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# The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern

By Richard Landes

In 1901 George Lincoln Burr published an article in the *American Historical Review* in which he summarized for American historians a new consensus among their European colleagues: the arrival of the year 1000 had not provoked any apocalyptic expectations.<sup>1</sup> This position completely reversed the previous view championed in the mid-nineteenth century by historians like Jules Michelet, who had drawn a dramatic picture of mass apocalyptic expectations climaxing in the year 1000. Despite extensive advances in scholarship since 1900, medieval historians continue to accept and repeat this revisionist position, a position that is methodologically jejune and that almost completely ignores the social dynamics of millennial beliefs. This paper proposes to reconsider the issue from the perspective of the more sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon made possible by two generations of millennial scholarship.

For Michelet the liberating power of this eschatological fervor—arousing hope in the oppressed and terror in the oppressors—was the key to the transformations of eleventh-century France.<sup>2</sup> Other historians of the period readily embroidered on this theme of Apocalypse and revolution, although in time the emphasis shifted from revolutionary hope to paralyzing terror.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, the picture became an

This article builds on my earlier work on apocalyptic expectation in the patristic and early-medieval periods: “Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography, 100–800 CE,” in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst, and Andries Welkenhuysen (Leuven, 1988), pp. 137–211; “*Millenarismus absconditus*: L’historiographie augustinienne et le millénarisme du haut moyen âge jusqu’à l’an mil,” *Le moyen âge* 98 (1992), 355–77; 99 (1993), 5–26; and more theoretical work on the nature of millennialism and its relationship to the surviving textual record: *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995); and “On Owls, Roosters, and Apocalyptic Time: A Historical Method for Reading a Refractory Documentation,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 49 (1996), 49–69. I wish to thank David Van Meter, Frederick Paxton, Philippe Buc, Bernard Bachrach, Amy Remensnyder, Thomas Head, Conrad Leyser, Johannes Fried, Andrew Gow, William Prideaux-Collins, and many others for their conversation on these matters and their feedback on earlier drafts of this work. I also want to thank the Boston University Humanities Fellows Seminar, and Patrick Geary and the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, for the opportunity to present earlier drafts of this work and receive valued criticism.

<sup>1</sup> “The Year 1000 and the Antecedents of the Crusades,” *American Historical Review* 6 (1901), 429–39.

<sup>2</sup> Jules Michelet, *L’histoire de France* (Paris, 1835), 2:132; citations from *Le moyen âge*, ed. Claude Mettra (Paris, 1981), pp. 229–35.

<sup>3</sup> See Christian Amalvi, “L’historiographie française face à l’avènement d’Hugues Capet et aux terreurs de l’an mil: 1799–1987,” in *De l’art et la manière d’accommoder les héros de l’histoire de France: Essais de mythologie nationale* (Paris, 1988), pp. 115–45.

anticlerical caricature: greedy priests and monks manipulated the fears of commoners to extort gifts of land and money.

Shortly after the revolutionary catastrophe of the Paris Commune in 1871, however, a powerful reaction set in among both ecclesiastical and increasingly “professionalized” (i.e., positivist) secular historians, who now categorically rejected the “terrors of the year 1000” as a romantic legend. There was, these historians argued, simply no evidence to support a picture of an entire society quaking in fear at the approach of a date that, they contended, few contemporaries even knew about.<sup>4</sup> Most of the documents invoked by the “terrors” school turned out, upon close examination, either to be about a different date (1010, 1033) or were later texts reflecting the composer’s fantasy rather than any evidence from the year 1000. Moreover, nothing in Scripture gave any reason to expect the Apocalypse in 1000. The scriptural millennium, they pointed out, was not a chronological marker, but the period of a messianic kingdom to come; and even that notion had disappeared from Christian beliefs since Augustine had banned it in the fifth century. To the contrary, nothing in the sources distinguished the year 1000 from any other year. This radical revision of the turn of the first Christian millennium became an integral part of European and, through Burr, American historiography by the early twentieth century. By the mid-twentieth century a prominent historian could merely note in passing that this “myth has been effectively banished from serious historical writing,” without even citing a reference.<sup>5</sup>

No challenges to the revisionist position (what I shall refer to as the “anti-terrors school”) have managed to make much of a dent in this pervasive sense that 1000 was a year like any other.<sup>6</sup> This seems all the more remarkable when one considers

<sup>4</sup> Dom François Plaine, “Les prétendues terreurs de l’an mille,” *Revue des questions historiques* 13 (1873), 145–64; H. von Eiken, “Die Legende von der Erwartung des Weltunterganges und der Wiederkehr Christi im Jahr 1000,” *Forschungen zur Deutschen Geschichte* 23 (1883), 303–18; Jules Roy, *L’an mille: Formation de la légende de l’an mille* (Paris, 1885); Christian Pfister, *Etudes sur le règne de Robert le Pieux (996–1031)* (Paris, 1885), pp. 320–25; Pietro Orsi, *L’anno mille: Saggio di critica storica* (Turin, 1887); Burr, “The Year 1000”; Frederic Duval, *Les terreurs de l’an mille* (Paris, 1908); [L. F.] duc de La Salle de Rochebonne, *Gerbert-Silvestre II: Le savant, le faiseur de rois, le pontife* (Paris, 1914), 2:507–26; Ferdinand Lot, “Le mythe des terreurs de l’an mille,” *Mercur de France* 300 (1947), 639–55, repr. in *Recueil des travaux historiques de Ferdinand Lot* (Geneva, 1970) 3:398–414; Edmond Pognon, *L’an mille* (Paris, 1949), pp. viii–xv, and *La vie quotidienne en l’an mille* (Paris, 1980), pp. 7–16; A. A. Vasiliev, “Medieval Ideas of the End of the World: West and East,” *Byzantion* 16 (1942–43), 462–502; Bruno Barbatti, “Der heilige Adalbert von Prag und der Glaube an den Weltuntergang im Jahre 1000,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 35 (1953), 127–41; Daniel Le Blevec, *L’an mil* (Paris, 1976), pp. 1–10; and Pierre Riché, “Le mythe des terreurs de l’an mille,” in *Les terreurs de l’an 2000* (Paris, 1976), pp. 21–30. The most recent reformulation of this “anti-terrors” approach comes, surprisingly, from a historian of *mentalités*, Peter Stearns, *Millennium III, Century XXI: A Retrospective on the Future* (Boulder, Colo., 1996), pp. 21–34; see also Dominique Barthélemy, “La paix de Dieu dans son contexte (989–1041),” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 40 (1997), 3–35; and Sylvain Gouguenheim, *Les fausses terreurs de l’an mil: Attente de la fin des temps ou approfondissement de la foi?* (Paris, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (Baltimore, 1962), p. 79; similar sentiments in Robert E. Lerner, “The Medieval Return to the Thousand-Year Sabbath,” in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992), p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Reconsiderations by Henri Focillon, *L’an mil* (Paris, 1952), trans. Fred D. Wieck, *The Year 1000* (New York, 1970); F. N. W. Hugenholtz, “Les terreurs de l’an mil: Enkele hypothesen,” in *Varia his-*

two key elements in the debate: the anti-terrors argument was made at a time when our understanding of apocalyptic dynamics was virtually nonexistent and when the kinds of data that historians sought in vain—for example, signs of apocalyptic “paralysis”—were seriously misconceived;<sup>7</sup> and the debate pitted two flawed arguments against each other: the anti-terrors position fought valiantly against a romantic vision that had become its own straw man.<sup>8</sup>

So pervasive has this conclusion become that both general historians and specialists of the eleventh century have excluded, a priori, any consideration of an apocalyptic year 1000. Thus, for example, virtually no discussion of the meaning of the year 1000 accompanies studies of Otto III (994–1002), which commonly refer to him as “l’empereur de l’an mil” and describe him as an unbalanced religious mystic,<sup>9</sup> or the sudden rise in popular and elite heresies in the first decades

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*torica aangeboden aan Professor Doctor A. W. Byvanck* (Assen, 1954), pp. 110–23; R. B. C. Huygens, “Un témoin de la crainte de l’an 1000: La lettre sur les Hongrois,” *Latomus* 15 (1956), 224–39; Georges Duby, *L’an mil* (Paris, 1967); Daniel Verhelst, “Adso van Montier-en-Der en de angst voor het jaar Duizend,” *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 90 (1977), 1–10; and most recently and extensively by Johannes Fried, “Endzeiterwartung um die Jahrtausendwende,” *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 45 (1989), 385–473. See also the compelling, if specifically Aquitanian, evidence of Daniel Callahan, “The Peace of God, Apocalypticism, and the Council of Limoges of 1031,” *Revue bénédictine* 101 (1991), 32–49; idem, “The Problem of the Filioque and the Letter from the Pilgrim Monks of the Mount of Olives to Pope Leo III and Charlemagne: Still Another Ademar Forgery?” *Revue bénédictine* 102 (1992), 75–134; and idem, “When Heaven Came Down to Earth: The Family of St. Martial of Limoges and the ‘Terrors of the Year 1000,’” in *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living: Essays in Memory of David Herlihy*, ed. Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., and Steven Epstein (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1996), pp. 245–58; David C. Van Meter, “The Peace of Amiens-Corbie and Gerard of Cambrai’s Oration on the Three Functional Orders: The Date, the Context, the Rhetoric,” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 74 (1996), 633–57; idem, “Count Baldwin IV, Richard of Saint-Vanne, and the Inception of Monastic Reform in Eleventh-Century Flanders,” *Revue bénédictine* 107 (1997), 130–48; and Jean-Pierre Poly, “Le commencement et la fin: La crise de l’an mil chez ses contemporains,” in *Georges Duby: L’écriture de l’histoire*, ed. Claudie Duhamel-Amado and Guy Lobrichon (Brussels, 1996), pp. 191–216. This list does not include a host of other studies on specific aspects of apocalyptic expectations around 1000. See also the forthcoming *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectations and Social Change*, ed. Richard Landes and David Van Meter (Oxford University Press).

<sup>7</sup> Dom Plaine looks for men who “languished miserably in the torpor of inaction, concerning themselves no more with the work of the body or the spirit,” and points to the efforts to convert eastern and northern regions of Europe as disproof of the “terrors,” since “if these generous missionaries could have imagined that the world had only a few more years to go, they would surely have saved themselves some useless work”: “Les prétendues,” p. 161. This is a surprising formulation from a monk.

<sup>8</sup> At the colloquium in 1987 in honor of the millennium of the Capetians, Robert-Henri Bautier read Christian Amalvi’s paper (see n. 3). He read Michelet’s passage on 1000 with such verve that the audience spontaneously applauded; but by the time he came to the later, romantic depictions of 1000, the audience was snickering.

<sup>9</sup> Alain Ollivier, *Otton III, empereur de l’an mille* (Lausanne, 1969); E.-R. Labande, “*Mirabilia mundi*: Essai sur la personnalité d’Otton III,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 6 (1963), 297–313, 455–76; and idem, “Essai sur les hommes de l’an mil,” in *Concetto, storia, miti e immagini del medio evo* (Florence, 1973), pp. 135–82. Labande cites at length the one historian who does give the apocalyptic dimension a significant place—Menno ter Braak, *Kaiser Otto III.: Ideal und Praxis im frühen Mittelalter* (Amsterdam, 1928)—but never raises this aspect of ter Braak’s argument. Cf. Fried’s treatment, “Endzeiterwartung,” pp. 427–33. On the dramatic visit to Charlemagne’s tomb, see the analysis of the sources in Heinrich Beumann, “Grab und Thron Karls des Grossen zu Aachen,” in *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, 4, ed. Wolfgang Braunsfels and Percy Ernst Schramm (Düsseldorf, 1967), pp. 8–39, also below, n. 86.

of the eleventh century,<sup>10</sup> or the Cluny of “l’an mil,” whether looking at the central role of the Book of Revelation in the self-imagery of the monks<sup>11</sup> or trying to understand the motives of aristocrats donating so much land to Cluny from the 980s to the 1030s.<sup>12</sup> The current historiography of the tenth and eleventh centuries still leans uncritically (or even unconsciously) upon the late-nineteenth-century anti-terrors school. I know of no other area of historical research where modern scholars still base their approach on an argument first made over a century ago in a strongly polemical and politically charged atmosphere (Third Republic conservatism), based on a historical method long since called into question (strict positivism) and on a seriously outdated body of knowledge about the phenomenon in question (apocalyptic and millennial expectation).

My own research into the documents of Latin Christianity during the first millennium, and into the phenomenon of millennialism as it has occurred in many societies, including our own, has led me to conclude that however extravagant and lopsided some of their “reconstructions” might have been, the romantic historians came much closer to grasping the role of apocalyptic beliefs in the generation that lived through the turn of the first Christian millennium than did the historians of the anti-terrors school. In this paper I shall revisit the debate in light of more recent developments in millennial studies and in studies of early-eleventh-century society. The topics I shall discuss are the dynamics of apocalyptic belief and their range of impact on societies where they become active, the peculiar relationship between this process and the surviving documentation, the millennium-long cultural process whereby the year 1000 took on its apocalyptic significance to those Christians who lived through it, the ways in which the apocalyptic concern for the year 1000 appeared in the documentation, and finally, the major elements of early-eleventh-century society that we would understand better were we to look at their apocalyptic component.

Rather than rehash a misconceived debate between romantic and positivist his-

<sup>10</sup> See Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Eng., 1992); Janet Nelson, “Society, Theodicy and the Origins of Heresy: Towards a Reassessment of the Medieval Evidence,” in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. Derek Baker, *Studies in Church History* 9 (Oxford, 1972), pp. 65–77; Talal Asad, “Medieval Heresy: An Anthropological View,” *Social History* 11 (1986), 345–62; and below, n. 196.

<sup>11</sup> Through their virginity the monks are identified with the virgins of Revelation; their renunciation is a “visible sign of a present spiritual eschatology.” See Dominique Iogna-Prat, “Contenance et virginité dans la conception clunisienne de l’ordre du monde autour de l’an mil,” *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1985), pp. 127–46; see also his *Agni immaculati: Recherches sur les sources hagiographiques relatives à Saint Maïeul de Cluny (954–994)* (Paris, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Rhinoceros Bound: Cluny in the Tenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1982), pp. 34 ff., 101–12; and *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny’s Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1989), pp. 35–48; and Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Sword, Miter, and Cloister: Nobility and the Church in Burgundy, 980–1198* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1989), pp. 38–46. Bouchard, despite focusing on personal crises and fear of death—and hence, obviously, judgment—never raises the matter of the Last Judgment. Neither of Rosenwein’s arguments—not the earlier “anomie” nor the more recent “social networking with intercessors”—necessarily excludes the influences of an anticipated and delayed Apocalypse; to the contrary they could work quite well with such an interpretation, especially in explaining later problems that ecclesiastical institutions had in holding onto property donated under misconceived circumstances.

torians, who both tended (Michelet excepted) to overemphasize the importance of fear and relief as the defining emotions of apocalypticism, I prefer to focus on the more significant and creative apocalyptic emotions, namely, hope and disappointment. If we shift our attention from “paralyzing” fears to “galvanizing” hopes (often “set off” by fears), we can begin to understand how to trace the presence of apocalyptic expectations in the texts and how to understand their historical role in generating social change.

1. THE NATURE OF APOCALYPTIC AND MILLENNIAL EXPECTATION:  
ON THE PERSISTENCE OF THE “IRRATIONAL”

Let me begin with some definitions. These definitions are not necessarily those used by other scholars in related fields, such as theology and literary studies; they are designed, however, to provide the most suitable conceptual vocabulary for the social historian.

- *Eschatological* refers to any belief in a climactic, God-wrought conclusion to history in which the good are rewarded and the evil suffer. It is the most complete and satisfying answer to the problem of theodicy, that is, the question “in a world filled with evil, where is God’s justice?”
- *Apocalyptic* (literally, “revelatory”) refers to the belief that this final moment when God’s ways are revealed is imminent, a period ranging from a generation (within one’s lifetime) to any day. The emotions this belief provokes intensify as the anticipated waiting period shortens. In Christianity, the final moment brings the Parousia, the return of Christ.
- *Chiliasm* (often called millenarianism or millennialism) refers to the expectation that this end will bring about a prolonged period (e.g., a thousand years) of peace, harmony, and joy here on earth for those who are favored on the Day of Judgment. The political implications of this transformation’s occurring on earth make chiliasm a dangerous, indeed revolutionary ideology that consistently attracts implacable hostility from those in power.
- *Messianic* refers to chiliastic movements that are inaugurated and led by a messiah, a specially anointed agent of God.
- *Millennialism* I use in distinction to chiliasm, in that it refers to eschatological expectations anticipated at the turn of a millennium, a belief set in motion by the ecclesiastical teaching of the *sabbatical millennium*, the teaching that created the apocalyptic meaning of *anno Domini* and *anno Passionis 1000*.<sup>13</sup>

As a social phenomenon, apocalypticism defies all expectations of fundamentally rational behavior. In its early stages it tends to unleash impulses normally held in check, leading to extreme and emotional behavior—ascetic, libertine, violent. Of course, from the viewpoint of those who believe that the rule set is about to change radically, that God is about to intervene in history on their side, that

<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere in my work, I use millennialism as both a chronological term (a thousand years) and as a synonym for chiliasm (e.g., the Center for Millennial Studies), but in this article I want to distinguish between chiliasm, which can occur anytime, and the kinds of apocalyptic beliefs, chiliastic and otherwise, that tend to multiply around a chronological millennium. On the sabbatical millennium, see below, pp. 110–18.

they need no longer fear future consequences of “inappropriate” behavior, then the normal inhibitions that govern us tend to vanish.<sup>14</sup> Whatever the subsequent costs, apocalyptic believers live in a world of great intensity—semiotically aroused, they see every event as a sign with a specific message for them; emotionally aroused, they feel great love and sympathy for their fellow believers and for all potential converts; physically aroused, they act with great energy and focus; vocationally aroused, they believe that they live at the final cosmic conclusion to the battle between good and evil and that God has a particular role for them. While this belief may be internally consistent, from a larger temporal perspective it is neither rational nor, in most cases, compatible with social stability.

One would at least think that those who believed such prophecies or predictions would repudiate and walk away from such nonsense once the predicted date had passed uneventfully. Indeed, one of the refrains of the anti-terrors school is that, by 1000, Christians had long since given up after so many false alarms. The boy can cry “Apocalypse” just so many times before people cease to respond.<sup>15</sup> Committed believers, however, prove impervious to disconfirmation and rational argument, even after the most egregious failures. They respond to the passing of their doomsday by recalculating, reformulating their expectation, and redoubling their efforts to convince others of its truth.<sup>16</sup> This seemingly irrational response derives from one of the most frequently overlooked aspects of apocalyptic expectations. For many believers the time that they spend awaiting the end is not merely a time of fear and trembling, but also a time of great hope and anticipation. “The pronouncements of wise men,” Rodulfus Glaber wrote in the mid-1020s, “by divine inspiration engendered both fear and hope.”<sup>17</sup> Michelet captured this powerful mood in his expression “l’effroyable espoir du Jugement Dernier.”<sup>18</sup>

Hope, then, is the key to understanding the apocalyptic mind-set. But apocalyptic hope—especially in its chiliastic variants—is most often the currency of those who believe they are oppressed. In this worldview—which is not exclusively but is certainly emphatically Christian—suffering is a mark of God’s favor, a favor that will become manifest, gloriously manifest, only at the Apocalypse. The meek shall inherit the earth, and those who hold the corrupt power that currently rules the world shall receive a just and severe punishment. Tertullian, in some lines made famous by Nietzsche’s moral disgust, promised the faithful that the sight of the damned in hell will be the greatest of heavenly delights, far outstripping the gory

<sup>14</sup> For the best treatment of this dynamic, see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn., 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Burr, “The Year 1000,” p. 435.

<sup>16</sup> The classic work on the subject is by Leon Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group That Predicted the End of the World* (New York, 1956, 1964<sup>2</sup>). For a discussion of the importance of dates and chronology in apocalyptic rhetoric, see Stephen O’Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York, 1994), pp. 20–61; and Frank L. Borchardt, *Doomsday Speculation as a Strategy of Persuasion* (Lewiston, N.Y., 1990), pp. 216–23.

<sup>17</sup> Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque* 1.5.26, ed. and trans. John France, in *Rodulfi Glabri Historiarum libri quinque; eiusdem auctoris Vita domni Willelmi Abbatis*, ed. and trans. John France, Neithard Bulst, and Paul Reynolds (Oxford, 1989), pp. 44–45.

<sup>18</sup> Michelet, *Le moyen âge*, p. 230.

pleasures of the gladiatorial games.<sup>19</sup> We find similar sentiments in a text on doomsday from England in 1011: “then will end the tyranny of kings and the injustice and rapine of reeves and their cunning and unjust judgments and wiles. Then shall those who rejoiced and were glad in this life groan and lament. Then shall their mead, wine, and beer be turned into thirst for them.”<sup>20</sup> Doomsday may be a “day of wrath” feared by some who prayed for its delay, but to others it was a longed-for “day of pleasure” whose advent they prayed would be hastened.<sup>21</sup>

Belief in such a “day of wrath, day of pleasure” has had an important place in the pastoral activities of the church from its earliest times. One of Augustine’s apocalyptic contemporaries (and critics) insisted that hope of the imminent Parousia was the very nourishment he fed to his flock, a sentiment echoed repeatedly in the sources.<sup>22</sup> The evidence suggests that eschatological hope constitutes one of the most attractive and oft-employed forms of popular theology.<sup>23</sup> This holds not only for Christianity but for Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, indeed for cultures around the world.<sup>24</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that the announcement of an imminent date for the apocalyptic moment could galvanize widespread enthusiasm and troubling popular behavior.<sup>25</sup> Similarly one should understand that the

<sup>19</sup> Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 29–30; Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* 1.15.

