Final Preparations: The Emergence of Human Agency in Christian Apocalyptic Speculation in the 10th and 11th Centuries

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

KATHRYN REYERSON, JOHN WATKINS, ADVISERS

November 2020

Acknowledgements

In an age when people throughout the world are asked to share the burden and responsibility of staving off a threat to all humanity, and when access to resources for academic pursuits can no longer be taken for granted, it is only right to remember those who have made this dissertation possible. Even in ideal circumstances, there is no end to the assistance necessary for a project like this to come together. At the University of Minnesota, I would like to thank in particular my advisors, Kathryn Reyerson and John Watkins, for their unending help and encouragement over the years; my committee, who had to appraise this work in rather unusual and far from ideal circumstances; the university librarians, who saw too much of me over the years; the Goodwin family and the Noonan Award in Medieval Studies, for their much appreciated generosity; the Pre-Modern Workshop, for valuable aid in helping me steer this project at an early stage in its development; my fellow graduate students, whose innumerable insightful and supportive conversations cannot be overstated; and the staff in the UMN history department, who made navigable the tedious, opaque, but necessary paperwork.

I am equally indebted to many other academic institutions and groups, including: the American Society of Church History, whose trust in me as a copy-editor both exposed me to invaluable new scholarship and helped me refine my discipline as a writer; my fellow panelists and audiences at meetings of the Annual Symposium on Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Saint Louis University, Missouri, the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, Michigan, and the American Society of Church History

at the American Historical Association, whose feedback, questions, and guidance were most helpful; the Saint Louis University Pius XII Library as well as its attached Vatican Film Library, whose patient librarian suffered a fool gladly; and Washington University's John M. Olin Library. When other sources were cut off, the Belleville (IL) Public Library and its helpful (and forgiving on late fees) librarians proved to be lifesavers. Likewise, the institutions and individuals who have made publications freely available online during quarantine are both numerous and deserving of praise, but I will make special note of the Hathi Trust and Matthew Gabriele (Virginia Tech). The "twitterstorians" of social media have also brought diverse, insightful, and encouraging perspectives on a near daily basis.

Most of all, I must thank my family and friends. I would like to single out Nicholas Ehlers for venturing into the labyrinth of medieval apocalyptic speculation for a friend. But none deserve more gratitude than Steph and Maggie, whose patience has been matched only by their constant support. How many spouses can say they sheltered with an apocalypticist during a pandemic, and how many children have listened to medieval prophecies as bedtime stories? Understandably, my family has eagerly awaited the completion of this project for a long time. Because of their love and tireless help, they have made the end possible.

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Abbreviations

ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 10 vols. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994–1995.
CCCM	*Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaeualis*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–present.
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–present.
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.
AA	*Auctores antiquissimi.*
SS	*Scriptores.*
SSRG	*Scriptores rerum germanicarum in usum scholarum*.
NPNF	A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994.
PL	*Patrologia Latina*. Edited by Jean-Paul Migne. 221 vols. Paris, 1844–1864.

Introduction

> And the Pharisees and Sad′ducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather; for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah." So he left them and departed.[1]

According to his followers, Jesus denounced his critics for being able to read the weather but not the prophetic significance of his ministry. The signs were there, but they failed to heed them. More recently and less seriously, the expression goes, "Everybody complains about the weather, but nobody does anything about it." This statement accurately summarizes the first millennium of Christian apocalyptic thought. For nearly a thousand years, the apocalypse[2] was something worthy of speculation, discussion, debate, and even energetic calculation. Opinions about whether it would come sooner or later, arrive suddenly or predictably, or follow one pattern or another were pursued by Christians of all stations. Some versions became widely accepted, even "orthodox," and some were deemed heretical and/or forgotten entirely by later generations. But in all cases for nearly ten centuries, no matter how little or much people talked about the apocalypse, no one thought there was anything they could do about it.

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[1] Matthew 16:1–4. Biblical quotations come from the Revised Standard Edition unless otherwise noted. Exceptions to this are when Scriptural passages are contained within another quoted work.

