicet prima nocte Decembris fuit tonitrus et choruscatione vehemens et horribilis nimbis inundationibus sociatus in triste auspiciu et gemebundum multis auditum, quod semper solet tonitrus significare hiemalis.'

¹⁰⁶ *MPEH* 1.451. *CM* IV.250: 'Considerent astrologi quid hujusmodi portentum significet; sed omnibus intuetibus videbatur nimis stupendum et prodigiosum.'

¹⁰⁷ My translation of *CM* V.199: 'augurantes ...triste pronosticum.'

¹⁰⁸ See Lynn Thorndike *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vols. 1&2, New York, Macmillan, 1929, p. 110-121.

¹⁰⁹ Below I have listed all of Matthew's biblical citations in the *Chronica Maiora*. Those quotations which refer to the signs before the end are marked thus: xxiii.39*. Psalms: lxxiv.3 see *CM* V.492, xcii.5 see *CM* V.491, ciii.9 see *CM* V.453; Habakkuk: iii.8 see *CM* V.177; Matthew: v.45 see *CM* V.496, xviii.7 see *CM* V.31, xxiii.39* see *CM* IV.360, xxiv.2* see *CM* IV.345, xxiv.7* see *CM* V.187; Luke: xxi.10* see *CM* V.47, xxi.11* see *CM* V.47, xxi.25* see *CM* III.380, V.193; John: iv.23* see *CM* V.317, xvi.2* see *CM* V.317; Romans: i.28 see *CM* IV.78; 1 Thessalonians: ii.3 see *CM* V.334; 2 Timothy: iii.1,2* see *CM* V.317; Revelation: i.13* see *CM* IV.329.

¹¹⁰ My translation of *CM* IV.603: 'minas Evangelii.'

¹¹¹ My translation of *CM* V.47: 'Mundi finis multiplicibus argumentis indicativus ut sunt, surget gens contra gentem, et terrae motus erunt per loca' with reference to Luke xxxi.10-11.

¹¹² My translation of *CM* V.187: 'Unde eventuum futurorum creditur fuisse significativus sensit igitur anno illo tam terra quam mare insolitas commotiones et horribiles quae secundum evangelicam coominationem quae est "Erunt terrae motus per loca" mundi terminum minabantur imminere.' (Reference to Matthew xxiv.7)

¹¹³ *MPEH* III.86, *CM* V.453: 'ut videretur cessatum quod in Psalmo legitur de mari "Terminum statuisti ei quem non transgreditur" scilicet aquae. Sed demus aliquid Deo posse quod non est humanum nosse. De talibus autem signis nos Dominus praemunivit dicens "Erunt signa in sole etc."' with reference to Psalm 104 v. 9 & Luke xxi.25

¹¹⁴ Isaiah Ch. 13 v. 10 & Ch. 34 v. 4.

¹¹⁵ For example *CM* V.108.

¹¹⁶ For example *CM* IV.32-3.

¹¹⁷ For example *CM* V.48, V.368, V.398, V.409.

¹¹⁸ IV.76-8, IV.270, IV. 298-300, IV.386-90, IV.547. Matthew Paris also includes six letters about the Tartars in his *Liber Additamenta* *CM* VI. 75-85 which are followed by a prophecy connected with the coming of the end of the world cited later in this article. The fall of Jerusalem is also recorded with the forewarnings that preceded it (*CM* IV.345).

¹¹⁹ *MPEH* 1.171. *CM* III.538: 'Cedrus alta Libani succidetur; Mars praevalebit Jovi. Erit unus deus id est monarcha secundus adiit. Filii Israel liberabuntur a captivitate infra undecim annos. Gens quaedam sine capita reputata vagans veniet. Vae clero viget ordo novus; si ceciderit vae ecclesiae. Fidei legum et regnorum mutationes erunt et tota terra Sarracenorum subvertetur.'

¹²⁰ Cf. Isaiah, chs 13-31.

¹²¹ My translation of *CM* 1.81: 'Annus solis erat decimus lunaeque secundus | Quando fuit Christus sacra de Virgine natus. | Item de eodem: | Annis quingentis decies iterumque ducentis | Unus defuerat cum Deus ortus erat. | Ab origine mundi usque ad Annunciationem beatae Virginis. | Ter decies deni, centum quinquagies anni | A patre primaevo sunt ad Christum minus uno. | Cum fuerint anni transacti mille ducenti | Et quinquaginta post partum Virginis almae | Tunc antichristus nascetur demone plenus.'

¹²² My translation of *CM* VI.85: 'Cum fuerint anni transacti mille ducati | Et quinquaginta post partem Virginis almae | Tunc AntiChristus daemone plenus.'

¹²³ *CM* I.81 'Nota quod in Marco scribitur super his scilicet cap xiii.' See also Vaughan, *Illustrated*, p.1 for the illustration.

¹²⁴ My translation of *CM* V.187: 'mundi terminum minabantur imminere.'

¹²⁵ *MPEH* III.406 *CM* V.193: 'sed ut Christi comminatio mortalibus immineret "Erunt signa in sole etc."' with reference to Luke xxi.23.