<sup>20</sup> *Byrhtferth’s Manual*, ed. S. J. Crawford, Early English Text Society, Original Series, 177 (London, 1972), p. 242, lines 3–9.

<sup>21</sup> As one black slave in the American South cried out in her despair after seeing her child whipped before her: “There’s a day a-coming! I hear the rumbling of the chariots, I see . . . white folks’ blood a-running on the ground like a river and the dead heaped up that high! O Lord! Hasten the day when the blows and the bruises and the aches and the pains shall come to the white folks. . . . O Lord! Give me the pleasure of living to that day . . .”: quoted in Mary Livermore, *My Story of the War* (Hartford, Conn., 1889), cited in Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 5. Nota bene: slaves were not to read the Bible or hear about it from anyone unless a white was present; in principle, this woman should not have even known about the apocalyptic tradition.

<sup>22</sup> Hesychius (ca. 418) to Augustine (Augustine, *Ep.* 198, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 57:235–42); and the bishops at the Council of Trosly (909), ed. Giovanni Domenico Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 31 vols. (Florence, 1759–98), 18:264–66. See also Fried, “Endzeiterwartung,” p. 410; and Anglo-Saxon homilies, e.g., Wulfstan’s opening passage to his *De Antichristo* 1a, ed. Dorothy Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford, 1952). Ademar of Chabannes (ca. 1032) speaks of giving a sermon at the funeral of a monk struck by lightning on the theme of how such signs indicate the imminent Day of Judgment and call the faithful to terror-filled repentance (Phillipps MS 1664, fol. 113v, cited by Callahan, “The Problem of the Filioque,” p. 124).

<sup>23</sup> For the early Middle Ages, see Martin of Braga, *De correctione rusticorum* (ca. 574), esp. sections 14–19, ed. A. F. Kurfess, *Aevum* 29 (1955), 181–86. Julian of Toledo (687), Bede (724), Remi of Auxerre (ca. 940), and Byrhtferth (1011) all openly speak of the “vulgar” belief in the millennium to which they oppose their Augustinian teachings. On Julian and Bede, see Landes, “Lest,” pp. 171–78; on Remi of Auxerre, see Huygens, “Une lettre”; on Byrhtferth, see above, n. 20, and below, n. 79.

<sup>24</sup> See Henri Desroches, *Sociologie de l’espérance* (Paris, 1973), esp. pp. 18–38; and Ted Daniels, *A Doomsday Reader* (New York, 1999), p. 39 and passim. The apocalyptic belief that offers no hope for its followers has been the great exception, although such beliefs have proliferated since the discovery of the atomic bomb and the advent of other weapons of mass destruction.

<sup>25</sup> Hippolytus describes two incidents with apocalyptic bishops (below, n. 54); Gregory of Tours reports on a number of popular charismatic figures appearing, often in the aftermath of signs and portents, e.g., the False Christ of Bourges (below, n. 37); and Rudolf of Fulda reported on a female prophet with an enthusiastic following, Thiota (below, n. 36).



passage of such a date and the failure of a prophecy might alter, but would rarely eliminate, apocalyptic hopes and expectations.

Of course, apocalyptic expectations have proven wrong with a consistency that only the historian, looking back over the almost three millennia of recorded cases, can appreciate. Indeed, apocalyptic beliefs are perhaps the only religious belief about which historians can safely say, "They were wrong." However stimulating such expectations might be, they are, in the long run, dangerous: to promise the Parousia in the immediate future, as Augustine warned, courts disappointment and even loss of faith.<sup>26</sup> Thus any time that apocalyptic expectation becomes an issue, we find two opposing stances: on the one hand, the apocalyptic enthusiasts, who wax eloquent about the imminent dawn, wishing to wake the believers for the great day; and, on the other hand, the sober antiapocalypics, who insist that it is still the middle of the night, the foxes are out, the master asleep, and that only damage can come of stirring the population to life before the appointed time. From the earliest generations Christians have had to deal with this problem. The New Testament contains multiple references both to the apocalyptic call of the earliest figures (Matt. 3.2, 4.17) and to the problems of excessive enthusiasm (2 Thess. 2.2) and of humiliating disappointment (2 Pet. 3).<sup>27</sup>

## 2. CLERICAL HOSTILITY TO CHILIASM AND THE "CONSENSUS OF SILENCE"

This brings us to the nub of the problem of early-medieval apocalypticism, namely, the relationship between the largely antiapocalyptic clerical elites who produced our sources and the rest of the population, both clerical and lay, whose voice rarely appears in the texts. Few Christian teachings more directly concerned and excited the commoners than chiliasm, with its promise of a time of heavenly peace, dreamlike prosperity here on earth, and a justly ferocious punishment for sinners, particularly those who had abused their power by oppressing the poor and defenseless. Chiliasm has, therefore, always had a distinctly subversive political character, and ruling groups invariably oppose it, often violently wiping out any traces.<sup>28</sup> More than with any other form of Christian belief, then, the historian needs to consider the apocalyptic, and especially chiliastic, tendencies of the *pau-*

<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *De fine saeculi* (Letter to Hesychius), *Ep.* 199, CSEL 57:279–92, copied verbatim by Bede at the end of his *De temporum ratione* 67–71, ed. Charles W. Jones, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, 123B (Turnhout, 1977), pp. 536 ff. On this correspondence, so valuable in understanding apocalyptic rhetoric and its opposition, see J.-P. Bouhot, "Hesychius de Salone et Augustin: Lettres 197–198–199," in *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, ed. A.-M. de la Bonnardière, *Bible de Tous Temps* 3 (Paris, 1986), pp. 229–50; and J. Kevin Coyle, "Augustine and Apocalyptic: Thoughts on the Fall of Rome, the Book of Revelation, and the End of the World," *Florilegium* 9 (1987), 1–34.

<sup>27</sup> For a good analysis of the apocalyptic context of early Christianity, see Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven, Conn., 1988).

<sup>28</sup> Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (New York, 1969), p. 34; and E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 1959), pp. 57–106. For a case of the annihilation of an isolated and pacific millennial community, some fourteen thousand men, women, and children in the backlands of Brazil in 1896, see Robert Levine, *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893–1897* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992).

*peres* independently from what the clerical elites taught (or said they taught) to their flocks. Nor should we conceive of the split as one between clergy and laity: numerous lay people, high and low, mocked and ridiculed apocalyptic beliefs,<sup>29</sup> while some clerics, believing their texts and not their ecclesiastical superiors, placed themselves at the front of apocalyptic revolutionary movements.<sup>30</sup>

All this goes a long way toward explaining official ecclesiastical attitudes, both toward apocalypticism in general and toward chiliasm in particular. On the one hand, since eschatological beliefs lay at the origin and core of Christianity, it was the priest's task to warn his flock and prepare them for the day of the Lord. On the other hand, as Christianity developed an institutional superstructure that copied and identified with that of the Roman Empire, the disruptive nature of its own—historically anti-Roman—eschatological tradition grew increasingly less tolerable. From nearly the first, Christian leaders did their best to contain the ill effects of a too passionate and too immediate sense of the end; and by the time Roman imperialism converted to Christianity, in the early fourth century, most of the church's chiliastic past had been systematically erased from the record. The Greeks even tried to eliminate the Book of Revelation from the Christian canon altogether.<sup>31</sup>

In the West prominent figures like Jerome and Augustine did their best to discredit most forms of apocalyptic expectation and the chiliastic hopes it often inspired, in part by pointing to the absence of any valid text that might hold out such "carnal" promises. Augustine even argued that rather than awaiting a millennium of perfect peace on earth still to come, Christians were living in the "invisible millennium," as imperfect in its terrestrial manifestations (including the church) as it was perfect in its celestial ones. This invisible millennium of peace and justice had been in progress since the Ascension of Christ in 33.<sup>32</sup> Henceforth, chiliasm deserved mention only as a condemned popular belief. After the work of those two towering theologians, ecclesiastics all but banished chiliasm from official Latin Christian theology: no one was to write about it as a valid option, nor should anyone encourage it by identifying current historical events with the obscure prophecies of that most bothersome of chiliastic texts the Book of Revelation.

Does that mean that apocalyptic speculation and hopes for a coming millennium died out in Latin Christendom? According to church historians in the last century chiliasm disappeared from the West from Augustine's day (early fifth century) until

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., Chaucer's Miller's Tale, in which a student cuckolds his landlord by playing on his credulity for catastrophic prediction.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., the remarks of Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (New York, 1973), chap. 3. The most famous chiliastic priest was Thomas Müntzer; see the seminal remarks of Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth (London, 1936), pp. 190–97.

<sup>31</sup> See Paula Fredriksen, "Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity: From John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo," *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991), 171 n. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.7–9; among the many analyses, see Robert Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of Saint Augustine* (Cambridge, Eng., 1970); Paula Fredriksen Landes, "Tyconius and the End of the World," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 28 (1982), 53–65; and Coyle, "Augustine and Apocalyptic" (above, n. 26).

Joachim of Fiore's (late twelfth); there may have been a few, brief interludes, and some early-twelfth-century preambles, but essentially chiliasm had ceased to be a significant belief. Accepting such a paradigmatic approach, one then tends to view all anomalous (i.e., apocalyptic) data for the intervening period—examples of popular messiahs, clerical denunciations, the persistence of the sabbatical millennium—as so much flotsam and jetsam of a ship Augustine had already sunk, not worthy of close examination.<sup>33</sup>

I would like to propose a different approach. First, we must not restrict the discussion to incidents where the texts explicitly mention chiliasm. The evidence suggests that medieval writers avoided the subject of the millennium whenever and wherever possible, that for every open and explicit denunciation of apocalyptic chiliasm, clerical writers used dozens of euphemisms—false prophets, false Christs, judaizers, *delirantes*, fears that “the elements . . . had fallen into perpetual chaos,” etc.<sup>34</sup> If we want our medieval clerical writers to neatly and explicitly label apocalyptic chiliastic movements, we will, predictably, find few cases. If, however, we examine their accounts carefully and place them within a larger, and longer-term, conception of popular religiosity, these literary fragments become the tips of icebergs, indicating a much larger oral discourse lying beneath the surface of the text, a discourse that the composers of our texts do not wish to divulge. After all, as one cleric wrote concerning a great theologian: “he stopped up the mouths of those who prattled inanelly on the advent of Antichrist or of our Lord.”<sup>35</sup>

No incident better illustrates these points than the story of Thiota, a “pseudo-prophetess” who rather disturbed (“non minime turbaverat”) the city of Mainz in 847 by announcing: “that very year, the Last Day (*ultimum diem*) would fall. Whence many commoners (*plebeii*) of both sexes, terror struck, flocked to her, bearing gifts, and offered themselves up to her with their prayers. And what is still worse, men in holy orders, setting aside ecclesiastical doctrine (*doctrinas ecclesiasticas postponentes*), followed her as if she were a master (*magistram*) sent

<sup>33</sup> This consensus on the disappearance of chiliasm appears in scholarly circles at the same time as the anti-terrors school: Léon Gry, *Le millénarisme dans ses origines et son développement* (Paris, 1904), whose conclusions were repeated in every kind of work from monograph to encyclopedia article (e.g., Coyle, “Augustine and Apocalyptic,” p. 20 f.). Coyle cites François Paschoud as an exception to this belief in the disappearance of any literal interpretation of Revelation, but even Paschoud, while noting the difference between the orthodox authors of the transmitted texts and the existence of a more local “littérature de seconde zone,” goes on to characterize these millennial beliefs as “noyaux archaïques et isolés” (F. Paschoud, “La doctrine chrétienne de l'idéologie impériale romaine,” in *L'Apocalypse de Jean: Traditions exégétiques et iconographiques, IIIe–XIIIe siècles*, ed. Yves Christe [Geneva, 1970], p. 71; Coyle, p. 30 n. 127). I would argue that Paschoud, despite noting the skew of the documentation, has overvalued the written and undervalued the spoken word: millennialism was indeed local, but universally so; official doctrine was indeed “universal,” but barely penetrated local culture (see Landes, “Millenarismus absconditus”). The most recent expression of this overvaluation of the textual record comes from Bernard McGinn, who believes that a “subterranean millenarianism is a figment of [Landes's] imagination”: quoted by Patricia Bernstein, “Terror in A.D. 1000,” *Smithsonian* 30 (1999), 119. Cf. the rather vigorous familiarity with apocalyptic promises in the African slave population of the American South—an illiterate and closely watched population (above, n. 21).

<sup>34</sup> “Estimabatur enim ordo temporum et elementorum, preterita ab initio moderans secula in chaos decidisse perpetuum atque humani generis interitum”: Glaber, *Quinque libri* 4.4.13, pp. 192–93.

<sup>35</sup> On Jacob of Nisibe, see Gennadius, *De viris illustribus* 1, PL 58:1059.

from heaven.”<sup>36</sup> Here we have classic apocalyptic millennial dynamics: the prominence of women; the popular response; the defection of clerics who, putting aside their (Augustinian) teachings, entered into apocalyptic time, with its new rules and new roles.<sup>37</sup> Whether Thiota was chiliastic or not—perhaps she was, although the text suggests an Augustinian scenario of the Last Judgment—and whether her clerical followers wrote anything about her or not, our only surviving evidence that anything happened comes from the pen of a hostile cleric who described Thiota as a false prophet and a fraud and details her downfall and disgrace. How many other cases like this occurred without leaving a trace? Still more significantly, what kind of insecurity dogged the ecclesiastical authorities when such radically threatening upheavals could occur? Taking into account these subtextual currents, we can at least hypothesize that although Augustine’s banning of chiliasm and premature apocalyptic enthusiasm may have dominated the formal theological and exegetical texts, a very different and more lively discussion occurred between clerics and commoners.

The common objection to this approach rejects both an argument *ex silentio* and a conspiracy theory. But the argument, as I shall show, is hardly *ex silentio*: the evidence is ample when one knows where to look.<sup>38</sup> Nor is it a conspiracy of silence: the determination to eliminate any trace of this activity from the texts is a policy carefully and explicitly laid out by Augustine and widely disseminated. And although Augustine may have had difficulty finding acceptance for some of his theological positions, he had widespread success with this one.<sup>39</sup> Why? Because the psychological and political dimensions of this phenomenon reinforce each other’s impact on the textual record.

First, there is every reason for clerics not to record chiliastic and apocalyptic beliefs in writing. Such beliefs are almost invariably politically offensive, and an apocalyptic claim, after it proves wrong, can not only destroy one’s reputation

<sup>36</sup> “Per idem tempus [847] mulier quaedam de Alamanniae partibus, nomine Thiota, pseudoprophetissa, Mogontiacum venit, quae Salomonis episcopi parrochiam suis vaticiniis non minime turbaverat. Nam certum consummationis seculi diem, aliaque perplura Dei solius notitiae cognita, quasi divinitus sibi revelata, scire se fatebatur, et eodem anno ultimum diem mundo imminere praedicabat. Unde multi plebei utriusque sexus timore percussi, ad eam venientes munera illi ferebant, seque orationibus illius commendabant: et, quod gravius est, sacri ordinis viri doctrinas ecclesiasticas postponentes, illam quasi magistram coelitus destinatum sequebantur”: *Annales Fuldenses* ad an. 847, MGH SS 1:365.

<sup>37</sup> I can think of no other referent for “doctrinas ecclesiasticas” in this case than the Augustinian teachings of *De fine saeculi* that Bede copied at the end of his *De temporum ratione* (see above, n. 26) and that were available to any Carolingian cleric from a significant house. For a case similar to Thiota’s but explicitly chiliastic (the leader is viewed by his followers as Christ returned), see Gregory of Tours’s description of the False Christ of Bourges and his companion Mary in *Historiae* 10.25; comments in Landes, “*Millenarismus absconditus*,” pp. 373–74.

<sup>38</sup> “Trotzdem finden sich in doch erstaunlichem Masse Hinweise auf diese Endzeiterwartung, auch wenn dies nicht *expressis verbis* zum Ausdruck gebracht wird”: Wolfram Brandes, “Anastasios ó δίκωπος: Endzeiterwartung und Kaiserkritik in Byzanz um 500 n. Chr.,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 90 (1997), 62.

<sup>39</sup> H.-X. Arquillère coined the term “augustinisme politique” to describe the way in which ecclesiastics from Orosius on misinterpreted Augustine’s effort to eliminate empire, especially the Roman Empire, from sacred history: *L’augustinisme politique: Essai sur la formation des théories politiques du moyen âge* (Paris, 1932).

but in some postapocalyptic climates become a death sentence. Moreover, in an age when writing constituted one of the slowest and most restricted forms of communication, the more apocalyptic one got, the less one wrote. Only the occasional and very disturbed monk might give in to a literary apocalypse;<sup>40</sup> the vast majority of apocalyptic enthusiasts had neither time nor interest in the medium. The literary output of genuinely apocalyptic believers in this period would be most limited: some prophetic texts, perhaps reworked (like the *Fifteen Signs before Doomsday*),<sup>41</sup> or aids to the prophetic work (such as “letters from heaven”).<sup>42</sup>

Second, with the passage of the apocalyptic moment, enthusiasts had every reason to deny, tone down, and reformulate the nature of their beliefs. Those who could not do so, like the Anabaptists at Münster or Thiota of Mainz, became capital lessons in public order. Those who could, did, and if they wrote, they did so in the “retrospective perfect,” where they had never been wrong about the signs and wonders of their age.<sup>43</sup> It is from this reflective, postapocalyptic stance that virtually all of our data about apocalyptic chiliasm in the period from Augustine to Joachim comes. It is also in this postapocalyptic period that all our documentation is preserved; it is precisely the retrospective narrators who are the archivists. We cannot expect a literary community with the formal commitments of these Augustinian scriptoria to preserve the record of apocalyptic movements among the populace or the clerical elite. On the contrary, it had every reason to destroy any such texts: as we hear from the Carolingian capitulary about “letters from heaven”: they are “to be burned.” And we have every reason to believe that if the text of a “letter from heaven” does survive, it will have been purged of any apocalyptic and chiliastic material that it might originally have contained.<sup>44</sup>

Does this mean that no clerics, no groups, no movements ever got swept into the apocalyptic vortex and behaved in those strange and compelling ways that have occurred in almost every age and every culture around the world? Does that mean that when the signs and wonders proliferated, no charismatics began to prophesy? Of course not. We have explicit evidence to the contrary.<sup>45</sup> Can we

<sup>40</sup> E.g., Ademar of Chabannes, in *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, pp. 269–81.

<sup>41</sup> William W. Heist, *The Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* (East Lansing, Mich., 1952); see also Fried, “Endzeiterwartung,” pp. 381–84.

<sup>42</sup> For the most recent analysis of “letters from heaven” and their role in the millennial year 1033, see Van Meter, “The Peace of Amiens-Corbie” (above, n. 6), pp. 646–55.

<sup>43</sup> On the ways in which apocalyptic signs are reinterpreted as warnings and prophecies of more mundane events when the end does not come, see Landes, “*Millenarismus absconditus*,” pp. 370–72; on the failure to understand the principle, see Gouguenheim, *Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 110–30.

<sup>44</sup> The Carolingians ordered such letters burned (below, n. 69). For a rare example of such a letter with chiliastic content (rather than the Augustinian versions we normally find), see the millennial letter from heaven that, according to David Van Meter, Gerard of Cambrai denounced as part of an unacceptable Peace initiative by the western Frankish bishops, an initiative Van Meter dates specifically to the year 1033: “si vos emendaveritis, aperiam vobis ianuam celi et dabo vobis ad tempus fructus terre et omnem habundantiam, et vitam vestram faciam longevam super terram, et eritis viventes in secula seculorum” (“The Peace of Amiens-Corbie,” p. 653 n. 74). A later copy of the same letter presents a more mundane and limited form of blessing, similar to Deuteronomic promises (ibid., n. 75). See below on the Peace of God as chiliastic, nn. 192–95.

<sup>45</sup> In the rare cases where a historian reports the success of a charismatic (chiliastic) prophet, he often mentions the presence of clerics in the prophet’s following (Rudolf of Fulda’s Thiota, Gregory of Tours’s False Christ of Bourges; above, nn. 36–37).

argue that on the rare occasions when this evidence indicates that they did so preach, clerics with their ecclesiastical doctrines and antiapocalyptic rhetoric silenced them? And if so, when—before or after the apocalyptic movement had run its course? The historians who believe that Augustine steadied his generation in the face of Rome's fall and that his rhetoric dominated the next eight centuries of apocalyptic discourse think that the written record reflects the balance of forces at the time.<sup>46</sup> I think it far more likely that we have here an especially powerful example of history as the propaganda of the victors.

The social historian, however, should wonder how long it took for that victory to become clear, and before that eventual victory, how powerful apocalyptic enthusiasts like the False Christ of Bourges or Thiota became. Seen from this perspective, it might be that these Augustinian historians had their greatest success, not among contemporaries, but among those historians who, coming centuries later and sharing the same postapocalyptic stance, find their testimony not only credible but reasonable.<sup>47</sup> But historians are not theologians; and they need to ask not, who was right, but who dominated discourse and motivated action.