[2] "Apocalypse" can refer to an event or a text that discusses special revelation one has received. Throughout, I use the lower-case word "apocalypse" to refer to the concept of prophesied cataclysmic events related to, though distinct from, a Last Judgment; when capitalized, "Apocalypse" and "Revelation" refer to the last book of the New Testament.

The Christian apocalypse was like the weather: whatever it will be, it will come when it comes. It certainly will have a great effect on mortals down below when it arrives, and there are plenty of things humans can do while they wait for the rains, droughts, snows, or heat waves. But in many respects, one year is like another. Some bring ideal rains while some bring either terrible storms or hardly any water at all. But the yearly work continues of plowing, seeding, weeding, and harvesting. With the help of a prophet, one might predict a time of famine and prepare accordingly. But no one was in a position to change the weather itself. That was for God—and possibly his holy agents—to see to. He decided if the rains came early or late. But whatever the case, humans would do the same things down below. The only question was whether they would toil in joy or in sorrow.

Likewise, Christian apocalyptic thinkers debated many things from the foundation of the religion in the 1st century. The answers to the questions they asked might well lead to changes on earth, but such changes were only to be adjustments to the everyday work of the community of believers. The truly important things—baptisms, basic catechism, confession of sins, fulfillment of penance, celebration of the eucharist, care for the needy, preaching of the Gospel, doing good deeds, and worship of God—were unchanging. All were necessary to guide a sinful human toward the judgment seat of God having proven their worthiness, aided by grace, to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The more time passed after Pentecost, the more it became clear that most Christians would die long before Christ returned. Preparations for an individual's death were ironically more universal than anything one could do for the end of the world, since all would die but not everyone would experience the apocalypse. So, when speculation on the apocalypse intruded upon Christian

thought and action, it nevertheless meant only fine adjustments to how Christians understood and participated in seeking each individual's personal salvation. Christians talked about the apocalypse, and some of them changed a few of their habits, but no one did anything about the apocalypse itself.

But what could they, or anyone, do about the end of the world? A quick look at the 21st century will give us some ideas. In recent times, the idea of the world coming to an end has been imagined—both religiously and secularly, seriously and fantastically—in countless ways: nuclear war; global pandemic; climate change; meteor impact; alien invasion; robot uprising; zombie hordes; or even enormous monsters. Relative plausibility aside, each of these imagined scenarios often includes one underlying assumption: that humans will be responsible for either triggering or preventing the end of the world. Stephen O'Leary concluded his monograph on apocalyptic rhetoric by saying, "If we recall that our history's end has not yet been written, and that we ourselves are its co-authors, then perhaps we will come to see that no ending is inevitable, and that the saving bliss of catastrophe is a luxury we can ill afford."[3] This is indeed an optimistic, empowering sentiment that, I think, captures the general attitude modern Americans have about the possibility of the world ending, regardless of confessional affiliation (if any). The natural (or supernatural) world has certain tendencies and potentialities that are antithetical to our way of life, but humans, too, have a say in whether or not these come to pass. Some fringe groups still hold to fatalism and might long for the End— "the saving bliss of catastrophe"—but most

[3] Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 228.

people assume human responsibility and agency over our collective destiny. But the idea O'Leary expresses is decidedly a modern one. Where did it come from?

This study attempts to answer the question: when and how did European Christians begin to believe humans could have a role in determining the apocalyptic drama of the end of the world? Based on an analysis of mostly Latinate sources—which include biblical commentaries, political and religious treatises, ecclesiastical letters, prophecies, chronicles, sermons, *vitae*, and monastic records—it is my conclusion that the transition to a fully realized belief in humans as agents and not mere spectators of the apocalypse occurred in the 10th and 11th centuries. No one person, location, or moment in time produced this revolutionary view of prophetic human-divine interdependence. Byzantine political prophecy, Irish penitential practice, English vernacular sermons, Carolingian education, Ottonian diplomatic strategy, Lotharingian monastic reform, Italian theology of witnessing, Frankish violence and pacifism, and Christian perceptions of their non-orthodox and non-Christian neighbors all worked together to produce by the start of the 12th century a view of the apocalypse that, for all its explicitly religious outlook, was the predecessor of modern assumptions of human responsibility in determining our collective fate.

The seed of this dissertation was planted long ago through personal experience with apocalyptic predictions and contingencies. In my lifetime, according to those concerned with such matters, I have lived through perhaps dozens of apocalyptic moments, none of which (fortunately!) have been accurate in predicting the End Times. Each potential apocalyptic event was accompanied by the question (sometimes left unspoken): what

should we do about it? I have long since become "Augustinian" in my worldview, but my interest in the apocalypse and how it is perceived continued. This question remained at the periphery of my thoughts until I began my graduate studies and met Adso of Montier-en-Der, Queen Gerberga of Saxony, Thietland of Einsiedeln, Abbo of Fleury, and Rudolphus Glaber. The scholarship I read on them revolved around questions of how one established a date for the End Times, what events would foreshadow it, the nature of the prophesied forces of evil, and how many people truly believed they were living through the last days of this world. The more I studied, the more I realized one question was missing from the discussion: what do we do about it? In fairness, the question did exist among scholars, but it was also one they took for granted. They assumed, to my understanding, that doing *something* because one was concerned about the apocalypse was sufficient evidence of interest in the apocalyptic drama. This was not a satisfying answer. Meanwhile, I was told that Thietland, who believed the End would come around the year 1000 CE, was different from Abbo, who believed such date-setting was improper. What I found, however, was that both men shared an interest in preaching a "correct" version of the apocalypse. Whether one expected the Antichrist to arrive sooner or later, both felt compelled to do the same *something* for similar reasons, even if their specific lessons were contradictory.

After seeing this shared interest, I began to ask my sources the old question that had accompanied every potential apocalyptic event I had lived through: what should we do about it? I realized that one need not expect an imminent apocalypse to answer that question. I began looking into apocalyptic speculations from before and after the 10th century. In the later Middle Ages, I found plenty of things people believed could and should

be done as the End Times drew near, from arming themselves in mountain strongholds to crafting alchemical solutions. In the Classical era and early Middle Ages, I also found advice from theologians and commentators on what Christians should do. But while the later works repeated much of what had preceded them, the actions suggested by older authors lacked the variety and—dare I say? —excitement of those by younger writers. I began to think about the stark differences between apocalyptic thought from, say, the 4th and the 14th centuries. When did such ideas start to intersect? It was not until I had passed through Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages and returned to my old tenth- and eleventh-century sources that I began to see once more the types of advice that made late medieval apocalyptic speculation so colorful, to my mind, with their wild possibilities, contingencies, and expectations for fighting the Antichrist. But I was unconvinced that Adso alone was the sole originator of these changes, as inspirational as he was for later apocalyptic thought. What I discovered, as I have already mentioned, was a wide variety of ideas that mixed together starting in earnest at the beginning of the 10th century that, by the end of the 11th, had firmly established a new, though never dominant, tradition of apocalyptic thought. It was a tradition that placed human agency and contingency alongside divine providence, transforming the very essence of the question "What should we do about the apocalypse?" from a purely individual, internally focused problem to one that looked outward at human society.

In order to fully explain my understanding of the development of this tradition, I have divided this work into five chapters. Chapter 1 covers an extended period from the 1st to the end of the 6th century. In it, what I call the "old" apocalyptic tradition emerged and

flourished, in which Christians expected that God alone would be responsible for the start and course of the End Times drama. There were things humans were expected to do as the apocalypse came, but these were fundamentally identical to what Christians in non-apocalyptic times should be doing. This tradition, this core assumption, remained stable and unchallenged for half a millennium. In chapter 2, I explore the early signs of what would become a new competing tradition of apocalyptic thought regarding human activity starting in the 7th century. Two independent trends, one based on politics and the other on preaching, began in the Eastern Roman Empire and in Ireland and Great Britain, respectively. To be sure, neither self-consciously understood itself to be a new tradition in the manner I discuss. In many ways, they worked in tandem with the older apocalyptic perspective. Nevertheless, as these two ideas spread from their places of origin and comingled in the Carolingian empire, they inspired creative alternatives to the old tradition that incorporated both politico-social life and preaching. Chapters 3 and 4 explore the emergence and early implications of these innovations in the 10th century for Ottonian royalty and monastic reform, respectively. Chapter 5 finishes this examination by seeing how the new tradition became fully realized and integrated within European society during the 11th century through a wide variety of socio-religious movements, culminating in the apocalyptic motivations for and memories of the First Crusade.