Looking at apocalyptic history through the lens of the retrospective perfect is “like gazing at a Flemish tapestry with the wrong side out: even though the figures are visible, they are full of thread that obscure the view and are not bright and smooth as when seen from the other side.”<sup>48</sup> In order to understand the apocalyptic tenor of an age we cannot view it backwards, from a temporal standpoint where the apocalyptic expectations have all proven wrong—our standpoint centuries later, and through the eyes of Augustinian clerics writing in the retrospective perfect, years, if not decades, later. Rather we must make the imaginative leap back to a time before the (non)apocalyptic resolution occurred, a time when apocalyptic rhetoric could have a compelling quality that the written record cannot possibly preserve. These apocalyptic moments have a Doppler effect, waxing powerfully at the approach and then, suddenly, waning at the passing of a moment of expectation. In the case of medieval apocalyptic moments, the crude recording instruments are turned on (if ever) after the peak has passed. And if, as historians, we view the few traces of apocalypticism that our deeply flawed recording instruments nevertheless do pick up, and dismiss them as so much insignificant static,<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> “Qu'[il] fut vraiment la conscience de la chrétienté d'Occident, jamais on ne le sentit mieux qu'au lendemain de la prise de Rome par Alaric”: Pierre de Labriolle, *De la mort de Théodose à l'élection de Grégoire le Grand*, Histoire de l'Eglise depuis les Origines jusqu'à Nos Jours 4 (Paris, 1937), p. 352. Henri-Irénée Marrou commented that Augustine has taught us the art of living through catastrophe: *St. Augustin et l'augustinisme* (Paris, 1957), p. 7; cited approvingly by Coyle, “Augustine and Apocalyptic,” p. 18. Taught us, not necessarily his contemporaries. Cf. Gouguenheim, *Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 56–58.

<sup>47</sup> For an apocalyptic analysis of Augustine's impact in the aftermath of the fall of Rome, see Landes, “*Millenarismus absconditus*,” pp. 364–67.

<sup>48</sup> Cited by Daniel J. Boorstin, *Hidden History* (New York, 1987), epigram.

<sup>49</sup> Walter Goffart dismisses the impact of the False Christ of Bourges and his posthumous followers who “appeared in various parts of Gaul and acquired great influence over commoners” (Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* 10.25) as “a local nuisance”: *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, N.J., 1988), p. 187. This explicitly contradicts the text at multiple points: Gregory claims he saw “quite a few” of the followers and debated with them. See also below, n. 129, on Matthew Paris's apocalyptic “interruption” (a good example of someone “ducking” in expectation of an imminent end) as “a rhetorical flourish.”

then we will lose track of an oral tale that, to contemporaries at least, may have had far more prominence than the textual ones we so prize.

The above discussion remains anecdotal, and were this all the evidence we have, the case for a dramatic disparity between written and oral apocalyptic discourse in the medieval period would remain tenuous. But we do have a body of evidence concerning the doctrine of the sabbatical millennium that permits us to explore this hypothesis in quite some detail, to document amply the workings of popular millennialism. At the same time, it explains why, despite a lack of scriptural support and claims from anti-terrors historians to the contrary, the year 1000 carried such immense apocalyptic freight. Thus the path to understanding the role of the year 1000 to those who lived at that millennial cusp goes via the millennium-long history of the sabbatical millennium.

### 3. THE PROBLEM OF THE DELAYED PAROUSIA IN CHRISTIANITY: THE SABBATICAL MILLENNIUM AND THE ORIGINS OF AN APOCALYPTIC YEAR 1000

The sabbatical millennium, one of the most important and enduring ecclesiastical explanations for the delay of the Parousia, first appeared in Christian texts in the early second century common era (C.E.).<sup>50</sup> It remained a primary force in Christian chronology for the next millennium and survives to this day.<sup>51</sup> According to this theory, since the world was created in six days and God rested on the seventh, and since “a thousand years is as a day in the sight of the Lord,” this fallen world of travail would last for six thousand years and then, finally, would come the sabbatical millennium. When linked to a chronology of the world that placed Jesus’ birth in the mid-sixth millennium, it offered the clerics living in the second and third centuries who adopted it an ideal antiapocalyptic chiliasm. In response to those who proclaimed an imminent Parousia, more sober voices could, even as they affirmed the popular chiliasm of the day, put off the day of reckoning well beyond the span of any living person’s life. This formula for procrastination was so attractive to the antiapocalyptic clergy, especially in the West, that it was used, adjusted, and used again for centuries. It explains why, in the eschatological thinking of the Latin church, the end of the current millennium became indissolubly associated with the coming of the chiliastic millennium. It also illustrates how significant a chasm could open up between oral and written millennial discourse.

Each system of calculating the age of the world, the *annus mundi* (A.M.), was first adopted at a time, by its own reckoning, when the millennium was still about three centuries away, what I call the “temperate zone.” Church historians adopted *annus mundi* I in the early third century C.E., that is, in the early 5700s A.M. I. Thus while affirming the chiliastic hopes of the faithful (which, after the fiasco of the chiliast Montanus in the second century, some conservative ecclesiastics sought to deny completely), it postponed the moment of consummation. For a couple of

<sup>50</sup> The earliest documents attesting to this belief are Christian (2 Pet. 3.2 [ca. 115]; Epistle of Barnabas 7 [ca. 105–20]). For a full analysis, see Landes, “Lest,” pp. 141–44.

<sup>51</sup> On current uses of Bishop Ussher’s chronology to identify A.D. 2000 as A.M. 6000, see Dave Hunt, “A Confusion of Dates,” in *Toward the Seventh Millennium: A Penetrating Look into the Future*, ed. Arno Froese (West Columbia, S.C., 1998), pp. 85–106.

centuries, such a system apparently worked well enough, offering the clergy a steadying argument against apocalyptic preachers.

The argument may not have always worked at the height of an apocalyptic crisis, but it certainly gained credence each time such prophecies failed. It was, above all, a teaching intended for those unsophisticated believers who were so easily swayed by apocalyptic rhetoric that they followed the delirious ravings of false prophets. It was the church's principal teaching on the millennium; in the late fourth century Augustine learned it.<sup>52</sup> Thus, over the three centuries from Hippolytus to Cassiodorus, the sabbatical millennium outlasted all other arguments about the end: the longer time passed, the more conviction it assumed.

The problem, of course, was that in its final century, the sabbatical millennium would transform into precisely the opposite of its initial role. It would appeal with growing urgency precisely to those it was intended to calm, and would become unwelcome precisely among the successors of the antiapocalyptic teachers who had used it in earlier centuries. Thus, in the course of the final century before A.M. 6000, the sabbatical chronology of the world—now widely disseminated and “confirmed” by the failure of all shorter eschatological prophecies—entered what I call the “torrid zone” and began to serve precisely those false prophets it had been introduced to combat. When Rome fell to the Goths in 410, Augustine informs us, some believed that it was, in fact, the year 6000.<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, around A.M. 5900 the leading theologians and chronographers (often the same people) abandoned the older, now dangerous, system and replaced it with one that offered another eschatological horizon of some three centuries. The pattern appears at three key junctures: the approach of the first year 6000 in A.D. 500; the approach of the second year 6000 in A.D. 801; and the approach of A.D. 1000.

The first *era mundi* that Christianity adopted, circa 200 C.E., placed the Incarnation at A.M. 1 5500, thus locating the year 6000 in 500 C.E. The man who first wrote about this admittedly “forbidden” knowledge made it quite explicit: he and his contemporaries had three hundred years longer to wait.<sup>54</sup> For the next two centuries, with the exception of the ferociously antichilastic, antiapocalyptic historian Eusebius, every major chronicler used *annus mundi I*; some, like Lactantius (ca. 5820/320) and Hilarianus (5899/399), actually offered a countdown of the years remaining. But, as 6000 approached, the chronology became increasingly attractive to the very apocalyptic enthusiasts whom it had been designed to frustrate, and increasingly problematic to their clerical opponents, whose predecessors had first launched it. And so, with a little less than a century to go before 6000, we find a dramatic shift from *annus mundi I* to a revised chronology proposed by Eusebius (5803/303) and translated into Latin by Jerome (5888/388). The new calculations placed the Incarnation in 5199 and gave the world another three-

<sup>52</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.7; discussed by G. Folliet, “La typologie du *sabbat* chez saint Augustin,” *Revue des études augustiniennes* 2 (1956), 386.

<sup>53</sup> See above, nn. 46–47.

<sup>54</sup> Hippolytus, *In Daniele* 4.23–24, trans. Gustave Bardy, *Sources Chrétiennes* 12 (Paris, 1947), pp. 187–89; discussion in Landes, “Lest,” pp. 144–49. Note that Hippolytus presents this dating schema right after telling two narratives about failed apocalyptic prophecies that had started in episcopal circles: *In Daniele* 4.18–19, pp. 182–84.



century respite. After Augustine and Orosius threw their support behind the new chronology, we find almost no trace of the earlier, ever-more apocalyptic *annus mundi I*. The millennial year 500 C.E. appears in our documentation, not as 6000, but as A.M. II 5699.<sup>55</sup>

Did this mean nothing happened? Does the apparent “control” of the documentation by the users of *annus mundi II* represent a broad consensus? Or does it only tell us about the attitude of antiapocalyptic clerics? How do we interpret the mention of raving lunatics (*delirantes*) who, in 493 and 496, spread rumors that the Antichrist had arrived? Were such events pure coincidence, or were they prompted by reckonings of those years as 5993 and 5996?<sup>56</sup> Does this apocalyptic fervor, of which we catch only furtive glimpses in our documentation, represent a widespread oral discourse, a discourse avoided in our documentation by a chronological shift? Or was the disappearance of chiliasm from surviving written sources an index of its insignificance? Was it an idea that, as church historians would have us believe, Augustine had put to rest at the beginning of the fifth century (i.e., the 5900s)?

On the basis of the sparse documentation of circa 500 C.E., we can reasonably withhold judgment, even though a close reading suggests considerable apocalyptic activity.<sup>57</sup> The best way to judge the vitality of apocalyptic chiliasm in popular circles, the very activity that the sabbatical millennium was developed to combat, is to examine what happened at the approach of the next millennial date—A.M. II 6000 (801 C.E.). If we find the same patterns, we can reasonably conclude that the sabbatical millennium survived A.M. I 6000 and played a similar role over the next three centuries to the role it had played in the previous three.<sup>58</sup>

In fact, the parallels between A.M. I 5700–6000 and A.M. II 5700–6000 are quite detailed; indeed where we find divergences, they suggest that the focus on A.M. II 6000 was still greater than on A.M. I 6000.

- From the sixth century we find historians who, in confronting popular apocalyptic prophets, invoked the *annus mundi II* calculations to reassure “those who despair at the approaching end of the world” (Gregory of Tours; cf. Hippolytus).<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Cassiodorus and John Malalas were the chroniclers who wrote most immediately after the millennium: the Greek Malalas, who had to deal with A.M. I 6000, had great difficulties discussing the date; the Latin Cassiodorus, e.g., kept his chronology steady at the advent of A.M. II 5699 (see Landes, “Lest,” pp. 161–65). For the most thorough examination of the evidence concerning apocalyptic expectation in A.M. I 6000, see Brandes, “Anastasios” (above, n. 38), pp. 1–63.

<sup>56</sup> The comments appear in the *Paschale Campanum*, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 2077, fols. 96v–98r, MGH AA 9:745–50; analysis by Fabio Troncarelli, “Il consolato dell’Antichristo,” *Studi medievali*, 3rd ser., 30/2 (1989), 567–92, esp. pp. 585–92.

<sup>57</sup> Brandes and Troncarelli both suggest widespread apocalyptic expectations at this time.

<sup>58</sup> This is precisely what Judith Herrin, among many other historians, does not do: see her acknowledgment of the chiliastic tradition in the early patristic period (*The Formation of Christendom* [Princeton, N.J., 1987], pp. 3–5) but her failure to raise it again, either in 500 (pp. 54–129) or in 800, the period of her focus (e.g., pp. 235–36, 406).

<sup>59</sup> Landes, “Lest,” pp. 166–68. The correlation between a chronologist with an eschatological date beyond his lifetime and the presence of apocalyptic prophets is extremely high, especially where there is good documentation (e.g., Hippolytus, Jerome, Orosius, Gregory of Tours, and Bede). For another study of the approach of A.M. II 6000, one that preceded my own, see Juan Gil, “Los terrores del año 6000,” in *Actas del Simposio para el Estudio de Los Codices del “Comentario al Apocalipsis” de Beato de Liebana*, Grupo de Estudios Beato de Liebana 1 (Madrid, 1978), pp. 217–47.

- About a hundred years before the millennium we find detailed and remarkably accurate countdowns—“et ut istum milliarium impleatur restant  $x$  anni” (Isidore’s continuators; cf. Lactantius and Hilarianus).<sup>60</sup>
- At the same time theologians try to change the chronology to avoid the advent of a millennial year. In A.M. II 5885 Julian proposed calculations that placed the year 6000 over a decade into the past (cf. Jerome’s translation of Eusebius in A.M. I 5888); and between A.M. II 5902 and 5923 Bede proposed using a new calculation for the age of the world (A.D. 1 = A.M. III 3952) and the virtual abandonment of *annus mundi* in favor of *annus Domini* (cf. Augustine and Orosius’s adoption of *annus mundi II* in A.M. I 5915–18).<sup>61</sup>
- The corrections that put the millennial year into the past do not succeed. We have only one copy of the continuator of Hilarianus, who argued in A.M. I 5969/469 that the year 6000 had passed two years earlier, and of Julian of Toledo’s efforts in A.M. II 5885/686 to put A.M. II 6000 eleven years in the past.<sup>62</sup> (Similar things happened to Abbo of Fleury’s efforts in 983 to put *annus Domini* reckoning four years into the past.)
- These same theologians denounce the chiliastic and millennial beliefs that render the older chronology so dangerous. Bede even complained about rustics who pestered him with questions about the number of years remaining in the millennium. Such a rare and revealing remark indicates that commoners were attuned to the millennial countdown and that with the approach of 6000, such concerns could only get worse.<sup>63</sup>
- The decisive introduction of the new dating system comes in conjunction with the appearance of a popular, charismatic holy man (Boniface, *Concilium Germanicum* of 741, in conjunction with opposition to Adalbert; cf. Augustine [A.M. II 5620–30/A.M. I 5920–30/420–30 C.E.] and Orosius [A.M. II 5614/A.M. I 5915/415 C.E.] in opposition to the apocalyptic reaction to the fall of Rome and Hesychius).<sup>64</sup>
- At the approach and advent of 6000 we find a marginalized chronological tradition still tracking *annus mundi II* and becoming increasingly apocalyptic (Bea-

<sup>60</sup> Landes, “Lest,” pp. 168–71.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171–78.

<sup>62</sup> On the continuator of Hilarianus see Landes, “Lest,” p. 162; on Julian, pp. 171–74; on Abbo, see below, pp. 123–31.

<sup>63</sup> Anti-terrors historians, faced with this remark of Bede’s, hasten to argue that Bede did not mean real rustics here, merely poorly trained clerics. This argument maintains the conviction that peasants did not know, nor did they care, about such technical matters as the date. Not only does such a reading ignore the very value of the sabbatical millennium—to counter apocalyptic prophets among the populace—but it assumes that the rustic clerics about whom Bede is supposedly complaining had no relationship to commoners. In fact, they probably had far more impact on oral discourse and popular attitudes than our monk did, whereas the Venerable Bede’s impact is immense on later generations of readers (including us). See above, n. 46.

<sup>64</sup> On the Carolingians, see Landes, “Lest,” pp. 178–81; on Adalbert, see Capitulary of 744 (Pepin no. 12, c. 2, MGH Capit 1:29), and Boniface, *Letters*, nos. 57–60, MGH Epp 1:313–25. See also Jeffrey B. Russell, “St. Boniface and the Eccentrics,” *Church History* 33 (1964), 235–47; and, more generally on this messianic strain of early-medieval popular culture, see Aaron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. János M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, Eng., 1990), chap. 3. On Augustine and Orosius, see Landes, “Lest,” pp. 156–60.

tus, John of Modena, Hlotharius of Saint-Amand; cf. the continuator of Hilarianus, Hydatius, the *Paschale Campanum*).<sup>65</sup>

- In the final decades of the millennium, we have traces of popular religious activity that disturb the authorities (false priests, wandering penitents, letters from heaven in 5988; cf. the *ignari praesumptores* and the *delirantes* who announced the Antichrist in A.M. I 5993 and 5996).
- At the same time we have historians using the new, non-eschatological chronology tracking major “imperial” events (Carolingian annalists describing Charlemagne’s coronation A.D. 801/A.M. II 6000; cf. Cassiodorus on Theodoric’s entry into Rome A.M. II 5699/A.M. I 6000/500 C.E.).<sup>66</sup>

The consistencies are remarkable: the shift in system occurs in the 5900s of the doomed chronology (*annus mundi I* in the fifth century, *annus mundi II* in the eighth); the eschatological calculation remains only in the most marginal texts or the margins of texts; and no system finds favor (as a replacement) that does not rejuvenate the millennium, thus continuing to hold out hope for millennium’s end. Finally, the system enters usage within a range of two to four centuries to go (Eusebius’s *annus mundi II* was ignored when he introduced it in 5500, and it continued to be ignored even after Jerome translated Eusebius in 5580; similarly with Dionysius’s *era Incarnationis* in 526 and Bede’s *annus mundi III* in 4655). Even when, as in the East in the sixth century, a millennial year passed, Christian historians show extraordinary reluctance to note its passage.<sup>67</sup> The year 500 C.E., then, is the first clearly documented case of a successful consensus of silence about a millennial date among ecclesiastical historians.

There is a revealing contradiction at work here. As the pattern indicates, each “correction” actually prolonged the life of the sabbatical millennium by reinserting the prevailing chronology in a zone of comfortable delay, thereby placing mankind firmly in the twilight of the final age. Thus no effort to antedate the millennium gains serious support, no matter how prominent the figure publishing it (Hilarianus’s continuator in 5968, Julian of Toledo in A.M. II 5868, Abbo in A.D. 983). This consistent detail implies that, rather than getting rid of the sabbatical millennium entirely, the prevailing clerical preference was for a system that allowed it to continue with the same general framework—a few centuries to go—that Hippolytus had first proposed.

As with the first instance around 500 C.E., we must ask ourselves the meaning of this chronographical shift. Did the Carolingian and papal courts know that their A.D. 801 was A.M. II 6000? Certainly any historian did.<sup>68</sup> Did the court know? One would have to assume a level of indifference belied by every escha-

<sup>65</sup> Beatus (Landes, “Lest,” pp. 192–95), John of Modena (*ibid.*, p. 195 f.), and Hlotharius of Saint-Amand (*ibid.*, p. 189); cf. the continuator of Hilarianus (*ibid.*, p. 162), *Paschale Campanum* (*ibid.*, p. 162, and above, n. 56), and Hydatius (*Chronicon*, ad an. 469; ed. and trans. Richard Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana* [Oxford, 1993], esp. p. 32).

<sup>66</sup> On Charlemagne, see Landes, “Lest,” pp. 196–203; Wolfram Brandes, “Tempora periculosa sunt’: Eschatologisches im Vorfeld der Kaiserkrönung Karls des Grossen,” in *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794: Kristallisationspunkt karolingischer Kultur*, ed. Rainer Berndt (Mainz, 1997), pp. 49–79; cf. Gouguenheim, *Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 204–10.

<sup>67</sup> Landes, “Lest,” pp. 163–64.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 188–91.

tological indicator. The timing of the end was hardly a matter of indifference to a medieval clergyman.

But, one might argue, this concern remained within elite circles. Did the rest of the public know? Here we run into evidentiary problems. We have virtually no accounts from any laymen, much less commoners, at this moment in history, so we have to try to answer the question indirectly. The first thing to note is that we have no reason to believe that the tradition of charismatic prophets with popular followings had died down at the end of the sixth millennium A.M. II. Indeed we have every reason to believe that Bede's rustics of 5900/700, who had jumped the millennial gun by a century, continued to insist on knowing the date. Indeed, the desire to "stop up the mouths" of those so speculating explains, more than any other factor, the success in chronographical circles of Bede's substitution of calculations by the *annus Domini* rather than by the *annus mundi III*. Secondly, we have ample, if laconic, evidence that there were "pseudo-doctors who rose up," "renegade clerics who mislead the people," and wandering preachers and penitents "without any law," some of whom circulated dangerous "letters from heaven" that "should be neither read nor taken up, but burned."<sup>69</sup>

Indeed we have one documented case of a monk who knew the date and fomented apocalyptic fervor around its arrival. Beatus, writing a commentary on Revelation in A.M. II 5986, noted the fourteen years remaining until the final age began in 6000. According to his enemy, the archbishop of Toledo, during those final years he preached his apocalyptic message "populo praesente" and convinced a following to expect the end on a specific Easter, preparing in sackcloth and fasting for the great moment.<sup>70</sup>

This case suggests a situation in which religious currents are not "under control" and that enthusiasts may have found reckoning by *annus mundi II* a particularly powerful rhetorical device to preach the Apocalypse to the populace.<sup>71</sup> We cannot know for certain. But we certainly should not be so dazzled by the literary activities at court that we assume a bovine peasantry complacently unconcerned with such issues as the proximity of the millennium. Thus, when Charlemagne was crowned on the first day of the year that corresponds directly to A.M. II 6000, it seems worthwhile to consider the possibility that the chronological coincidence might

<sup>69</sup> "Sunt tempora periculosa, ut apostoli praedixerunt, quia multi pseudodoctores surgent," Alcuin, *Ep.* 74, MGH Epp 4:117. "Omnibus. Item et pseudografia et dubiae narrationes, vel quae omnino contra fidem catholicam sunt et epistola pessima et falsissima, quam transacto anno dicebant aliqui errantes et in errorem alios mittentes quod de celo cecidisset, nec credantur nec legantur sed conburentur, ne in errorem per talia scripta populus mittatur. Sed soli canonici libri et catholici tractatus et sanctorum auctorum dicta legantur et tradantur," Capitulary of 789, canons 78, 82, MGH LL 2/1:60–62; one could not ask for more explicit evidence of a desire to destroy dangerous *popular* texts and leave only an "orthodox" record behind. For analysis, see Landes, "Lest," p. 192; and Brandes, "Tempora," pp. 63–67.