As this study will show, there was a long-standing belief in European Christianity that too much interest in apocalyptic matters could be harmful. Scripture taught, "He who observes the wind will not sow; and he who regards the clouds will not reap."[4] Likewise,

[4] Ecclesiastes 11:4.

someone who heeded prophetic omens and timetables would fail to do what was proper in the here and now. But as will be made clear by the end, apocalyptic speculators in the 10th and 11th centuries did not use the weather, the signs of the End, as an excuse for inaction. Rather, they were watching the clouds to see what they could do to change them.

Chapter 1: Thy Will be Done: The Early Christian and Late Antique Apocalyptic Tradition

> Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.[1]

The concept of the apocalypse—meaning, in its broadest sense, a radical and sudden transformation of society—has taken on a multitude of manifestations in the modern era beyond the original religious connotations of an "unveiling" of the divine plan. Whether the apocalypse is evoked in the fanciful (zombie outbreaks), the unlikely (meteor strikes), or the frighteningly real (pandemic or nuclear warfare), questions accompany the cataclysmic scenario under consideration. How will we know when it will happen or what it will be? Is this something caused by humans, by nature, or a combination of the two? What, if anything can we do to prevent it, or can we refrain from a mistake that will cause its occurrence? What are the things that humans might do to speed up or encourage it? Are all people equal participants in this scenario or can individuals or specific communities fare better if they adequately prepare?

All these questions, save for the first, have largely been ignored in the study of medieval apocalyptic thought. The reason for this is rather straightforward: the long-debated mysteries behind the timing of the End, who the enemies of God will be, how they will persecute the faithful, and how Christ will ultimately defeat them have captivated the

[1] Mark 13:35–37.

imaginations of both medieval and modern authors.[2] The earliest followers of Jesus posed the foundational apocalyptic questions: "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"[3] Scholars have followed suit, and histories of medieval apocalyptic thought gravitate towards representations of evil, political and social conflict, or signs of impending world changes. This approach has unintentionally limited the study of apocalyptic themes in the Middle Ages, telling only part of the whole story.

If medieval apocalyptic beliefs are to be better understood, historians must also apply to them the same questions that modern, secular cataclysmic scenarios are subjected to. This means looking at what role medieval authors said Christians—the creators and consumers of apocalyptic speculation—were expected to play in the Last Days. Who were the principal actors, and were they individuals or collective bodies? What were their responsibilities as the End approached? Were they merely supposed to continue living orthodox Christian lives, or were they expected to change their behavior as tribulations mounted? Were they to be passive martyrs or active resisters, that is, spiritual or literal warriors opposing the Antichrist?

The answers to these questions are diverse and surprising. Among the various conclusions reached in the Middle Ages, some authors expected Christians to remain completely passive save for personal spiritual renewal. Others envisioned the faithful directly opposing the Antichrist and his armies but disagreed on the means, which included

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[2] Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), especially 1–7.
[3] Matthew 24:3.

armies, preaching campaigns, or even wonder-working alchemical potions. Still others believed transforming the social order itself would counter apocalyptic dangers, whether by means of the Peace of God movement, the Gregorian Reform, mendicant orders, or, at the end of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformation. Some groups (both among the orthodox and those deemed heretics) thought that Christians must separate from and flee the established (evil) social order already corrupted by the Antichrist and find protection in their own, self-regulated enclaves. That today we have an innumerable array of things which people believe might cause, prevent, accelerate, ameliorate, or guard against global catastrophe (whether on the national, small group, or personal level) is testament to the surge that apocalyptic preparations have undergone since these early speculations.