<sup>70</sup> *Epistola episcoporum Hispaniae ad episcopos Galliae, Aquitaniae et Austriae* 17; PL 101:1330C; Landes, "Lest," p. 194; and Brandes, "Tempora," pp. 64–65.

<sup>71</sup> Dates are one of the most powerful of apocalyptic tropes. See O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse* (above, n. 16), pp. 44–51, 120–25.

have had significance to contemporaries.<sup>72</sup> The silence of our texts, while it may indicate the kind of indifference that historians have tacitly or explicitly assumed, may indicate the opposite—a consensus of silence that masks a great deal of concern.<sup>73</sup> In fact, the coronation of Charlemagne on Christmas Day 6000/800 may mark the most dramatic date in the split between oral and written discourse on the millennium: what people thought and said on the topic was precisely what no one wrote.

Most importantly for our concerns, Bede and the Carolingians continued the same prolongation of the delayed millennium that the great antichiliasts of the patristic period had effected in the 5900s A.M. I. Their shift had given apocalyptic meaning to A.D. 1000, for the shift to the *era Incarnationis* was far more revolutionary, both chronologically and eschatologically, than the earlier shift to *annus mundi II*. By shifting to a system based on the Incarnation (rather than the hopelessly distant year A.M. III 6000, which will not occur until 2048 C.E.), they gave the millennium yet another lease on life at the same time as they redefined what the coming apocalyptic date meant. Now, instead of coming at the end of the sixth millennium since the creation of the world, the new target date would come at the end of the first millennium since Christ. On one level, the pattern repeated: like Hippolytus and his third-century followers and Augustine and his fifth-century ones, Bede and his Carolingian disciples could not only deny the advent of an apocalyptic date in their own day but also point to one that was several centuries off. The clerics who tried to hold to their “ecclesiastic doctrines” and fight the teachings of the *magistra* Thiota may have stuck to formal, eschatologically agnostic Augustinian doctrine (which would not have carried much weight with those excited by a charismatic prophet), or they may have argued that, with at least another century and a half to go, this enthusiasm was premature.

The shift from *annus mundi* to *annus Domini*, however, added another significant element. Whereas the chronicler using *annus mundi II* implicitly promised a chiliastic millennium at the end of the current one, the chronicler using *annus Domini* could insist on an Augustinian millennium: A.D. 1000 might mean the end of the sixth age and the beginning of the chiliastic seventh,<sup>74</sup> or it might mean the end of the invisible millennium Augustine had insisted on, and therefore the considerably less subversive expectation of the eschatological finale—Antichrist’s

<sup>72</sup> Both Juan Gil in 1978 (n. 59) and I in 1987 published articles pointing out this remarkable “coincidence,” but with the exception of Wolfram Brandes (above, n. 38), Carolingianists have shown little desire to explore it. A historical approach to the Carolingians that might help us track some of these issues should use, as I do here, both *annus Domini* and *annus mundi II* in dating events. One can less easily dismiss apocalyptic rhetoric as “mere” verbiage when it dates to the 5990s, rather than to the 790s.

<sup>73</sup> For the most recent expression of this attitude by Bernard McGinn, see above, n. 33. As far as I know, McGinn has never discussed the sabbatical millennium, nor has he offered an alternative explanation for the pattern of dating-system shifts here discussed (e.g., no mention in his study of the apocalyptic “longue durée,” *Antichrist*, pp. 79–114).

<sup>74</sup> See, e.g., *Blickling Homily* 971 (below, n. 118) and Rodulfus Glaber, ca. 1025, *Quinque libri* 1.5.26, pp. 44–47. There is at least one ninth-century manuscript copy of the continuator of “Fredegar” who, coming across the calculation of 736 that had 63 years remaining until the completion of the millennium, substituted 263 years, thus clearly retargeting from the passed A.M. II 6000 to the coming A.D. 1000 (MGH SSrerMerov 2:176 n. 2).

brief return and the Last Judgment.<sup>75</sup> We have a direct and explicit proof of the conflation of these two in the mid-tenth-century monastic commentary on 2 Thessalonians by Thietland of Einsiedeln in which he merged the traditional reading of 2 Thessalonians with that of Revelation<sup>76</sup> and identified the period of the Antichrist's imprisonment as the thousand years as Augustine had defined them, the millennium of the church (i.e., 1033).<sup>77</sup> At least two other texts tell us of an Augustinian millennium ending in 1000.<sup>78</sup> When we understand this explicit evidence for the eschatological shift from 6000 to 1000/1033 in terms of the patterns of (anti-) apocalyptic dating first created by the sabbatical millennium, it suggests a widespread apocalyptic discourse at the approach of the year 1000.

None of this, of course, would have had Augustine's approval. He explicitly insisted that the thousand years not be taken literally, a position taken by Abbo circa 970 and by Bryhtferth in 1011.<sup>79</sup> But just as *augustinisme politique* describes those numerous clerics who misquoted Augustine in support of a Christian empire, so *augustinisme chronologique* can describe those who misquoted him in favor of an eschatological year 1000.<sup>80</sup>

We can, according to this model, expect that, just as the chronologists of the final generations of *annus mundi I* and *II* had to struggle with the apocalyptic approach of a millennial date, so did those facing the advent of 1000 and 1033. But unlike their predecessors, the last generation of the first Christian millennium had no alternative chronology to hide behind. They had to confront the date. Among other things, this observation significantly undermines the romantic depiction of a cynical manipulation by the clergy of a gullible laity. On the contrary, any cleric who did not believe in the coming end would want to downplay any date, indeed any discussion of the matter (as we will see in the case of Abbo); and any cleric who did engage in apocalyptic discourse would probably be as much a believer in this overwhelming and long-awaited date as the simplest peasant (as we shall see in the case of Rodulfus Glaber and Ademar). The eschatological importance of 1000 did not begin among ignorant masses. Like that of 6000, it began at the top, in a revolutionary program of chronological reform that anti-apocalyptic Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian clerics disseminated among the populace in the eighth and ninth centuries and that, like the earlier universal chronologies, became favored by apocalyptic preachers—lay and clerical—at the

<sup>75</sup> See Landes, "Millenarismus absconditus," pp. 362–63.

<sup>76</sup> For more detail on the antiapocalyptic exegesis of 2 Thessalonians, see Paschoud, "La doctrine chrétienne" (above, n. 33).

<sup>77</sup> Commentary on 2 Thessalonians 2.8, in Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 38, and Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, MS Bibl. 89, edited and analyzed by Steven Cartwright, "Thietland's Commentary on Second Thessalonians: Digressions on the Antichrist and the End of the Millennium," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, chap. 5.

<sup>78</sup> Abbo's Parisian preacher (see below, n. 113) and Rodulfus Glaber (below, nn. 147–49).

<sup>79</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.9. Bryhtferth was triumphant with his *ex post facto* proof that Augustine had been right: *Manual* (above, n. 20), pp. 239–41; see the analysis by William Prideaux-Collins, "'Satan's Bonds Are Extremely Loose': Apocalyptic Expectation in Anglo-Saxon England during the Millennial Era," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, chap. 14.

<sup>80</sup> This is precisely the point that Gougenheim missed in his analyses when he assumed that the Augustinian position dominated without challenge before as well as after 1000 (*Les fausses terreurs*; see below, nn. 126, 161).

approach of the millennium. With these remarks behind us, we are in a position to turn to the texts of the period around 1000 to consider the possible relations they might have to apocalyptic and chiliastic beliefs, discussions, and social encounters.

#### 4. THE APPROACH OF THE YEAR 1000:

##### EVIDENCE FOR APOCALYPTIC CONCERNS AND INTEREST IN THE MILLENNIAL YEAR

The mid-tenth century shows every sign of an apocalyptic crisis, one that moved the Lotharingian abbot Adso of Montier-en-Der to write a treatise on the Antichrist, a kind of *vita Antichristi*, that would become one of the most influential books of the next half millennium.<sup>81</sup> A roughly contemporary letter from the bishop of Auxerre to the bishop of Verdun deplored the chiliastic response of the masses, who saw in the invading Northmen and the Magyars the forces of Gog and Magog.<sup>82</sup> In Theitland and Adso we have a classic dichotomy of clerical antiapocalypticism. Thietland chose the chronographical postponement typical of the sabbatical millennium: by emphasizing 1033 as the time when Antichrist will be released, he could reassure people that the apocalyptic moment was still some eighty years away.<sup>83</sup> Adso, however, chose the political approach. He turned to the same text, 2 Thessalonians, in order to invoke the imperial, antiapocalyptic teaching that held that as long as the Roman Empire endured, Antichrist could not come. Of course, the mid-tenth century was hardly a good time to invoke the Roman Empire as a bulwark against the forces of chaos and evil: for about half a century there had been no emperor; and with invaders rampaging unrestrainedly for over a century, Charlemagne's imperium did not look very robust. As Adso himself admitted, "We see the Roman imperium almost completely destroyed."<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, he insisted, "As long as there are kings of the Franks who ought to

<sup>81</sup> *Libellus de Antichristo*, ed. Daniel Verhelst, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 45 (Turnhout, 1976). Anti-terrors historians consider the nonpolemical tone of this letter, "addressed to the theological curiosities of the queen rather than to refuting some error that had seized her in its grip," a "devastating silence that voids all relevance of this letter for the argument about the year 1000" (Pognon, *L'an mille*, p. xiv; similar arguments from Plaine, "Les prétendues," p. 152; Roy, *L'an mille*, p. 187; and Lot, "Le mythe," p. 400).

<sup>82</sup> "Ac primum dicendum opinionem quae innumeros tam in uestra quam in nostra regione persuasit friuolam esse et nihil ueri in se habere, qua putatur Deo odibilis gens Hungrorum esse Gog et Magog ceteraque gentes quae cum eis describuntur. . . . [D]icunt enim nunc esse nouissimum saeculi tempus finemque imminere mundi, et idcirco Gog et Magog esse Hungros, qui nunquam antea auditi sint, sed modo, in nouissimo temporum, apparuerint"; analyzed and edited by Huygens, "Un témoin de la crainte," p. 231, lines 96–106. For examples of Insular apocalyptic reactions to the Norse invasions, see Malcolm Godden, "The Millennium, Time and History for the Anglo-Saxons," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, chap. 8.

<sup>83</sup> See above, n. 77.

<sup>84</sup> ". . . licet uideamus Romanum imperium ex maxima parte destructum . . .": Verhelst, p. 26, lines 113–14. Some fifty years later, Thietmar of Merseburg also wrote about the decline of the Roman imperium: "Imperator antiquam Romanorum consuetudinem iam ex parte magna deletam suis cupiens renovare temporibus, multa faciebat, quae diversi diversae sentiebant" (Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* 4.47; ed. Werner Trillmich, 6th ed. [Darmstadt, 1985], p. 162). See below, n. 86.

be king (i.e., Gerberga's husband, the Carolingian Louis IV and his line), the dignity of the Roman kingdom has not entirely perished."<sup>85</sup>

This was a perilous reassurance indeed. By linking antiapocalyptic exegesis to imperial developments, Adso could only intensify apocalyptic speculation. What he clearly intended as an antiapocalyptic reassurance had nonetheless broken with Augustine's warning not to view current events in an eschatological light: as long as contemporaries thought Rome endured, the exegesis would reassure; but if events turned out badly, the exegesis could backfire. It seems, then, that the way in which the clerical elites handled the apocalyptic crises of the mid-tenth century was to put them off—to the year 1000 or 1033, to the collapse of the Frankish empire. Come the approach of 1000, therefore, it is far more likely that apocalyptic tensions were still higher and harder to put off, than that they had somehow subsided gently into oblivion.

The first such crisis came from Adso's work. Within decades, the entire imperial complexion of post-Carolingian Europe had changed: in 962 a Saxon, Otto I, was crowned emperor in Rome; and in 987 the last Carolingian king, Louis V, died, replaced not by a relative but by a new dynasty. Obviously, Ottonian loyalists would argue that their emperor maintained the Roman dignity, and Otto III certainly made dramatic efforts to both "revive" the empire and link his own rule to that of Charlemagne's at the approach of the year 1000.<sup>86</sup> In France the Capetian kinglets had replaced the Carolingians in what many saw as a treacherous manner, and the king, Robert II, was under anathema in the year 1000. Here no such argument about an enduring empire was possible.<sup>87</sup> Unquestionably, the changed circumstances gave Adso's treatise an extraordinary significance at the turn of the millennium, one evident in the number of copies and variants that appeared within the first two generations.<sup>88</sup> As we shall see, the difference between an acephalous, disorderly France and an imperially dominated Germany and Italy had a significant influence on the way apocalyptic expectations manifested themselves at the turn of the millennium.

In addition to exegetical texts concerned with apocalyptic matters, clerics of the tenth century produced a number of liturgical texts with strong eschatological

<sup>85</sup> Adso, *Libellus*, p. 26, lines 113–20.

<sup>86</sup> On the opening of Charlemagne's grave on Pentecost of 1000, see Beumann, "Grab und Thron" (above, n. 9), critiqued in terms of Beumann's handling of Ademar's account in *Ademari Cabannensis Chronicon*, ed. Pascale Bourgain, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 129 (Turnhout, 1999), pp. lvi–lviii. On Otto III's *renovatio imperii romani* see Knut Görich, *Otto III.: Romanus, Saxonicus et Italicus* (Sigmaringen, 1995). For a millennial reading of Otto III, see Benjamin Arnold, "Eschatological Imagination and the Program of Roman Imperial and Ecclesiastical Renewal at the End of the Tenth Century," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, chap. 13. Note that Thietmar's remarks about the near-collapse of the Roman Empire, so close to Adso's, come as an introduction to both the exhumation of Charlemagne and the program of *renovatio imperii romani* (see above, n. 84); cf. Gouguenheim, *Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 136–45.

<sup>87</sup> See Richard Landes, "L'accession des Capétiens: Une reconsidération selon les sources acquittaines," in *Religion et culture autour de l'an mil: Royaume capétien et Lotharingie*, ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat and Jean-Charles Picard (Paris, 1990), pp. 151–69, at pp. 151–66.

<sup>88</sup> For the spectacularly successful influence of this letter see Robert Konrad, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi: Antichristvorstellung und Geschichtsbild des Abtes Adso von Montier-en-Der* (Kallmunz, 1964), and Verhelst's edition, pp. 3–18; comments in Fried, "Endzeiterwartung," pp. 399–400.



elements. In general the musical and poetic creativity of the tenth century (and beyond) found apocalyptic themes particularly inspiring.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps the most dramatic poem, an alphabetic acrostic about the end of the world, appears on the flyleaf of a liturgical manuscript from Aniane, written in a mid- to late-tenth-century hand. The same text reappears in a deluxe edition at Fécamp circa 1040, and the similarities to the immensely popular thirteenth-century *Dies irae* are notable enough to suggest a continuing tradition of this poem in various forms from the latter tenth century onward.<sup>90</sup> Other poetry, both vernacular (*Muspilli*) and Latin (like the Aniane poem, written in the margins of manuscripts), emphasize the terrors of Antichrist's advent.<sup>91</sup>

The most anomalous material, predictably so, comes from the patterns evident in the chronological writings of the day. It is a favorite commonplace of anti-terrors historians to argue that few people knew the date, and that those who did were confused and uncertain about it. Nothing could be further from the truth. The end of the tenth century marks a period of "computistical fever" within monastic culture, an "obsessive concern for chronology."<sup>92</sup> In the early tenth century Helpericus of Auxerre wrote a short and very popular treatise on *computus* in which he paid particular attention to the calculation of the current year according to the *annus Domini*, and subsequent copyists took care to update the calculations to their own time.<sup>93</sup> Although not as explicit as the updates of Isidore's chronicle in the 590s A.M. II, which often concluded with the number of years remaining in the millennium,<sup>94</sup> such texts could also serve as apocalyptic countdowns.<sup>95</sup> Nor

<sup>89</sup> N. Bridgman, "Les thèmes musicaux de l'Apocalypse: Leur signification spirituelle et leur interprétation dans les miniatures," in *Musica e arte figurativa nei secoli X-XII* (Todi, 1973), pp. 197–222; Nicole Sevestre, "La tradition mélodique du *Cantus sabyllae*," in *La représentation de l'antiquité au moyen âge*, ed. Danielle Buschinger and André Crépin (Vienna, 1982), pp. 269–83; Gunilla Björkvall, "Expectantes Dominum: Advent, the Time of Expectation, as Reflected in Liturgical Poetry from the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in *In Quest of the Kingdom: Ten Papers on Medieval Monastic Spirituality*, Bibliotheca Theologiae Practicae 48 (Uppsala, 1991), pp. 109–34; and Regula Meyer-Evitt, "Vos inquam convenio, O Judaei! Eschatology, Millenarian Apocalypticism, and the Liturgical Anti-Judaism of the Medieval Prophet Plays," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, chap. 10.

<sup>90</sup> The poem was analyzed and edited by Paulin Blanc, "Nouvelle prose sur le Dernier Jour, composée avec chant noté, vers l'an mille," *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique de Montpellier* 2 (1850), 451–509. Christian Pfister dismissed the poem as isolated and undatable (*Études sur le règne de Robert le Pieux*, p. 325). Most anti-terrors historians do not even mention this text; Fried, however, does ("Endzeiterwartung," p. 416). A second, very careful copy has been located by Michel Huglo: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 1928, fol. 178, Fécamp ca. 1040).

<sup>91</sup> On *Muspilli* see F. von Leyen, *Deutsche Dichtung des Mittelalters* (Frankfurt, 1962), pp. 58–60; partial translation in Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1979), pp. 80–81. Bernhard Bischoff discusses two marginalia written ca. 950 in a Norman manuscript: "Vom Ende der Welt und vom Antichrist: Fragment einer Jenseitsvision (Zehntes Jahrhundert)," in *Anecdota novissima: Texte des vierten bis sechzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 80–82.

<sup>92</sup> Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiévale* (Paris, 1980), p. 152.

<sup>93</sup> Helpericus, *Liber de computo*, PL 137:17–48; see also A. Cordoliani, "Les traités de comput du haut moyen âge (526–1003)," *Bulletin Du Cange* 17 (1943), 62–63; and P. McGurk, "Computus Helperici: Its Transmission in England in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Medium Aevum* 43 (1974), 1–5.

<sup>94</sup> See Landes, "Lest," pp. 168–71, 187–96.

<sup>95</sup> See the concerns on calculating the date *anno Domini* in Regino of Prüm, discussed by Arno Borst, *The Ordering of Time*, trans. Andrew Winnard (Chicago, 1993), p. 48.

did one need to engage in elaborate calculations to know the date and count the years remaining. Bede's Easter tables could be found, by the late tenth century, in any significant monastery or church throughout Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon Europe.<sup>96</sup> At the approach of the millennium the least of the learned of Europe knew a great deal about the date as reckoned from the Incarnation.<sup>97</sup> Thus when, in the late 980s and early 990s, certain monasteries in southern Frankland did not want to date by the Capetian king's reign, they moved effortlessly and unanimously to the system devised by Dionysius Exiguus, based on the *annus Domini*.<sup>98</sup>

Moreover, the acute awareness of the date that so many manuscripts indicate, even in their mistakes, often focused specifically on the year 1000. Normally, for example, one began or ended an Easter table, no matter how short, with a nineteen-year cycle. Since 1000 fell in the middle of the cycle 988–1006, one would not expect to see it begin or end such tables. Yet a number of tables either begin or end with the years 999, 1000, or 1001.<sup>99</sup> Such unusual procedures are not explicitly apocalyptic, nor do I think they necessarily indicate some kind of eschatological expectation. Quite the contrary, those composing them after 1000, like Byrhtferth, probably did so to emphasize that year's passage.<sup>100</sup> As the later eleventh-century chronicler Adam of Bremen put it, in a phrase where one can almost hear the relief: "Meanwhile the thousandth year since the Incarnation of the Lord was completed favorably (*feliciter*)."<sup>101</sup> These computistical anomalies attest to the exceptional status of the year 1000 in the minds of those who composed these texts.

This focus on the end of the millennium also accounts for the renewed interest in the *annus mundi* chronology, which had passed the eschatologically significant year 6000 two centuries earlier and had since then largely been neglected by Latin historians. A scribe at Notre Dame in Paris noted, in a manuscript composed around 1000, that the *annus mundi* at the time of the Incarnation had two variants: 4955 according to the Hebrews (instead of 3952) and 5199 according to the Septuagint. The composer thereby shifted attention from the implicitly apocalyptic year 1000 *era Incarnationis* to an alternative chronology, which, with his "mistake" of over a thousand years in the Hebrew count, he rendered only slightly less apocalyptic. His year 6000 would come in A.D. 1045!<sup>102</sup> Ademar of Chabannes

<sup>96</sup> See the long list of manuscripts in Jones's edition of *De temporum ratione* (above, n. 26), including his remarks on the number of worn fragments that bear eloquent witness to how often and hard ecclesiastics used these tables (p. 241).

<sup>97</sup> Burr ("The Year 1000," p. 436 f.) cites A. Giry, *Manuel de diplomatique* (Paris, 1894); and Vasiliev remarks on the papacy's erratic use of reckoning from the Incarnation until 1431: "The data show us clearly that about the year 1000 Dionysius' era had by no means spread all over Western Europe and was not yet in popular use" ("Medieval Ideas," p. 477).

<sup>98</sup> Landes, "L'accession des Capétiens," pp. 158–61.

<sup>99</sup> See, e.g., St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 902, pp. 817–999, and MS 387, pp. 1001–29. I suspect that attention to such matters would uncover many more such tables.

<sup>100</sup> See above, nn. 20, 74.

<sup>101</sup> "Interea millesimus ab incarnatione Domini annus feliciter impletus est, et hic est annus archiepiscopi 12" (Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* 2.40, MGH SS 7:320).

<sup>102</sup> "Anno a creatione mundi 4955 iuxta hebreos natus est secundum carnem dominus noster iesus christus, iuxta alios vero 5199" (BnF lat. 17868, fol. 2r [dated by the hand to ca. 1000]).

similarly shifted his chronology from *annus Domini* to *annus mundi*.<sup>103</sup> Further, a scribe from the monastery of Massay in Berry noted opposite the year 1000 in his Easter tables: “A severe famine. There are 6,201 years from the beginning of the world.”<sup>104</sup> Such efforts to draw attention away from apocalyptic chronology fell flat, however. Not until the early twelfth century would the *era mundi* return to the center of European historiography.<sup>105</sup>

Unable to replace reckoning by the *annus Domini*, chronologists turned their attention to undermining its accuracy. Thus, although Dionysius Exiguus’s calculations of the Incarnation had gone unchallenged since he published them in 525, they were “corrected” twice between 983 and 990. For Abbo of Fleury, 1000 was really 1021, and for Heriger of Lobbes, 1000 was 992.<sup>106</sup> I shall return to Abbo’s work in its context below, but it is worth remarking here on the similarity between these kinds of small adjustments and those with which the Byzantine chronologists met their millennial date, A.M. 1 6000. According to the various Eastern traditions, that year came in 492, 500, 502, or 508 C.E.<sup>107</sup>

However, unlike the Byzantine historians of the seventh millennium whose work acknowledged the passage of the year 6000 with great reluctance,<sup>108</sup> the historians of the year 1000 were singularly fascinated by the passage of the year 1000. A scribe from the cathedral school at Angoulême, for example, confronted with an annalistic list that went only to 989, noted the final eleven years of the millennium in sequence, adding the computistical data for these years and concluding not with the numeral *M* but with the word *MILLE* written in capitals.<sup>109</sup> An Angevin annalist wrote in the margins of the year 968 or 969 “mille anni a nativitate Christi.” His error may have been from stupidity or from cleverness, done before or after the year 1000, but either way, it offers unquestionable evidence for a fixation on this particular date.<sup>110</sup> In the aftermath of 1000 we find similar, exceptional interest

<sup>103</sup> See Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> *Annales Masciacenses*, MGH SS 3:170.

<sup>105</sup> On the return of the “universal chronicle” in the twelfth century, see Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, *Studien zur lateinischen Weltchronistik bis in das Zeitalter Ottos von Freising* (Düsseldorf, 1957), chaps. 6–8.

<sup>106</sup> On Abbo’s computistical work, see A. Cordoliani, “Abbon de Fleury, Hériter de Lobbes et Gerland de Besançon sur l’ère de l’Incarnation chez Denys le Petit,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 44 (1949), 464–69; and A. Van de Vyver, “Les œuvres inédites d’Abbon de Fleury,” *Revue bénédictine* 47 (1935), 150–58.

<sup>107</sup> Landes, “Lest,” p. 163; and V. Grumel, *La chronologie* (Paris, 1958), pp. 73–97.

<sup>108</sup> See John Malalas, *Chronographia* (PG 97:354, 579–80, 632), with comments in Landes, “Lest,” p. 163 n. 107; and on the *Chronicon Paschale* see G. Podskalsky, “Représentation du temps dans l’eschatologie impériale byzantine,” in *Le temps chrétien de la fin de l’antiquité au moyen âge: IIIe–XIIIe siècles*, ed. Jean-Marie Leroux (Paris, 1984), pp. 439–50; and J. Beaucamp, “La *Chronique Pascale*: Le temps approprié,” *ibid.*, pp. 451–68.

<sup>109</sup> Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 1127, fol. 10v. This is an unusual annal, not done in the margins of Easter tables, but as an independent list of dates with no computistical data included until the final addition for 990–1000.

<sup>110</sup> Louis Halphen, however, considered it so careless an error that he did not even include the text in his edition, preferring to append a dismissal of this mistake in a note to a different year; see Louis Halphen, *Recueil d’annales angevines et vendômoises* (Paris, 1903), p. 58 n. 2, p. 116 n. 6. And yet this note was copied by the compilers of the annals of Vendôme (later eleventh century) and Saint-Florent de Saumur (early twelfth), and cases of intentional error are hardly out of the question for either apocalyptic or antiapocalyptic calculators (see Landes, “Lest,” pp. 174, 190).

in the year 1000. The continuator of the *Annales Hildesheimenses*, writing in the late 1030s, noted for the year 1000: “With Otto III ruling, the thousandth year passing the number of established reckoning according to that which is written: *The thousandth surpasses and transcends all years.*”<sup>111</sup> Other annalists and historians note the passage of the year 1000 more laconically, but even that is unique to this date. “This was Gerbert at whose time the thousandth year from the Incarnation of the Lord was completed.”<sup>112</sup>

As with the anomalous Easter tables, no other year receives this kind of attention from Christian historians East or West. The year 1000 was not a year like any other. All of this, however, would have little more than antiquarian interest if we could not connect it to the larger issues and conversations of the day. The career of Abbo of Fleury presents precisely such an opportunity to draw together the various threads and explore the relationship between the antiapocalyptic discourse that we find in our texts and the oral conversation that lies behind it.

### 5. ABBO OF FLEURY AND THE APOCALYPTIC YEAR 1000

Nowhere is the combination of computational-chronological and apocalyptic concerns more evident than in the work of Abbo, *scholasticus*, then abbot of Saint-Benoît of Fleury-sur-Loire (ca. 945–1004). In a letter to the kings of France dated circa 994–96, Abbo recalls several incidents of apocalyptic rumors circulating in earlier years:

Concerning the end of the world, as a youth I heard a sermon preached to the people in the Paris church to the effect that as soon as the number of one thousand years was completed, Antichrist would arrive, and not long after, the Last Judgment would follow. I resisted as vigorously as I could to that preaching, citing the Gospels, Revelation, and Daniel. Then my abbot Richard, of blessed memory and keen mind, rejected another error that grew about the end of the world; and after he received correspondence from Lotharingians, he ordered me to answer. For a rumor had filled almost the entire world that when the Annunciation fell on Good Friday, without any question it would be the end of the world. Concerning the beginning of Advent, which happens each year before Christmas, there were also grave errors, some beginning it after November 27, others before, while Advent never has more than four weeks, even if only [a week of] a day. And since from these various divergences conflict grows in the church, a council should be called so that all those who live in her should know what your diligence grants, that [God] wishes to have us in unanimity in his house.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>111</sup> “Tertio Ottone imperante millesimus annus supercrescens statuit computationis numerum, secundum illud quod legitur scriptum: ‘Millesimus exsuperat et transcendit omnia annus’ ” (*Annales Hildesheimenses* 3, preface, MGH SS 3:91–92). The citation has yet to be identified.

<sup>112</sup> “Iste fuit Gilbertus, tempore cuius impletus est annus millesimus ab incarnatione Domini” (*Annales Pragenses*, ad an. 999, MGH SS 3:120 [contemporary hand]).

<sup>113</sup> Abbo of Fleury, *Apologeticus ad Hugonem et Rodbertum reges Francorum*, London, British Library, MS Add. 10972, fol. 22v, PL 139:471–72; dated before 996 by A. Vidier, *L'historiographie à Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire* (Paris, 1965), pp. 105–7; to 994–95 by Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury* (Hilversum, 1987), pp. 48–51.

This passage, which concludes an urgent letter requesting royal support, offers a host of information about apocalyptic concerns in the generation before the year 1000.<sup>114</sup>

First, the incident in Paris in Abbo's youth reveals the presence of the *augustinisme chronologique* that had, in the Bedan/Carolingian world, replaced the sabbatical millennium as the clerical means for postponing the end of the world.<sup>115</sup> This preacher was not a chiliastic rabble-rouser, but a cleric preaching "before the populace,"<sup>116</sup> most probably in the cathedral itself.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, he espoused an Augustinian eschatology. For him the year 1000 would not bring the beginning of the millennium but its end—the release of Antichrist (Rev. 20.7) and the Last Judgment shortly thereafter. This is considerably more Augustinian than the almost exactly contemporary belief expressed in the *Blickling Homilies*, which, in giving the date as A.D. 971, emphasized that the sixth and final age was almost finished, thereby invoking the coming sabbatical millennium.<sup>118</sup>

Why then would this conservative Parisian cleric invoke an apocalyptic year 1000 that was only about thirty years away? It might be one thing for a monk to write about an apocalyptic date some eighty years hence, but why publicly invoke one so close, especially when he might better have targeted 1033 and given everyone more breathing room? The explanation that best accords with the centuries-long patterns of apocalyptic procrastination suggests that this Parisian preacher addressed his remarks to an audience in an advanced state of apocalyptic arousal, and he was trying to calm them by using the standard Carolingian technique of postponing the millennium. The brevity of the delay—within their lifetimes—is a clue to the intensity of the expectation it was supposed to counter.<sup>119</sup> Thus far is conjecture. Fortunately, we have evidence to support such a reconstruction; and it comes directly from Abbo.

In the next incident Abbo reports, we hear of an apocalyptic rumor from Lotharingia that, he claimed, had "filled almost the entire world." This *computus-*

<sup>114</sup> Anti-terrors historians dismiss this entire passage as an irrelevant digression, so lacking in details about how Abbo refuted these challenges that it indicates a subsidence of apocalyptic beliefs at the approach of the year 1000: "The [apocalyptic fears] preoccupied only a small number of weak minds avid for wonders. Otherwise, how can one explain that after these admirable proofs of zeal for the purity of the faith [ca. 970], the abbot of Fleury would have kept a culpable silence precisely at a time when the poison of such doctrines supposedly multiplied? [H]ence one can conclude that these [earlier] efforts remained without apparent results" (Plaine, "Les prétendues," pp. 454–55; see also Pognon, *L'an mille*, p. xiii; even Duby, *L'an mil*, p. 36). Most recently, Mostert has characterized the passage as so unrelated to the rest of the letter that it might be called an "author's interpolation" (*Political Theology*, p. 51 n. 38).

<sup>115</sup> See above, n. 80.

<sup>116</sup> "Coram populo"; cf. the comment from Elipandus of Toledo that Beatus taught his apocalyptic heresy "populo praesente" (above, n. 70). It seems that, although one should not engage in apocalyptic speculations, one gravely compounded the matter by sharing them with the population.

<sup>117</sup> If it were any other church, Abbo would have likely written "quadam ecclesia."

<sup>118</sup> See *Blickling Homily* 11 (Ascension), ed. R. Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, Early English Text Society, Original Series, 58, 63, 73 (London, 1874–80; repr. 1967), p. 119; analysis in Prideaux-Collins, "Satan's Bonds."

<sup>119</sup> Jerome mentions some chronologists who, in the apocalyptic aftermath of the fall of Rome in 410, dated the end to 430 years after the Passion (i.e., some 50 years away): *In Ezechielem* 4.4, PL 25:46B; Landes, "Lest," p. 159.

based calculation predicted the end of the world when the Passion and the Annunciation coincided on Friday, March 25, the very date of the creation of Adam.<sup>120</sup> This calendrical coincidence occurred three times in the final generation before 1000—in 970, 981, and 992. Apparently this rumor had already become serious at the approach of 970, when Abbo was still a youth. To the west of Paris, in Anjou, the above-noted annalist not only dated the year 1000 to this same period but also reported prodigies for the year 965 that have more than a hint of apocalypticism—“fire from heaven throughout the kingdom, demons appearing.”<sup>121</sup>

Those disposed to see these fragmentary allusions to apocalyptic discourse as so much flotsam and jetsam dismiss the preacher as a lone chiliast whom Abbo soundly defeated before a presumably approving crowd.<sup>122</sup> A reading more attentive to the dynamics of apocalyptic debate *coram populo* considers three sides—two clerics disagreeing publicly over how best to deal with an apocalyptic crowd. The debate displays precisely the traits we can expect during the final century before every millennial date as a once antiapocalyptic chronology inexorably mutates into its opposite.<sup>123</sup> Opposing the now-outdated Carolingian *augustinisme chronologique* of the Parisian preacher, the true Augustinian Abbo argued on the basis of Daniel (according to Jerome’s exegesis) and Revelation (according to Augustine’s) that man simply cannot know the time of the end.

The most striking aspect of debate, therefore, is not its content but that it occurred in public. Although Abbo may have been both theologically and historically correct, that hardly means that his *ecclesiasticae doctrinae* carried the day. On the contrary, the likelihood that people in the crowd walked away infused with a deep appreciation of Augustine’s radically agnostic eschatology seems low. As Daniel Milo put it, “One can hardly imagine the ignorant masses of ‘believers’ accepting, even understanding the Augustinian exegesis upon seeing the year 1000 appear on the calendar; at that point symbolic, allegoric, and anagogic readings of the

<sup>120</sup> On the patristic and Carolingian origins of this calculation, see David C. Van Meter, “Christian of Stavelot on Matthew 24:42, and the Tradition That the World Will End on a March 25th,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 63 (1996), 68–92. See also Eduard Weigl, “Die Oration ‘Gratiam tuam, Quaesumus, Domine’: Zur Geschichte des 25. März in der Liturgie,” in *Passauer Studien: Festschrift für Bischof Dr. Simon Konrad Landersdorfer OSB zum 50. Jahrestag seiner Priesterweihe* (Passau, 1953), pp. 57–73.

<sup>121</sup> “Hoc anno, iv idus maii, in maxima parte hujus regni, in omnibus fere villis in quibus ecclesiae sunt, caelestis ignis sine vento et tonitru ac turbine, non hominem neque pecus ledens, cecidit et in quibusdam locis daemones in forma luporum, ad imitationem capraearum balantes, apparuerunt et nocte auditi sunt.—Finis chronicae Frodoardi” (Halphen, *Recueil d’Annales angevines*, p. 58). Only one manuscript copy of Flodoard’s own text includes anything similar: “Mira et inaudita inundatio pluviae et fragor tonitru ac coruscatio fulgoris decima Kalendas Augusti accidit”: MGH SS 3:407, addition in BnF lat. 5354, Limoges, mid-eleventh century.

<sup>122</sup> “Un phénomène unique en son genre” (Pognon, *L’an mille*, p. xiii). See below, n. 156.

<sup>123</sup> Eusebius introduced *annus mundi II* just as Lactantius emphasized no more than 200 years to the next millennium (*annus mundi I*); Jerome and Augustine insisted on *annus mundi II* just as Hilarius announced 101 years to go (*annus mundi I*); Bede introduced *annus Domini* and *annus mundi III* just as Fredegar counted 63 years left (*annus mundi II*); the Carolingian historians developed the “annual” based on the *annus Domini*, just as Beatus counted 14 years left (*annus mundi II*), etc. (extended treatment in Landes, “Lest,” pp. 149–56, 169–70, 174–78).

Scriptures would have had an opacity that pushed the limits of fraud.” But since Milo does not believe that the year 1000 brought with it any significant apocalyptic expectation, he is then forced to make an error-laden assertion: “‘Luckily’ for the church, one might say, the potentially terrorized were completely ignorant of the approach of the funereal date, and especially of its passage without results.”<sup>124</sup>

Despite the numerous errors, Milo has intuitively expressed a key insight here—at the approach of 1000, with signs and wonders multiplying, the populace would have no patience for Augustinian eschatology. If Augustine himself had already tried these arguments with an apocalyptic bishop to no avail,<sup>125</sup> how could a young monk, opposing an older clerical preacher, succeed with illiterate commoners at the approach of 1000? It was precisely because Augustinian eschatology proved so useless in the face of apocalyptic fervor that alongside this “official” position, clerics readily revisited older, less austere (and more dangerous) teachings like the sabbatical millennium and its Augustinian Carolingian variant.

Only Milo’s (multiple) misconceptions of the situation have prevented him from following his own logic to its conclusion. How can one speak of the “complete ignorance” of commoners about the date when Abbo himself tells us that a fairly sophisticated computistical prediction had spread through “almost the entire world,” leaving apocalyptic expectations in its wake? More plausibly, once one understands the dynamics of apocalyptic dating, the commoners were fully aware of the year 1000; and, at its approach, the Carolingian clergy found itself in a particularly uncomfortable situation. It is far more likely that the *populus* of Paris walked away from that debate still more anxious and uncertain, more receptive to apocalyptic rhetoric, than that they left feeling reassured by the young monk’s formal Augustinianism. As with Augustine himself, Abbo’s victory here may have been postapocalyptic and posthumous, and most decisive among later historians who overvalue the composers of surviving texts.<sup>126</sup>

If Abbo’s battle against the Parisian cleric went perhaps less well than modern historians might imagine, what about the epistolary debate with the Lotharingian computists? After all, the case was clear: all Abbo had to do was point out that Good Friday had fallen on March 25 dozens of times since the Passion, and never before with eschatological results. Again, the logic is more convincing to those of us who have seen many more such dates pass, whereas the evidence suggests that even after the three dates before the year 1000 had passed inconclusively (I shall return to the final two), March 25 retained its apocalyptic fascination for at least

<sup>124</sup> Milo, “L’an mil,” p. 263.

<sup>125</sup> Augustine had urged Hesychius to read Jerome on Daniel as an antidote to apocalyptic expectations in the aftermath of the fall of Rome, but Hesychius rejected the exegesis out of hand (his letter is included in Augustine, *Ep.* 198; above, n. 26).

<sup>126</sup> The copy of Abbo’s letter made at Fleury in the eleventh century contains marginal indications of the content. At the conclusion one finds the clearly *ex post facto* reflections: “Error finis mundi” and “De recta observatione adventus domini postposito errore” (London, British Library, MS Add. 10972, fol. 22v). For the modern anti-terrors school Abbo’s victory is self-evident: “. . . en quoi [his attack on the preacher] il réussit pleinement” (Plaine, “Les prétendues,” p. 153); Gouguenheim cannot believe that so poor an understanding of Augustine could be found in more than an isolated preacher, whom Abbo refuted (*Les fausses terreurs*, p. 132).

another three centuries. When the coincidence next occurred, in 1065, a huge group of pilgrims, led by the bishop of Bamberg, set off for Jerusalem, “deceived by the vulgar belief that that day would bring the Last Judgment.”<sup>127</sup> For Lambert of Saint-Omer in the early twelfth century, the date had become a veritable vortex of cosmic time: in his calendar the eighth day before the kalends of April (March 25) was the date of the creation of Adam, the binding of Isaac, the crossing of the Red Sea, the Annunciation, the Passion, and the Battle of Armageddon.<sup>128</sup> In 1250 the myth continued to inspire apocalyptic behavior. Matthew Paris laid down his pen that year, expecting the Lord’s advent on the first Passion of March 25 to fall in a Jubilee year.<sup>129</sup>

Matthew’s embarrassing adherence to this superstition offers us a key here. To those reasoning thinkers who might object, “Look how often it has happened without result,” the apocalyptic thinker replied, “This is the first time that it has occurred in conjunction with some imminent chronological coincidence.” For Matthew, it was the first Jubilee; for the people of the late tenth century, it was the proximity of the year 1000; for the people in 1065, it was the completion of the second great Easter cycle since the Incarnation. The passage of 970, then, would hardly have put an end to this kind of speculation; on the contrary, each successive tenth-century date would have carried still greater weight among apocalyptic hopefuls. This is, after all, the classic pattern among those disappointed by a failed prophecy—redate and intensify commitment.

At this point, I must turn to an aspect of Abbo’s computistical work that anti-terror historians have willingly cited as an example of chronological confusion about the *annus Domini* but never explored in this context. A year after the second apocalyptic date, 981, Abbo published his discovery of a significant mistake in the *era Incarnationis*: Christ was born twenty-one years earlier than Dionysius thought, and so, writing in 982 by this mistaken system, Abbo argued the real date was in fact 1003. Significantly, Abbo based his correction not on chronological data, but directly on the logic of eschatological expectation for when the Passion fell on March 25 (the previous year), seeking thereby to hoist these apocalyptic computists with their own petard. According to Dionysius’s calculations, only the Annunciation fell on March 25, not Good Friday. Indeed the only possible year the Passion could have fallen on that date was A.D. 12 according to Dionysius; hence the Incarnation (thirty-three years earlier) occurred twenty-one years before A.D. 1, and likewise, the year 1000 had already occurred, in 979.<sup>130</sup>

Abbo’s renewed concern with the Passion of March 25, and indeed his use of this date in order to correct the current, unanimously accepted calculation of the Incarnation, suggests that the apocalyptic expectations of 970 had revived in 981. For Abbo, this renewed strength called for a stronger dose of medicine, one that addressed the real problem in this apocalyptic speculation, namely, the approach

<sup>127</sup> *Vita Altmanni* 3, MGH SS 12:230.