To my knowledge, no historical work has sought to explain the emergence of Christian agency in apocalyptic thought for the Middle Ages. This absence is not merely a surprising lacuna in a sea of scholarly thought on the topic. The question of human agency and the expectations for Christians prior to Christ's return is directly relevant to medieval concerns about free will, personal and communal responsibility, hierarchy and social bonds, and what and whom apocalyptic commentators valued. To correct this, it is necessary to start with the origins of Christian apocalyptic thought, its earliest influences, and the directions it took during the first few centuries after Jesus taught.

As I will argue, apocalyptic speculation in the Latin West transitioned from ignoring to accepting human agency as a potential factor in the End Times drama during the 10th and 11th centuries. This occurred through the influence of Byzantine political prophecy and Hiberno-British penitential travels meeting together in Carolingian territory

and combining with imperial and religious ambitions. The mixture of ideas was not planned, and likely not even recognized as such at the time. No single author or theologian was responsible for it, yet it found expression in, took shape because of, and guided the course of 10th and 11th century religious activity, both elite and popular. The end result was a new way of thinking about humanity's relationship to divine providence at the crucial point where time met eternity: the events preceding Christ's Second Coming. Among both the religiously and the secularly minded, the impact of this transformation in humans' understanding of their own agency regarding literal world-ending events persists to this day and informs our understanding of what our relationship to our own potential extinction is.

Therefore, to provide a solid intellectual foundation to what preceded the changes of the 10th and 11th centuries, this chapter will investigate Christian apocalyptic theories from the faith's origins to the end of Late Antiquity and beginning of the Middle Ages. What follows, however, is not an exhaustive analysis of every apocalyptic text written before the pontificate of Gregory the Great. The sources used have been selected because of their direct interest in apocalyptic matters, the importance of the author to later theologians, and as containing unique or, as is more often the case, representative views that were common in texts not otherwise used here. As will be seen, despite concerns for the End Times present as early as the 1st century and the upheavals Christians endured through persecutions, doctrinal disputes, legalization, imperial sponsorship, and the collapse of traditional governmental structures in the Western Empire, authors were slow to advocate for almost any form of active apocalyptic preparations outside of personal

spiritual edification during the first 600 years after the Crucifixion. That is not to say apocalyptic theorists had nothing to say on the topic. Despite their relatively limited content on the subject, Late Antique authorities held some very specific ideas about the role of Christians during the End Times. These views were not as self-consciously expressed as later thinkers, yet they consistently reveal how members of the faith saw their role in the end of days. While some Late Antique authors made some modest preparatory suggestions or recorded those of others, Christians for the first half-millennium after Christ's Resurrection saw themselves as completely at the mercy of Divine Omnipotence. With minimal exceptions, the faithful had few responsibilities as the End approached beyond a continuation of normal Christian activities. Our sources reveal that they believed the apocalypse was a confrontation primarily involving supernatural actors: angels, demons, specially appointed prophets preserved by God, and, of course, members of the Trinity. Human participants on the side of evil were ultimately subject to the devil, while Christians, when mentioned at all, remained for the most part passive observers (or, at most, martyrs) awaiting Christ's promised return and ultimate victory. This passivity, however, would be joined by another, more socially active perspective by the central Middle Ages. For the present chapter, however, it is necessary to discuss in detail how Late Antique Christians understood and expressed their role in apocalyptic events beginning with the origins of the faith.

Christian Apocalyptic Foundations: The New Testament

Christian understanding of an apocalypse emerged from older Jewish and Zoroastrian traditions. This included the assumption that humans were insignificant compared to the chief deity who controlled the fate of the cosmos. There were some things that humans and even whole states could do, when warned by a prophet, to appease Yahweh and make him turn from his declared course of action.[4] According to Norman Cohn, however, prophecy and apocalyptic were not coterminal for the Hebrews.