<sup>128</sup> Liber Floridus (Ghent, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, MS 92), fols. 2r, 27v.

<sup>129</sup> Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, ad an. 1250, ed. Frederic Madden, Roll Series 44 (London, 1866–69), 3:97–98. See comments by Richard Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (Cambridge, Eng., 1979), pp. 49–77.

<sup>130</sup> The only alternatives were A.D. 1 and 91.



of the year 1000. Abbo's response—his effort to antedate a millennial year—goes back at least to Augustine<sup>131</sup> and may have been the intent of the Angevin annalist who placed the year 1000 in 968/69 (in which case he wrote his entry around the same time as Abbo). Like all the previous efforts, however, neither Abbo nor the Angevin annalist had any success convincing their contemporaries that the millennium had already passed. None of these corrections succeeded even in their monasteries of origin;<sup>132</sup> and this erudite dissension aside, all of England and Carolingian Europe followed the same date for the *annus Domini*, the one they found every year in their Easter tables. Rather than a time of uncertainty and doubt about the date from the Incarnation, the turn of the millennium marks the complete victory of Dionysius Exiguus's calculations as the standard European usage.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, Rodulfus Glaber, the Cluniac historian of the next generation, not only reflected the broad consensus of his day but may have even had Abbo and Heriger in mind when he wrote that “although in the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Old Testament the number of years that have passed since the moment of creation is different [i.e., A.M. I and II], we can be certain of the year of the Incarnation of Our Lord,” which he then dated according to Dionysius Exiguus.<sup>134</sup>

If Abbo failed to quiet apocalyptic expectations for the second Good Friday to fall on March 25 (981), and if, in fact, the closer to the year 1000 that this magical coincidence fell, the more potent it became, then the final occurrence would have been the worst: 992. Circumstances did not help. Since the collapse of the Carolingian dynasty in 987 (according to Adso, the last barrier to Antichrist), Halley's comet had appeared, in 989,<sup>135</sup> followed by a civil war that ended in basest treachery against the last Carolingian in 991. All this would have contributed to an apocalyptic mood. Indeed, two collections of original charters from Aquitanian institutions supposedly favorable to the Capetians offer some interesting reactions

<sup>131</sup> At the fall of Rome, and later in his *City of God*, Augustine had ridiculed those who, in the past, had believed in an earlier date (Landes, “Lest,” pp. 154–56); in A.M. I 5970 (470 C.E.) a chronicler updated Hilarius's chiliastic chronography and demonstrated that the year 6000 had occurred two years earlier (MGH AA 13:415–17; Landes, “Lest,” p. 162); in 681 Julian of Toledo attempted to prove that the year 6000 had passed six years earlier, in 675 (*De comprobatione sextae aetatis* 3.10, lines 100–148, ed. J. N. Hillgarth, *Sancti Juliani Toletanae Sedis Episcopi Opera*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 115 [Turnhout, 1976]).

<sup>132</sup> See A. Cordoliani, “Les manuscrits de la bibliothèque de Berne provenant de l'abbaye de Fleury au XIe siècle: Le comput d'Abbon,” *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte* 52 (1958), 148. The subsequent historiography at Fleury indicates that even his greatest admirers had rejected Abbo's system—Aimo, writing in the *Miracula sancti Benedicti* shortly after Abbo's death, dated the terrible and recent flood to “A.D. 1003, the sixteenth year of the reign of Robert with his father, and the seventh of his monarchy” (3.9; ed. E. de Certain [Paris, 1858], pp. 150–53); see also Helgaud, *Epitome vitae Rotberti pii regis* 22, ed. Robert-Henri Bautier and Gillette Labory (Paris, 1965), p. 110.

<sup>133</sup> Giry, *Manuel de diplomatique*, pp. 89–90.

<sup>134</sup> *Quinque libri* 1.1, pp. 2–5. Glaber wrote this preface at Cluny in the later 1030s, but his use of *annus Domini* reckoning dated back to the beginning of his work in the mid-1020s.

<sup>135</sup> Cited in *Annales Divionenses*, MGH SS 5:40; *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, MGH SS 3:68; and Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* 4.10; see also Patrick Moore and John Mason, *The Return of Halley's Comet* (Cambridge, Eng., 1984), p. 46.

to these events.<sup>136</sup> Beginning in January of 992 the charters of Nouaillé date King Robert's first year of rule to 991, that is to say, not to the time of his coronation (988), but to the time of the dastardly capture of Charles of Lower Lorraine.<sup>137</sup> At the same time, and for the first time, the scriptorium introduced the apocalyptic preamble "Mundi terminum adpropinquante," which its scribes used repeatedly in subsequent charters. At Saint-Hilaire in the final years of the millennium, a charter laments how "with the end of the world at hand, since men are driven by a shorter life, a more atrocious cupidity consumes them."<sup>138</sup> This text is striking: most allusions to a looming end of the world in charters and other literature formulaically add that men responded with fear and piously mended their ways. Here, on the contrary, we find a kind of fin-de-siècle mentality attested to nowhere else in the literature of the period. Whether or not one wishes to take this apocalyptic cupidity as an insight into the mentality of some of the castellans and their warriors in the closing years of the millennium, it certainly deserves more attention than it has received.<sup>139</sup>

Rather than fade away, then, the evidence suggests that each apocalyptic March 25 gained in strength in the final generation of the millennium; and its final passage in 992 would merely have primed the population for the advent of the millennium in eight years. This could explain why Abbo wrote his coda on apocalyptic movements to the king in 994, when he was fighting for survival against powerful enemies and serious charges.<sup>140</sup> By invoking his past opposition to such movements, Abbo played his trump card. He did not rehearse in his letter the arguments he had then used, not because, as anti-terrors historians confidently assert, they were irrelevant, but because they were by then well known and widely circulated in church circles. Those arguments formed, after all, the eschatological position

<sup>136</sup> These originals were therefore not subject to manipulation by twelfth-century cartulary compilers, who tended to eliminate "unnecessary" (not to mention embarrassing) preambles. See Alexandre Bruel, "Note sur la transcription des actes privés dans les cartulaires antérieurement au XIIIe siècle," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 36 (1875); Giry, *Manuel de diplomatique*, pp. 29–33, with an example of the removal of an eschatological formula from Saint-Maixent (pp. 32–33 n. 5); and *Chartes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Maixent*, ed. Alfred Richard, *Archives historiques du Poitou* 16 (1886), 1–46.

<sup>137</sup> For the symbolic significance of such a system, see Landes, "L'accession des Capétiens," pp. 160–61. Monsabert erased the negative meaning by noting that a January 992 charter, dated in the first year of Robert's reign, "est prise . . . de son couronnement à Reims, le 29 mars 991 [*sic*, for the date of Charles's betrayal at Laon]": *Chartes de l'abbaye de Nouaillé de 678 à 1200*, ed. Dom P. de Monsabert, *Archives historiques du Poitou* 49 (1936), 118 n. 2.

<sup>138</sup> "Et seculi imminente fine, cum homines brevior vita perurgeat, atrocior cupiditas p[er]urget": *Documents pour l'histoire de l'église de St-Hilaire de Poitiers*, ed. L. Rédet, *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest* 65 (1847), 74; datable by the treasurer Geoffrey (end of the 990s) and by the hand.

<sup>139</sup> "This [apocalyptic] preoccupation may have surfaced in certain circles at the approach of the year 1000, but it had no influence on the acts of our dukes of Aquitaine and [especially not] at Saint-Hilaire, where the most elevated teaching took place and where we find no trace of a belief of the end of the world in its charters": A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou* (Paris, 1903), 1:191–92. Nouaillé, Saint-Maixent, and Saint-Jean-d'Angély were all prominent ducal monasteries.

<sup>140</sup> On the situation, see the article of Jean-Pierre Poly, "Le sac de cuir: La crise de l'an mil et la première renaissance du droit romain," in *Droits savants et pratiques françaises du pouvoir (XIe–XVe siècles)*, ed. Jacques Krynen and Albert Rigaudière (Bordeaux, 1992), pp. 48–62.

of the church, which dated back to Augustine and which had repeatedly, at the approach of a target apocalyptic date, returned to prominence.<sup>141</sup> Rather, just as Augustine would have wanted it, discretion and ecclesiastical discipline were the order of the day. With his laconic closing remarks Abbo underlined both his importance as champion of “true” Augustinian eschatology and his importance in the ongoing war against apocalyptic expectation, whose greatest challenge loomed ahead in the year 1000. What better way for a beleaguered churchman to conclude a letter seeking royal support in his hour of need; and what more striking example of the king’s support could Abbo request than his closing plea for a council over which he would preside, called to restore church unity in matters of liturgy and *computus*?

A word to the wise is sufficient, especially in a letter that opens with a reflection on how, in difficult times, “when seized by phantasms of the mind, we sometimes say those things we should remain silent about, and fall silent about those things we should say.”<sup>142</sup> No better illustration of the intentional substitution of one discourse (“*quae dicenda*”) for another (“*quae tacenda*”) could be requested. The historian who insists that the brevity of the text on apocalyptic expectations indicates its lack of significance—after all, most of the letter is about “other things”—misses the point.<sup>143</sup> The implicit discourse informs, shapes, drives the explicit, written discourse. This letter was written by an antiapocalyptic theologian to the kings of France at the approach of 1000, deliberately putting himself forward as one who can deal with a widespread and growing problem.

As far as we know, the requested council never took place. On the contrary, rather than greeting the year 1000 with the unity that Abbo wanted to assure, France met it without any real guidance from the throne. Within a year or so of the letter’s composition, Robert II had succeeded to the throne, married the widow of his best ally’s worst enemy, defied the efforts of the church to block what it considered an incestuous marriage, and, come 1000, found himself under papal anathema—a political impotent and a spiritual outcast. The contrast with Otto III—maker of popes and kings, converter of nations, renewer of the glory that was Rome, *mirabilis mundi*—could not have been greater. Thus western Frankland entered the millennium in hierarchical disarray, while Germany entered it with a dominating ruler in charge. As we shall see, the impact of the apocalyptic wave of the millennium hit these two sociocultural entities differently, and had the paradoxical effect of galvanizing western Frankland.

<sup>141</sup> For an example of this process, see the wide dissemination around 1000 of Julian of Toledo’s antiapocalyptic treatise, *Prognosticon futuri saeculi*, largely drawn from Augustine’s writings, especially Augustine’s *De fine saeculi*, disseminated in Bede’s *De temporum ratione* (above, nn. 26, 37). For a discussion of how both these texts played in the work of the scriptorium at Saint-Martial of Limoges, see Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, pp. 92–97.

<sup>142</sup> Abbo, in fact, opens his letter to the kings, not with the normal salutations, but with a pointed reminder: “*Saepe contingit ut, dum nimius insurgentium calamitatum horror mentem fatigat, ipso horrore non ea quae dicere debuerat turbatus animus expediat, sed fantasmate cogitationum aliorum raptus, quae tacenda erant dicat ac quod est consequens quae dicenda taceat*”: Abbo, *Apologeticus*, London, British Library, MS Add. 10972, fol. 15v; ed. PL 139:461B.

<sup>143</sup> See the remarks of Patrick Geary and Timothy Reuter in Barbara H. Rosenwein et al., “Qui a peur de l’an mil? Un débat électronique aux approches de l’an 2000,” *Médiévales* (1999), 32–36.

6. THE APOCALYPTIC YEARS 1000:

MILLENNIUM OF THE INCARNATION AND MILLENNIUM OF THE PASSION

In the year of the Incarnation 1000, indiction 13, epact 12, concurrent 1, paschal term 9, the fourth of the kalends of April, the sixth day [of the week], with the monks celebrating the mystery of his passion and redemption, there was a great earthquake; not as often occurs . . . but the whole earth shook in every direction with a vast and general tremor, so that it might be clear to everyone what had been promised before by the mouth of truth. For these and other signs that were foretold as necessary having been fulfilled, from here already our hope grows more certain of those things that remain to be completed in order.<sup>144</sup>

Note here the unusual attention to the details of the date combined with an apocalyptic prodigy (Matt. 24.7; Rev. 16.18) that was part of a larger set—“these and other signs that were foretold as necessary”—that would bring about the fulfillment of “our hope.” It would be difficult to find a more explicit expression of apocalyptic expectations—hopes and terrors—directly linked to the year 1000 than this.<sup>145</sup> In fact, the text’s reference to “earlier signs” and the inexorable “fulfillment of our hopes” could well refer to the phenomena Abbo described in his *Apologeticus*—the preacher in Paris, the three March 25 Passions, and the attendant political convulsions and natural prodigies that “fit” the apocalyptic scenario.<sup>146</sup> Granted this is the only exactly contemporary text that gives us so explicit a narrative about an apocalyptic year 1000. But it does come from clerical sources who clearly believed in the apocalyptic drama they saw unfolding before them, and these circles are in Lotharingia, so notoriously apocalyptic according to Abbo. Is it an isolated fragment? Or the tip of an iceberg? To answer that question let us turn to the most elaborate and explicit treatment of 1000 in the texts from the period, the work of the Cluniac monk Rodulfus Glaber.

In three passages Rodulfus tells us that the central organizing principle of his work was the passage of the millennium. In his preface, dedicated to Odilo and the monks of Cluny, he proposed to tell of the “many events which occurred with unusual frequency about the millennium of the Incarnation of Christ our Sav-

<sup>144</sup> *Annales Elmonenses*, ad an. 1000; Bibliothèque de Valenciennes, MS 343, fol. 47v (contemporary hand), ed. MGH SS 5:12; also edited by P. Grierson, *Les annales de Saint-Pierre de Gand et de Saint-Amand* (Brussels, 1910), p. 153. The annals were composed at Saint-Vaast and then brought to Saint-Amand ca. 1012 by Richard of Saint-Vannes.

<sup>145</sup> Although this text has been available since 1844, anti-terrors historians never cite it; on the contrary they assure the reader: “Open the contemporary annals; leaf through the writings—impossible to find the slightest allusion to the superstitious terrors of the year 1000” (Plaine, “Les prétendues,” p. 148; also Lot, “Le mythe,” p. 647). Gouguenheim dismisses the text by arguing that the fact that no further entries discuss apocalyptic fears is a “proof” that the following years were calm and that no mass panics occurred (*Les fausses terreurs*, p. 134). For someone who dislikes arguments ex silentio (p. 63), this is an interesting “proof,” especially when one does not look. See below, p. 133.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Plaine: “In order for the appearance of such strange [apocalyptic] visionaries [of the 960s] to have any significance, one would have to show that they formed a school, that they left behind disciples as fervent for the maintenance of their perverse doctrine as they were zealous in its propagation; but no one has been able to do that until now” (“Les prétendues,” p. 153).

our.”<sup>147</sup> In his *Vita Guillelmi*, written around the same time, he reveals that this concern was not merely personal but the overarching historical vision of his mentor, the great Cluniac reformer William of Volpiano (died 1031): “For at [William’s] command I had already written the greater part of the story of the events and prodigies which happened around and after the millennial year of the Incarnation of the Saviour.”<sup>148</sup> And finally, as we shall see below, he takes the passage of the millennium of the Passion (1033) for the central theme of his own independent work (books 4–5). One might expect that the proximity to major ecclesiastical figures like William and Odilo would have assured a tempered pen on Rodulfus’s part. Nothing of the sort: the text is full of allusion, hints, and explicit mentions of apocalyptic and chiliastic beliefs and behaviors.

Most strikingly, at the end of book 2 (which traces the history of the western Franks from 900 to 1000), Rodulfus discusses the appearance of popular heresies around 1000 and links them explicitly to the fulfillment of prophecies in Revelation: “All this accords with the prophecy of St John, who said that the Devil would be freed after a thousand years [Rev. 20.7]; but we shall treat of this at greater length in our third book.”<sup>149</sup> This is in fact perhaps the single most un-Augustinian passage in the historiography of the early Middle Ages. It at once embraces the *augustinisme chronologique* described above (A.D. 1000 is at the end of the thousand years in Revelation) and contravenes Augustine’s explicit prohibition on interpreting the Book of Revelation in historical terms. Not until the later eleventh and twelfth centuries would such tendencies to historicize apocalyptic prophecies become part of the historiographical tradition in the West.<sup>150</sup> Rodulfus’s remark, however, coming at least two generations earlier, is all the more striking because it is written so long after the events in question. By the mid-1020s, when he wrote the end of book 2, Rodulfus and his Cluniac mentors had plenty of time to see that the Antichrist had not come and gone. Where some might see this chronological problem as an indicator that Rodulfus could not possibly have believed what he wrote,<sup>151</sup> I would tend to see that fact as underlining just how tenacious the belief, born of the moment, remained several decades later. To anyone familiar with Augustine’s prohibitions, the statement is pure defiance. And indeed, we have evidence that Rodulfus went too far with this statement: despite his promise to treat the period after 1000 (book 3) in the light of this apocalyptic exegesis, Ro-

<sup>147</sup> *Quinque libri* 1.1, pp. 2–3; written ca. 1035–40 as a revision of his original (now lost) preface to William of Volpiano, who had since died. For a more detailed analysis of Glaber’s eschatology, see Richard Landes, “Rodulfus Glaber and the Dawn of the New Millennium: Eschatology, Historiography and the Year 1000,” *Revue Mabillon*, n.s. 7 (1996), 1–21.

<sup>148</sup> *Vita Willelmi Divionensis* 28, PL 142:718; Neithard Bulst, in *Deutsches Archiv* 30 (1974), 485; trans. France and Reynolds (above, n. 17), pp. 294–99. This remark from the *Vita* is not considered by most anti-terrors historians.

<sup>149</sup> *Quinque libri* 2.12.23, pp. 92–93.

<sup>150</sup> McGinn, following the consensus of earlier scholarship, dates this development to the end of the eleventh century and the works of Rupert of Deutz (*Visions of the End*, p. 96).

<sup>151</sup> “Mais puisque Glaber écrit ses trois premiers livres des *Histoires* entre 1030 et 1035 [sic], comment pourrait-il évoquer la fin du monde pour l’an mil?” (Gouguenheim, *Les fausses terreurs*, p. 168). Apparently the author has no knowledge of the ways in which apocalyptic believers can extend their timetables (see Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails*, above, n. 16).

dulfus did not cite Revelation again, nor did he make any further explicit reference to this passage on the heresies of the year 1000.<sup>152</sup>

This lack of discussion hardly stems from the lack of interesting apocalyptic material from the early decades of the new millennium. The years after 1000 are unusually rich in distinctly apocalyptic incidents—prodigies near Orléans, a terrible famine, the horrifying plague of holy fire, a supernova spotted the world over in 1003–6,<sup>153</sup> and in 1009–14 more prodigies and disasters, a rain of blood, and the slaughter of Jews in response to al-Hakim's destruction of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.<sup>154</sup> While Rodulfus's language is steeped in apocalyptic allusion, however, he never goes beyond the use of euphemism.<sup>155</sup>

How can we understand this evidence? How could contemporaries—Rodulfus and his masters included—have understood the tumultuous time in which they lived? Clearly they could not have viewed it with the equanimity and temporal

<sup>152</sup> Note that in the context of his millennial theme, Rodulfus tells us of a serious falling-out that he had with William of Volpiano, just as he was composing the third book (*Vita Willelmi* 13, ed. Bulst, p. 294; see below, p. 137). Note also that this passage and the equally apocalyptic one on the year 1033 happen to be part of the two lost segments of the autograph manuscript (France, pp. lxxxii–lxxxvi). See below, n. 187.

<sup>153</sup> For 1003 the *Annales sancti Benedicti Floriacensis* reports the prodigies (BnF lat. 5543, fol. 22; ed. MGH SS 2:255 and PL 139:583); also *Miracula s. Benedicti* 3.9, pp. 150–53. In 1005–6 a devastating famine afflicted much of western Europe, associated with apocalyptic portents in several texts: *Annales Sangallenses* by Hepidannus: “Ecce fames qua per saecula non seivior ulla,” MGH SS 1:81; *Annales Leodienses* and *Laubienses*, MGH SS 4:18; *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ad an. 1009, MGH SS 3:80; *Annales Hildesheimenses* (above, n. 111), ad an. 1006; Glaber, *Quinque libri* 2.9 (who reports a famine lasting five years, ca. 1001–6); Hugh of Flavigny (based on Glaber); *Chronicon Turonense*, ad an. 1006; and Siebert of Gembloux, ad an. 1006. In May of 1006 a “new star” was sighted in the heavens; at the same time a chaplain of the emperor converted to Judaism (Albert of Metz, *De diversitate temporum* 1.6–7, 2.22–23, MGH SS 4:704, 720–23). Many sources report the nova: *Annales Leodienses* and *Laubienses*, MGH SS 4:18; *Annales Mosomagenses*, MGH SS 3:161; *Annales Beneventani*, MGH SS 3:177; probably Glaber, *Quinque libri* 3.3.9; and *Chronicon Venetum*, MGH SS 7:36. It was spotted around the world (see Bernard Goldstein, “The Supernova of A.D. 1006,” *Astronomical Journal* 70 [1965], 105–11), including by the Muslim caliph al-Hakim, who took it to indicate that he was the divinity incarnate: Josef van Ess, *Chiliasmische Erwartungen und die Versuchung der Göttlichkeit: Der Kalif al-Hakim (386–411 H.)* (Heidelberg, 1977).

<sup>154</sup> A rain of blood was seen on Palm Sunday 1009, and the sun turned a horrendous color red and failed to shine for three days, followed by a plague and death (*Annales Quedlinburgenses*, MGH SS 3:80). In November of 1009 the chiliastic Muslim caliph al-Hakim (inspired by the supernova of 1006) destroyed the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, provoking an apocalyptic reaction in the West including violent anti-Jewish outbursts (Glaber; Ademar; *Annales Lemovicenses*, ad an. 1010; and *Annales Beneventani*, ad an. 1010, MGH SS 3:177); see Richard Landes, “The Massacres of 1010: On the Origins of Popular Anti-Jewish Violence in Western Europe,” in *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed. Jeremy Cohen, Wolfenbüttler Mittelalterlichen-Studien (Wolfenbüttel, 1997), pp. 79–112. Between 1012 and 1014 various prodigies and natural disasters provoked the expulsion of the Jews from Mainz and led some to believe that the world was “returning to its original chaos” (*Annales Quedlinburgenses*, MGH SS 3:82–83; see also Albert of Metz, *De diversitate temporum* [previous note]).

<sup>155</sup> See, e.g., Grund's analysis of Glaber's discussion of the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre (which Glaber refers to as “the Temple”): Karl Grund, *Die Anschauungen des Rodulphus Glaber in seinen Historien* (Greifswald, 1910), pp. 51–53.

perspective of a modern historian.<sup>156</sup> More likely many of them, especially those most hopeful for an apocalyptic year 1000, extended and redated their expectations, as do so many apocalyptic believers. The first extension turned to 1003–4. After all, if as the Anglo-Saxon and Parisian homilists predicted and Rodulfus insisted afterwards, the year 1000 saw the release of Antichrist, then one should expect his defeat three and a half years later.<sup>157</sup> Rodulfus records that, three years after the millennium, Europe shook off the past (“reiecta uetustate”) and covered itself with a white mantle (“candidam . . . uestem”) of churches,<sup>158</sup> while Thietmar of Merseburg spoke of a new dawn illuminating the world (“seculo”) in 1004.<sup>159</sup> This may well have been William of Volpiano’s plan for Rodulfus’s *Histories*: the passage of the millennium and the release of Antichrist led to the millennial victory of the church, a kind of *augustinisme ecclésiastique*. The glorious renewal that the church presided over in the years after 1000 may have had its own millennial meaning for contemporaries—at last the era of true peace.

Of course, as Augustine had so emphatically pointed out, nothing in this world is perfect, and the brightest ecclesiastical reform can go sour, sometimes spectacularly so. As a result, by the mid-twenties, when both Ademar and Rodulfus set out to write their histories, the world was no less a *corpus permixtum*, with good and evil, faith and heresy, loyalty and treason permeating all social and individual life. But it was also much more intense: at the same time as King Robert burned heretics in his capital of Orléans, he met with the emperor to proclaim a universal peace; at the same time that the Peace assemblies met, the warriors continued to fight their vicious wars against God’s people. If the millennium had not arrived, these were nonetheless apocalyptic times. And when the millennium passed, a new date appeared—the millennium of the Passion. This was not merely convenient redating; it was the proper date according to the *augustinisme chronologique* of clerics like Thietmar of Emsiedeln. Again, I turn to Rodulfus, who, in the opening passage of his fourth book of *Histories*, written after the death of his mentor William of Volpiano and shortly after the passage of the year 1033, noted, “After

<sup>156</sup> Gougenheim’s book is filled with assumptions about the easy and widespread victory of Augustine’s eschatological agnosticism (e.g., *Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 100–105, 130–35, 168–70). For him, texts that seem to indicate apocalyptic expectation cannot mean what they say, since it would suggest that the cleric—here, Abbo’s Parisian preacher—“aurait oublié l’autre versant de l’argumentation de saint Augustin, à savoir que le nombre 1000 est à prendre dans un sens symbolique” (p. 132; see above, n. 126); or that Glaber—here speaking of heresy in the year 1000 as a fulfillment of Rev. 20.9—“ne pouvait ignorer cette grille [ticonien-augustinien] de lecture” (p. 170; see below, n. 188). Thus *augustinisme chronologique* is apparently a priori impossible, except in small, isolated cases.

<sup>157</sup> This reading would find support in Augustine’s discussion of whether the three and a half years would come before or after the thousand years of Revelation (*De civitate Dei* 20.13).

<sup>158</sup> *Quinque libri* 3.3.13, pp. 116–17. As Thomas Head points out, the adjective Glaber used here was not *albus*, but *candidus*, a term with considerable apocalyptic resonance, especially from Cluny (Thomas Head and Richard Landes, “Introduction,” in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*, ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes [Ithaca, N.Y., 1992], pp. 11–12); cf. anti-terror historians’ emphasis on Glaber’s optimism as a disproof of apocalyptic (hence gloomy) expectations, e.g., France, p. lxvi.

<sup>159</sup> “Post salutiferum intemeratae virginis partum consummata millenarii linea numeri et in quarto cardinalis ordinis loco ac in eiusdem quintae inicio ebdomadae . . . clarum mane illuxit seculo” (*Chronicon* 6.1, ed. Trillmich [above, n. 84], p. 242).

the many prodigies which had broken upon the world before, after, and around the millennium of the Lord Christ, there were plenty of able men of penetrating intellect who foretold others, just as great, at the approach of the millennium of the Lord's Passion, and such wonders were soon manifest."<sup>160</sup> This time, with William of Volpiano no longer looking over his shoulder, Rodulfus followed through on his promise. The millennial significance of this date then became the main theme of the fourth book, which centers on a devastating three-year famine that drove people to fear the end of the world, followed by a dramatic turnabout in 1033/34, when God and nature smiled upon man with clement skies and abundant harvests. This, in turn, provoked a wave of popular assemblies throughout France at which wildly enthusiastic participants believed they were forming a covenant with God to bring his peace to earth. The same year also saw an unprecedented mass of pilgrims on the road to Jerusalem, which prompted some contemporaries to speculate further on the approaching end.<sup>161</sup>

Nor does Rodulfus's evidence stand alone on this issue. A number of other texts indicate a sharpening of eschatological anxieties in the period just before the millennium of the Passion, some of which specifically deal with the year 1033:<sup>162</sup> a rain of blood in Aquitaine in 1028 (by Jerome's chronology, one year before the millennium of the Passion) elicited a remarkable correspondence about its significance between Duke William, King Robert, Bishop Fulbert of Chartres, and Abbot and Archbishop Gauzlin of Fleury and Bourges.<sup>163</sup> At least four sets of texts testify to radical Peace councils attended by large crowds in 1032–33, including the remarkable account of the northern bishops brandishing a "letter from heaven"—how far we have come from the Carolingian attitude of burning them!—to be found in the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium*, an account corroborated in detail and dated by the documentation from the Amienois.<sup>164</sup> The

<sup>160</sup> *Quinque libri* 4.1, pp. 170–71.

<sup>161</sup> *Quinque libri* 4.6.18 and 4.6.21, pp. 198–201 and 204–5. For a presentation of these passages as the "tip of the iceberg" see Landes, "On Owls, Roosters, and Apocalyptic Time," pp. 63–65; cf. Gouguenheim, who makes all the points necessary to understand the passages' context and yet concludes that only a minority of clerics had apocalyptic expectations and that the lay pilgrims had none (*Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 170–75).

<sup>162</sup> It should be noted that although 33 had become the most widely accepted date for the Crucifixion, a strong case could have been made from the chronographical traditions of the day for any year from 1029 to 1033 for the millennium of the Passion (see Landes, "Lest," pp. 196–97 n. 226).

<sup>163</sup> Edited by Robert Bautier in *La vie de Gauzlin par André de Fleury* (Paris, 1975), pp. 159–67. Although both respondents cite previous cases in the historical record to predict coming difficulties and encourage people to reform their ways, neither makes any reference to the fact that a rain of blood is the first of the Fifteen Signs before Doomsday (see Fried's analysis, "Endzeiterwartung," pp. 381–84; and Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, p. 179); Gouguenheim considers this a typical medieval concern over nonapocalyptic signs ("réflexes habituels au Moyen Age") and dismisses the possibility that Robert was concerned with the apocalyptic meaning of the prodigy because "le roi ne fait pas allusion à ce texte [*Apocalypse de Thomas*]" (*Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 127–30, citations from p. 128).

<sup>164</sup> Poitiers (Saint-Maixent, 1032), Vich (1033), Autun (1033), Amiens-Corbie (1033), and Beauvais-Soissons (1024–36); see Hartmut Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei* (Stuttgart, 1964), pp. 33–40, 54–69. David Van Meter argues that the Amiens-Corbie assembly, which he argues occurred in 1033 and unfolded under explicitly apocalyptic circumstances, was one of the wave of councils described in the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium* (Beauvais-Soissons) that Duby and those before him had dated between 1024 and 1036 ("The Peace of Amiens-Corbie" [above, n. 6], pp. 633–57).



most extensive corroboration of Rodulfus's account of the final years of the millennium of the Passion, however, comes from the independent writings of Ademar of Chabannes, another monk-historian, this one from Aquitaine: Ademar writes of the death of great and pious men,<sup>165</sup> the famine and anthropophagy,<sup>166</sup> the apocalyptic preoccupations,<sup>167</sup> the Peace councils,<sup>168</sup> and the constantly swelling mass of pilgrims to Jerusalem,<sup>169</sup> which, in its peak year of 1033, included even Ademar himself.<sup>170</sup> Finally, both these writers' testimony to the redating of apocalyptic expectations to the millennium of the Passion receives eloquent confirmation from a later eleventh-century hagiographical report: "With Robert holding the right of kingship among the Merovingians [*sic*], also known as the Franks, after the turning of a thousand years from the Passion of the Lord, with that millennial year completed, when the observance of Lent had been completed, and Good Friday had come, fiery armed troops were seen in the sky in many places [Rev. 19.14], prodigious to behold, terrifying the hearts of those who gazed in amazement. Immediately the rumor (an evil that moves faster than any other) reached the ears of many."<sup>171</sup> The text goes on to describe a classic ecclesiastical response to widespread panic at such terrifying prodigies—transferals of relics and public penitential processions—attesting to the pressures that popular apocalyptic agitation exerted on ecclesiastics at the advent of a millennial year.

<sup>165</sup> Alphonse V, king of León (May 5, 1027); Richard, duke of Normandy (August 23, 1027); William, count of Angoulême (April 6, 1028); Fulbert, bishop of Chartres (April 10, 1028); William V, duke of Aquitaine (January 31, 1030); and Robert II, king of France (July 20, 1031).

<sup>166</sup> See excerpts from his sermons written contemporaneously in Léopold Delisle, *Notice sur les manuscrits originaux d'Ademar de Chabannes* (Paris, 1896), pp. 293–96. On the famine there is further corroboration by Andrew of Fleury, *Miracula s. Benedicti* 6.10, ed. de Certain (above, n. 132), p. 233.

<sup>167</sup> On Ademar's apocalyptic concerns, see Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, chaps. 5, 6, 11, 12, 15; and Callahan, "The Peace of God" (above, n. 6), pp. 32–49.

<sup>168</sup> Most of Ademar's final work gives the detailed minutes of debates and sermons delivered at Peace councils in Aquitaine from 1029 to 1032/33. Historians regularly quote the decisions as reflecting some of the most radical measures adopted at such councils: e.g., on interdict see Edward Krehbiel, *The Interdict: Its History and Its Operation* (Washington, D.C., 1909), p. 17. Ademar describes how, in the aftermath of the disasters of the early 1030s, which were compounded by a "public excommunication" (i.e., interdict) "cuncti principes eorum inter se invicem justitiam et pacem foederent in manibus episcoporum" (Delisle, *Notice*, p. 296); on clerical celibacy see David C. Van Meter, "Eschatological Order and the Moral Arguments for Clerical Celibacy in Francia around the Year 1000," in *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York, 1998), pp. 149–75.

<sup>169</sup> *Historia* 3.69.

<sup>170</sup> "Hic est liber sanctissimi domni nostri MARCIALIS Lemovicensis, ex libris bonae memoriae Ademari grammatici. Nam postquam idem multos annos peregit in Domini servicio ac simul in monachico ordine, in ejusdem patris coenobio, profecturus Hierusalem ad sepulchrum Domini, nec inde reversurus, multos libros in quibus sudaverat eidem suo pastori ac nutritori reliquit, ex quibus hic est unus" (Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Voss. Lat. 8° 15, fol. 141v, written ca. 1050). Ademar was still in Angoulême in 1032 and in Limoges as late as June 1033 (see below, n. 176).

<sup>171</sup> *Miracula sancti Agili abbatis* 1.3, *Acta sanctorum*, August 6:588. The date is uncertain since the incident is also dated to the reign of Robert II (d. 1031), but in any case, the fixation on a millennial date is beyond dispute: "post mille a passione Domini volumina annorum. Ipso milenarii impleto anno, cum peracta quadragesimali observatione, sanctae Parasceves dies advenisset, visae sunt multis per loca multa in aere igneae acies, prodigioso visu corda se intuentium perterrentes. Extemplo fama (malum, quo non aliud velocius ullum mobilitate viget) multorum perculit aures."

Perhaps the most striking example of the power of apocalyptic beliefs at the approach of the millennium of the Passion and the difficulty that historians have in perceiving it comes from a contrast between the two major historians of the day—Ademar of Chabannes and Rodulfus Glaber.<sup>172</sup> Both began their histories in the mid-1020s; both were monks in reforming houses; both had the same extraordinary geographical range and covered many of the same stories (often, as we have just seen, corroborating each other closely); both have left autograph manuscripts of their histories, which permit us to reconstruct their lives and attitudes in some detail. Ademar makes no allusion to the year 1000 in his *Historia* and rarely describes things in apocalyptic terms, while Rodulfus structures his history around the years 1000 and 1033 and repeatedly comes back to apocalyptic themes and language. Anti-terrors historians like to contrast Rodulfus, the unreliable, gossipy, gyrovague, whose prattlings about the year 1000 reflect his own psychotic tendencies rather than those of his contemporaries, with Ademar, the sober, disciplined monk, of “seraphic imagination,” who showed no interest in the date or concern about the end, thus accurately mirroring the indifference of his generation.

A more careful investigation reveals a dramatically different picture. Ademar and Rodulfus were both trained in the Augustinian, antiapocalyptic school. Rodulfus, the less disciplined (or more independent) of the two, abandoned those restraints and wrote openly about millennial concerns when he came to the year 1000. This brought him into direct conflict with his mentor and sponsor William of Volpiano, forcing him to play down the explicit apocalyptic elements as long as he wrote under his abbot’s supervision. But he survived both William’s death and the passage of the millennium of the Passion, and came out a far more nuanced, mature, and revealing millennial historian. Precisely because he was a gyrovague, he gives us an unusually rich view of the larger world, something normally inaccessible to “good” monks who kept to the discipline of *stabilitas loci*.

Ademar hewed to the Augustinian line more closely, and both his *Historia* and his chronographical and computistical work testify to the effort: he eliminated dates and dropped the millennial formula *ut istum milliarium impleatur* from the historical texts he was using for his own work; he changed the date by *annus mundi I* that he found in a text to correspond to the current Bedan orthodoxy *annus mundi III*.<sup>173</sup> And yet his work indicates that he knew quite precisely what year it was, and as 1033 drew nearer, he became increasingly excited about currents of popular religiosity—the cult of St. Martial—that had developed in the Limousin over the previous generation in conjunction with the Peace of God movement.<sup>174</sup> Thus, in 1028 (or *anno Passionis* 995), he embarked upon the kind of “project” that monks normally do not engage in: on August 3, 1029, he almost single-handedly launched the apostolic cult of Martial with an elaborate liturgy that he had himself composed. Things went badly: he was humiliated before a huge crowd on the very day of the performance; the next day he retired in shame to his home monastery of Saint-Cybard of Angoulême, where the envious monks

<sup>172</sup> Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, pp. 16–19.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131–53.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50–74.

tormented him mercilessly. He ended up writing some 250 folios of systematically false accounts describing and documenting his glorious victories over his enemies at the great Peace council of 1031, forging a letter from the pope and the canons of the council.<sup>175</sup> His final work is riddled with apocalyptic preoccupations and rhetoric, and he left for Jerusalem on the great pilgrim wave of 1033, dying there along with the other one-way pilgrims that Rodulfus describes.<sup>176</sup>

In the end, what we find is a radical reversal of the picture drawn by the anti-terrors school. Ademar was the deeply disturbed and unreliable monk who, as a result of his instabilities, found his closely watched apocalypticism, repressed since the vision of his youth in 1010,<sup>177</sup> overwhelm him in his forties, bringing him to a premature death in the apocalyptic city of Jerusalem shortly after the millennial year.<sup>178</sup> Rodulfus, despite his early and sustained commitment to an apocalyptic reading of events, survived the millennial year 1033 and lived long enough to tell the tale with some detachment and some maturity. The careers and writings of both reflect the profound apocalyptic tenor of the age, not only in their own hearts, but in those of their contemporaries, clerical and lay. Emile Gebhardt, in a passage intended to dismiss Rodulfus's testimony as an isolated phenomenon, depicted him as someone who "seems to have lived at the bottom of some crypt of a Romanesque cathedral, by the flickering light of a sepulchral lamp."<sup>179</sup> The description has nothing to do with Rodulfus, but it certainly suits Ademar from 1029 to 1032.

#### 7. THE ANTI-TERRORS SCHOOL AND *AUGUSTINISME HISTORIOGRAPHIQUE*

At the end of this very incomplete survey of the evidence for an apocalyptic year 1000,<sup>180</sup> I come to a reformulation of the question and an interesting paradox.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 199–281.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 309–27. Giulio d'Onofrio has discovered in a manuscript from Saint-Martial of Limoges autograph marginalia by Ademar describing an eclipse on June 29, 1033 (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 1332, fol. 43v: "Anno incarnationis dominicae millesimo trigesimo tertio, tertio kalendas iulii, feria sexta, hora sexta diei, luna vigesima septima, eclipsis solis factus est. Quasi luna cornuta niger apparuit sol, cornibus non acutis sed retunsis et versis ad occidentem. Et subter candidus erat sol, sed nigredo illa quae super candorem erat contra oculos nostros faciebat quasi noctem. Et illa figura solis giravit se ab occidente in dextera parte usque in orientem, et stellae in caelo visae sunt, et fumus in aere a parte septentrionis visus est, et figuram capitis humani in nigrante sole usque ad mamillas viderunt multi. Sed ego Ademarus multum contemplatus videre non potui, nec mentior. Et contra orientem versa cornua solis longe post duas horas splendorem solitum receperunt" (*Excerpta Isagogarum et Categoriarum*, ed. Giulio d'Onofrio, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis*, 120 [Turnhout, 1995], p. xlix). I did not know of this text when I wrote my book (and I thank Johannes Fried for bringing it to my attention); it places Ademar in Limoges longer than I had speculated, suggesting that he had come to Limoges for the millennium of the Passion (the previous April) and was still there at Pentecost (in June). This new information will necessitate a revision of my conjecture about Ademar's final motivations, but the apocalyptic element is hardly in doubt. See Glaber's description of the same eclipse (characteristically replete with comments about a wider range of reactions than his personal ones): *Quinque libri* 4.9.24, pp. 210–11.

<sup>177</sup> Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, pp. 40–46, 299–308.

<sup>178</sup> Gouguenheim, who wants to call into question whether the "great pilgrimage of 1033" ever took place, does not mention Ademar's participation (*Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 170–75).

<sup>179</sup> Emile Gebhardt, *Moines et papes: Essais de psychologie historique* (Paris, n.d.), p. 60.

<sup>180</sup> The amount of material indicating apocalyptic expectation in the two millennial generations

Let us concede that there were, indeed, more apocalyptic expectations around 1000 than previously thought, and even some more specifically linked to 1000. Can one not still argue that the level of this apocalyptic expectation is not necessarily higher than at other times?<sup>181</sup> The answer—both whether and how much 1000 differed from earlier and later periods—will be determined by future research. The reason why we are in only the early stages of estimating the intensity of the apocalyptic turmoil of 1000 and 1033 and its impact on the generation that preceded each is that our historiography has yet to seriously address the issue. And therein lies the paradox: the unconscious Augustinianism of modern historiography has prevented it for over a century from even asking the questions or analyzing the relevant material. While Christians in the ninth and tenth centuries incorrectly invoked Augustine as they interpreted historically the signs and wonders at the approach of an apocalyptic year 1000, modern historians all too often unwittingly implement Augustine's theological teachings and systematically reject the apocalyptic interpretation of the historical texts those generations produced.<sup>182</sup>

Modern historians, in fact, have shown themselves to be a far more receptive audience for orthodox Augustinianism than the men and women we study. Thus adherents of the anti-terrors school have an aggressive naïveté in their approach to the texts, indignantly dismissing the possibility that the clerics who composed our sources might have been under tacit pressure, reaffirming as an article of faith that there can have been no "conspiracy of silence." However, in order to do so they must take the texts literally and avoid probing for allusions and hidden meaning. To dig for an archaeology of responses that lie buried beneath these literate and revisionary products "would be personal presumption and inexcusable temerity."<sup>183</sup> Thus they take at face value the decidedly theological and polemical testimony of the great minds who were correct to caution against apocalyptic beliefs (Augustine, Bede, Adso, and Abbo) and conversely dismiss the possible appeal that these men's opponents (e.g., Hesychius, the preacher in Paris) may have had for throngs of people who—unlike us—did not know that the apocalyptic signs they saw would not bring on the end.

This modern penchant of anti-terrors historians for the position of those revisionist Augustinians shows up most strikingly in the very argument and rhetoric of the attack on the apocalyptic year 1000. It reproduces that of Augustine's own attacks on millenarianism. In his various writings, especially in book 20 of the *City of God*, Augustine systematically dismantled the millenarian position by a series of maneuvers with precise corollaries in the anti-terrors case: he reduced the number of proof texts acceptable for discussion to the minimum, a list already

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(960s–1030s) is immense, and still being uncovered. In this article I have scarcely touched on events in Germany and England, and have not even mentioned the material from Italy, Spain, and eastern Europe.

<sup>181</sup> Bernard McGinn has recently commented that "medieval folks were in a more or less constant state of apocalyptic expectation," and "it is by no means clear that fears of the end were more general ca. 1000 than during any other period in the Middle Ages" (quoted by Bernstein, "Terror in A.D. 1000" [above, n. 33], p. 118).

<sup>182</sup> The most recent example of this error can be found in Gouguenheim, *Les fausses terreurs*; see above, nn. 46, 80, 151.

<sup>183</sup> Plaine, "Les prétendues," p. 157.

reduced by previous censure (anti-terrors position: “twelve texts, not one more”); he then disposed of all remaining texts that do not explicitly mention the belief in question (“this text, therefore, is to be excluded from the debate”); he also reversed the meaning of the most central text, Rev. 20.1–9 (“Abbo is thus untroubled by this lone millenarian”);<sup>184</sup> and, having reduced the case to a few, discounted texts, he covered with ridicule all those who chose to believe such superstitious nonsense for which no textual support existed (“Michelet’s ravings inspire in us nothing but a surpassing disgust”).<sup>185</sup>

Perhaps the most striking illustration of this unconscious Augustinianism is the notable discomfort historians of the anti-terrors school display when confronted with genuinely apocalyptic passages directly linked to the year 1000. Some report the exact opposite of what the text says,<sup>186</sup> part of a singular ability to “read out” any apocalyptic significance. Others deny the very existence of a particularly problematic text, part of a tendency to depreciate and exclude whenever possible.<sup>187</sup> And when representatives of this school do confront such texts, they resort to technicalities and exegetical gymnastics to dismiss their significance,<sup>188</sup> part of a

<sup>184</sup> For an example of the boldness with which Augustine reversed the previous understanding of Revelation, see his remarks on the millennial kingdom of peace as a “kingdom at war with its enemies” (*De civitate Dei* 20.9).

<sup>185</sup> All quotations here are from Lot, “Le mythe.”

<sup>186</sup> La Salle de Rochemaure describes Andrew of Fleury’s account of the famine of 1031–32 in the Loire valley as “un malheur tout local circonscrit à la Bourgogne”: *Gerbert-Silvestre II* (above, n. 4), p. 509; see also above, n. 49.

<sup>187</sup> E.g., Glaber’s text on heresies, the Antichrist, and 1000 (above, n. 161) poses almost insurmountable problems. Duval denied that the text existed: “Quelques auteurs [ont] falsifié les textes. Tel [Camille] Flammarion, qui, dans *La Fin du monde*, écrit: [Duval accurately cites the passage in question from Glaber.] Tout commentaire nous paraît superflu” (*Les terreurs*, p. 38). Ferdinand Lot, without checking Duval’s scholarship, added scorn to this false accusation: “Mais Flammarion vivait dans la lune ou dans un des mondes habités dont il proclamait la pluralité [Flammarion was an astronomer who predicted disastrous effects from Halley’s comet in 1910]: c’est là, sans doute, qu’il trouva ces lignes qu’il met sous le nom de Raoul le Glabre. Nul manuscrit de cet auteur conservé sur cette terre ne renferme rien de pareil” (Lot, “Le mythe,” p. 653). The autograph manuscript is missing folios at this point, but the text is in the twelfth-century Poitevin copy: BnF lat. 6190, fol. 31, and is unquestionably, indeed quintessentially Glaberian. Most historians, perhaps trusting Lot’s scholarship, assert that there Glaber makes no link between the year 1000 and the Apocalypse: Roy, *L’an mille*, p. 175; La Salle de Rochemaure, *Gerbert-Silvestre II*, p. 513 f.; Orsi, *L’anno mille*, p. 43 f.; Wolff, *Awakening*, p. 116 f.; McGinn, *Visions of the End*, pp. 89–90; and Stearns, *Millennium III*, pp. 30–32. Gouguenheim insists that since Glaber did not follow through with his interpretation of events through the lens of Revelation, as he promised to do in book 3, he was merely using this passage to make a noneschatological point; Gouguenheim then uses the absence of the passage in the autograph manuscript to argue that it may be an interpolation of the late twelfth century (*Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 169–70). Perhaps because he knows how convoluted such an argument would become were he to try to demonstrate it, the author leaves this as a mere suggestion, and a way of salvaging Duval and Lot.

<sup>188</sup> In his notes to Glaber’s *Quinque libri historiarum* Pognon has numerous passages to explain away: here Glaber speaks of the year 1000 and prodigies (preface), “but not the end of the world” (*L’an mille*, p. 267 n. 4); there Glaber links prodigies and the end of the world (1.5), “but [with] no mention of the year 1000” (p. 169 nn. 39–40); here Glaber cites Rev. 20 about Satan unleashed at the end of a thousand years in A.D. 1000 (2.12), “but he makes no mention of the end of the world” (p. 271 n. 68); finally Glaber puts prodigies, the end of the world, and the year 1000 together (4.4–6), “but it is the year 1000 since the Passion” (p. 274 n. 142, p. 275 n. 153). Gouguenheim’s book repeats this kind of analysis throughout.

rhetoric of indifference which they draw directly from the posturing of their sources.<sup>189</sup> When confronted with too much evidence to wave aside, one can always trivialize it as commonplace: after all, apocalyptic beliefs were merely the “banal doctrine of the church” and, in the Middle Ages, as common as lice.<sup>190</sup> All of these shifting stances have the same goal: to dismiss the apocalyptic year 1000 as a “figment” of the “romantic” imagination.<sup>191</sup> One might turn the argument around: the “nonapocalyptic year 1000” is a product of the unconscious Augustinianism of the modern historical profession.

The anti-terrors school has not only dominated our historiography for a long time, but it has also obscured some of the most interesting evidence we have available, most notably our understanding of the two “world” historians of the age: Ademar of Chabannes and Rodulfus Glaber. In order to shore up its position, the anti-terrors school has offered an anemic and impoverishing exegesis that seeks to dismiss rather than understand cultures that seem profoundly alien to theirs. If we try to spare the denizens of the first millennial cusp the embarrassment of having mistakenly, but creatively, believed that they lived at the time of the cosmic transformation, are we understanding them? Or trying to project onto them, and therefore protect, our own hard-won rationality? Who is afraid of the year 1000?

#### 8. RECONSIDERING THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION AND ITS ROLE IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

Let me conclude, then, with a brief list of the elements of that larger picture in turn-of-the-millennium western Europe that deserve an apocalyptic rereading:

##### *The Peace of God*

Its very name, given by contemporaries, suggests messianic hopes of a transformation of this world into a realm of peace and justice.<sup>192</sup> Its dynamics often followed a classic millenarian pattern: divinely wrought disaster, followed by collective public penance, crowned with redemption and a new society. Its brief but intense period of dominance correlates closely to an apocalyptic chronology of the years 1000—it came in two waves, each a decade before the two millenniums of the Incarnation and the Passion, with a particularly powerful and documentable

<sup>189</sup> Lot explains the disappearance of apocalyptic preambles from Cluny’s charters ca. 984 by suggesting that “the scribe who liked them died or changed jobs and his replacement preferred others” (“Le mythe,” p. 649).

<sup>190</sup> Giry, *Manuel de diplomatique*, p. 544; Bernhard Töpfer also considers such sentiments too banal to include in serious historical analysis (*Volk und Kirche zur Zeit der beginnenden Gottesfriedensbewegung in Frankreich* [Berlin, 1957], pp. 81–83), a point Frederick Paxton paraphrased by calling apocalypticism “as common as lice” in the Middle Ages (“History, Historians and the Peace of God,” in *The Peace of God*, p. 28), an image taken up by Janet Nelson to criticize my suggestion that the Peace had a significant chiliastic dimension; see her review in *Speculum* 69 (1994), 165.

<sup>191</sup> See McGinn’s comment, above, n. 33. Given the large and multilingual literature on the apocalyptic year 1000, it seems strange still to find such patently rhetorical dismissals.

<sup>192</sup> David Van Meter has treated this topic at some length in regard to the Peace of Amiens-Corbie in “The Peace of Amiens-Corbie” and in “St. Adelard and the Return of the ‘Saturnia Regna’: A Note on the Transformation of a Hagiographical Tradition,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 113 (1995), 297–316.

wave the second time around.<sup>193</sup> Characteristically, Michelet pointed to the Peace councils of the period as examples of millennial hopes at work, while later historians have pointed to them as proof of the absence of a paralyzing terror.<sup>194</sup> These Peace assemblies, where the ecclesiastical and lay elite met in open fields with large crowds of commoners in an atmosphere of religious revival, represent the first documentable case of a chiliastic movement that did not provoke a violent repression from authorities.<sup>195</sup> It also constitutes the first experiment in civil society on record in European history, and its later variants—especially the urban communes of the later eleventh and twelfth centuries—constitute the most socially and economically creative and prosperous elements of western Europe.

### *Popular Heresies*

Historians of the subject almost never raise the issue of apocalyptic expectations when dealing with the unusual rise of popular heresy around the year 1000, partly from a tendency to see Manichean or apostolic beliefs at the core of these communities. At least in the latter case, this should not exclude apocalyptic beliefs, since both Jesus and his disciples lived in a world shaped by an imminent expectation of the end.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, one might even define “apostolic Christianity” as the sectarian response of apocalyptic believers at once disappointed in their initial hopes (Jesus as triumphant Christ/Messiah at the first or the second Parousia) and fervent in their expectation of his return (the Second Coming)—precisely the situation of those popular heresies that appeared in such unusual numbers in the years between 1000 and 1033.<sup>197</sup> Whatever these dissenters believed, ecclesiastical writers like Rodulfus Glaber and Ademar of Chabannes unquestionably saw their appearance as signaling the time of the Antichrist and felt justified in contravening

<sup>193</sup> It is a little-noticed fact that Roger Bonnaud-Delamare’s dissertation on the Peace of God placed the movement specifically in the context of the apocalyptic expectations surrounding the two years 1000 (“L’idée de la Paix au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle” [Ecole des Chartes, 1941], esp. pp. 74–86), briefly reasserted in his “Les fondements des institutions de paix au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Mélanges d’histoire du moyen âge dédiés à Louis Halphen* (Paris, 1951), pp. 19–26.

<sup>194</sup> Compare “Ces excessives misères brisèrent les coeurs [des guerriers] et leur rendirent un peu de douceur et de pitié. Ils mirent le glaive dans le fourreau, tremblants eux-mêmes sous le glaive de Dieu. . . . [C]’est ce qu’on appela la paix, plus tard la trêve de Dieu” (Michelet, *Le moyen âge*, p. 231); with “Le monde de l’église, est il inquiet? Dans son ensemble, il ne parait guère. Les conciles sont fréquents. En France ils se succèdent: Charroux (989), Narbonne (990), au Puy-en-Velay (990), Anse (994), Poitiers (1000)” (Lot, “Le mythe,” p. 646).

<sup>195</sup> The most recent comments by anti-terrorists historians are from Barthélemy (“La paix de Dieu”) and Gouguenheim (*Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 178–85), who set up a false dichotomy of millennial movements and episcopal initiatives, thus missing the most remarkable aspect of the Peace of God. Their comments are invariably reductive and dismissive of evidence; cf. Gouguenheim on 1033 (pp. 183–85) with the rich and detailed reconstruction of events in Amiens by Van Meter (see above, n. 164).

<sup>196</sup> See above, n. 10; and, most recently, R. I. Moore, “The Birth of Popular Heresy: A Millennial Phenomenon?” *Journal of Religious History* 24 (2000), 8–25; and Richard Landes, “The Birth of Heresy: A Millennial Phenomenon,” *ibid.*, pp. 26–43.

<sup>197</sup> For a discussion of the apocalyptic undertones of the heresy at Arras, see Van Meter, “Eschatological Order” (above, n. 168); and Michael Frassetto, “Reaction and Reform: Reception of Heresy in Arras and Aquitaine in the Early Eleventh Century,” *Catholic Historical Review* 83 (1997), 385–400.

all precedent in exterminating them—perhaps another consequence of the *augustinisme ecclésiastique* of a William of Volpiano. Millennialism, especially popular strands, are, above all, politically subversive of aristocratic privilege; burning apocalyptic believers as heretics—obviously a political act—makes a great deal of sense.

### *Anti-Jewish Violence*

Because Christian eschatological scripts cast Jews in a number of key roles, both negative (the Antichrist will be a Jewish “False Messiah” and his first disciples will be Jews) and positive (a remnant of the Jews will see the light and convert to Christianity), unusual activity in Christian-Jewish relations often marks the intensification of apocalyptic expectations among Christians. In the early years of the eleventh century we have an unusual number of cases of forced conversion and mass violence against the Jews. Many of these came in the wake of the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre in 1009 by the Abbasid caliph, al-Hakim, a deed that provoked widespread apocalyptic reactions in the West and that ecclesiastical authorities blamed on the Jews.<sup>198</sup>

### *Mass Popular Movements*

The marked rise in pilgrimages, particularly to Jerusalem, the proliferation of saints’ relics and the forms that their veneration took, the various forms of public worship, from mass penitential processions to liturgical drama, all indicate a marked increase of interest in, and commitment to, Christian religiosity among the populace. Whether directly apocalyptic in inspiration (pilgrimage to Jerusalem, penitential processions) or the result of ecclesiastical efforts to channel such sentiments into more normative channels (relic cults, liturgical dramas), this heightened activity deserves particular attention.<sup>199</sup> The very novelty of the turn of the millennium lies in the discovery of forms of religiosity that involved both elites and commoners, thus giving mass movements an unusual strength at this time.

<sup>198</sup> In particular see the much underused study by Lea Dasberg, *Untersuchungen über die Entwertung des Judenstatus im 11. Jahrhundert* (Paris, 1965); also Hans Liebeschütz, *Synagoga und Ecclesia: Religionsgeschichtliche Studien über die Auseinandersetzung der Kirche mit dem Judentum im Hochmittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Heidelberg, 1983); and R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 27–45, 147–52. Specifically on the incidents of 1009–10, see Fried, “Endzeiterwartung,” pp. 469–70; Landes, “The Massacres of 1010”; and Daniel Callahan, “Ademar of Chabannes, Millennial Fears and the Development of Western Anti-Judaism,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995), 19–35.

<sup>199</sup> Töpfer, “The Cult of Relics and Pilgrimage,” in *The Peace of God*, pp. 41–57; Ludwig Schmugge, “‘Pilgerfahrt macht frei’—Eine These zur Bedeutung des mittelalterlichen Pilgerwesens,” *Römische Quartalschrift* 74 (1979), 16–31; Robert Fossier, “Les mouvements populaires en Occident au XIe siècle,” *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Comptes rendus des séances de l’année 1971* (Paris, 1972), pp. 257–69; and Jean Musy, “Mouvements populaires et hérésies au XIe siècle en France,” *Revue historique* 253 (1975), 33–76. Gouguenheim comments that if apocalyptic and chiliastic ideas were widespread among the populace, one might expect to see popular movements, which one does not in the period 950–1050 (*Les fausses terreurs*, p. 130). The author does not cite any of the four articles just noted (pp. 221–22), nor does he bring up this “missing” phenomenon as he analyzes (nonapocalyptically) such mass movements as the pilgrimage to Jerusalem or the Peace assemblies of 1033 (above, nn. 161, 178).



*Political and Religious Reform*

The two generations around the millennium saw some unusually pious behavior from both secular and religious leaders: an unusual number of kings, dukes, counts, bishops, and abbots became saints or, short of that, were remembered for their exceptionally pious acts—pilgrimages, charity, donations to the church, retirement to a monastery. Otto III's and Gerbert's extraordinary behavior around the year 1000 deserves to be seen as an intensified recapitulation of Charlemagne's and Alcuin's behavior around the year 600. Given the topos that the approaching end should encourage those with the means to give generously of themselves, and the characteristic effort of religious and political elites to dampen more revolutionary sentiments by offering serious reforms, one should look for the possibility that reform took on unusually radical dimensions in response to the more unbridled apocalypticism afoot. After all, not only would unrepentant lords—lay and ecclesiastical—fare ill at the Last Judgment, but even before that, they would appear to those convinced that the end was nigh as agents of Antichrist.<sup>200</sup>

*Transformations in the Conception of Christ*

Many historians have noted the dramatic new emphasis on the human Jesus at the turn of the millennium. He becomes an intensely historical figure—preaching, prophesying, suffering on the cross. The apostolic hagiography of the day, the enthusiasm of pilgrims for walking in his footsteps, even the first appearance of the relic of the “Holy Foreskin”—all attest to the emphasis on Jesus' human nature. More strikingly, both Rodulfus Glaber and Ademar of Chabannes report that at the height of apocalyptic signs and wonders, visions were seen of the Crucified One pouring out rivers of tears, an image unmatched for its emotion even in the most Gothic or baroque portrayals. Since the very crucifixion of Jesus represents the first apocalyptic disappointment of Christianity, then the intensification of his agony may well reflect the intensity of disappointment at the passage of 1000.<sup>201</sup>

*Economic and Social Development in France and Germany*

It is a commonplace that the eleventh century is at the core of an economic and social transformation of Europe that extended, virtually without pause, for the next two centuries (to the early fourteenth) and, with ups and downs, to this day. Medievalists speak of revolutions in agriculture, technology, commerce, law, urban life, literacy, military and colonial expansion, architecture and sculpture,

<sup>200</sup> For a survey of religio-political reform activity around the year 1000, see John Howe, “The Nobility's Reform of the Medieval Church,” *American Historical Review* 93 (1988), 317–39; for the apocalyptic element in church reform, see Fried, “Endzeiterwartung,” pp. 438–70.

<sup>201</sup> On Ademar's and Glaber's reports of visions of a weeping crucifix, see Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, chap. 14. On the Holy Foreskin, which first appears in the mid-eleventh century, see Amy G. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1995), pp. 172–81. On the crucifix, see the remarks of Duby, *L'an mil*, pp. 222–26; Stephen Nichols, Jr., *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography* (New Haven, Conn., 1983), pp. 110–19; and Fried, “Endzeiterwartung,” pp. 451–61.

etc.<sup>202</sup> Although France is not the only place where such transformations occurred, it was perhaps the single most powerful center of this vigorous new civilization and would continue as such for centuries. One of the primary sources of this cultural vigor came from the remarkable initiatives taken by commoners in all fields, and the still more remarkable receptivity to those initiatives on the part of the aristocracy. This unusual configuration of innovative collaboration between elites and commoners first occurs on a grand scale at the Peace assemblies, in the shadows of the two great millennial dates of 1000 and 1033, and clearly continued on a more restricted scale in the aftermath (communes and assarts). It is in this dynamic that we may look to understand how the cultural and social situation that so favored Germany at the approach of 1000 could, through the paradoxical workings of popular apocalyptic chiasm, favor France in the coming centuries.<sup>203</sup>

Once one turns, therefore, from the “terrors of the year 1000” to the hopes, fears, disappointments, and reprieves of two millennial generations, a new picture emerges. This analysis, of course, does not have to exclude other elements from the picture, other factors and forces at work, perhaps more slowly, that may have little or nothing to do with any kind of apocalyptic activity—climatic change, technological innovation, demographic trends, the behavior of Europe’s neighbors. On the other hand, analyses that cite those factors but that exclude apocalyptic concerns seem as partial as approaches that reduce everything to the “terrors of the year 1000.” For all its ephemeral volatility, its protean qualities, its documentary disguises, the phenomenon of apocalyptic expectations and chiliastic enthusiasms belongs within the purview of historical analysis of the millennial generation. Otherwise we fail to appreciate the hearts and minds of people who lived, not in our Middle Ages, but in their Last Age.

<sup>202</sup> For the most recent articulation of the thesis that the strikingly creative and aggressive culture of the later tenth and eleventh centuries is the beginning of European culture as we know it today, see Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton, N.J., 1993); for studies on the transformations of literacy, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J., 1983); on symbolism, Nichols, *Romanesque Signs*; on technology, the vast opus of Lynn White, Jr., e.g., “The Life of the Silent Majority,” in *Medieval Religion and Technology: Collected Essays*, Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies 13 (Berkeley, Calif., 1978), pp. 133–47; and on law, Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983). The relationship of these centuries-long trends to the cultural changes of the turn of the millennium is the subject of a highly polemical debate—rapid mutation or slow adjustment?—led by Dominique Barthélemy, *La mutation de l’an mil a-t-elle eu lieu?* (Paris, 1997); see above, n. 4, seconded in this context by Gouguenheim, whose book is a companion piece to Barthélemy’s: *Les fausses terreurs*, pp. 43–52. The debate, which these historians seem to think has terminated, has, I hope, just begun.

<sup>203</sup> Richard Landes, “While God Tarried: Modernity as Frankenstein’s Millennium,” *Deolog* 4 (1997), 6–9, 22–27, 41, 45; available online at <http://www.stealth.net/~deolog/297.html>.