> The revelations that the apocalypticist received from God were very different from the revelations received by biblical prophets. There is no suggestion in the apocalypses that human beings can, by their obedience or disobedience, affect the shape of things to come. The future is already determined, in fact its course is already inscribed in a heavenly book. And its outcome will be different from anything foretold in classical prophecy. There will be a final judgment.[5]

Following their Jewish roots, the earliest members of the new Christian religion recorded and promulgated their own theories about the final days of the world before God would set everything in a just order forever. Jesus himself was particularly interested in declaring the imminence of the Kingdom of Heaven.[6] His emphasis on the apocalyptic has therefore been seen since the start of the 20th century as an important factor in the foundation of his church and in early (as well as modern) Christian self-identity.[7]

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[4] See, for example, the case of Nineveh, Israel's enemy, in the book of Jonah. The city was prophesized to be destroyed unless they repented, which they did and were spared, much to Jonah's dismay.

[5] Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 165.

[6] Ibid., 194–211; and Richard A. Horsley, "The Kingdom of God and the Renewal of Israel: Synoptic Gospels, Jesus Movements, and Apocalypticism," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism. Volume 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 2006), 303–344.

[7] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery, 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911), 313–376, 460–561; and

Despite the clear importance of apocalyptic thought in the formation of Christianity, however, the canonical Christian Scriptures do not contain a unified, unambiguous, self-contained record of End Time expectations and guidelines for how, or if, to prepare for earthly calamities preceding Judgment Day. Rather, the New Testament provides scattered apocalyptic details recorded by multiple authors and only one book expressly devoted to the topic. As part of Christian Scriptures, however, the faithful understood all direct references to the end of the world, and many others they considered implicitly relevant to the subject, to be authoritative in their understanding of the End Times. A brief look at some of the most explicitly apocalyptic passages will provide a first glimpse at Christian thoughts on apocalyptic preparedness as well as the inspiration and raw intellectual materials for all subsequent speculations.

The Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke

In the four Gospels, Jesus is said to have frequently spoken about the coming Kingdom of God. Much of his early appeal, it has been said, relied upon the apocalyptic nature of his preaching. Theologian Ernst Käsemann famously wrote, "Apocalyptic(ism) was the mother of all Christian theology."[8] Whatever his appeal to his later followers, the most direct statements by Jesus regarding the end of the world reportedly took place on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem shortly before his arrest and crucifixion. Three of the evangelists—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—produced similar accounts of Jesus's sayings on

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Ernst Käsemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," in *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1969), 82–107.

[8] Ernst Käsemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," 102.

the theme of the destruction of the Second Jewish Temple, the sign of his coming, and the ending of the world. These passages have collectively been known as the Olivet Discourse or the Little Apocalypse.[9] In all three accounts, after Jesus departs from the Second Temple, having prophesied its destruction, his followers come to him asking that he explain when this and the end of the world will occur and what signs would precede it. Jesus begins his apocalyptic discourse by warning his disciples to beware of false Christs and to be on the lookout for deceptions. He says that, in addition to this, the world will find itself plagued by wars, famines, diseases, natural disasters, and persecutions against his followers, some betrayed even by their kin. At that time, they would be brought before the secular authorities to be judged. Jesus provided encouragement for those who would suffer such abuses. Luke records,

> This will be a time for you to bear testimony. Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they will put to death; you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.[10]

In Matthew he says, "But he who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come."[11] Mark speaks in similar terms.[12]

A new, more pressing form of apocalyptic danger occurs after these persecutions and general calamities. Jesus says that when Jerusalem should become threatened by an

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[9] The so-called Little Apocalypse can be found in Matthew 24–25, Mark 13, and Luke 21.
[10] Luke 21:13–19.
[11] Matthew 24:13–14.
[12] Mark 13:10–13.

army and an unspecified evil, which had been predicted by the prophet Daniel, meek submission to persecution and death should be the guiding principle. Luke notes, "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it; for these are days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written."[13] Matthew adds, "[L]et him who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to take his mantle. And alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath."[14] Jesus then repeats his warning to beware of deceivers and false Christs.

> Then if any one says to you, "Lo, here is the Christ!" or "There he is!" do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Lo, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, "Lo, he is in the wilderness," do not go out; if they say, "Lo, he is in the inner rooms," do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man. Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.[15]

All three Gospel accounts then speak of signs in the sky and terrors on the earth increasing until at last the Son of Man returns with heavenly majesty as angelic servants gather together the living faithful from all parts of the earth. Despite the general note of danger, these are ultimately encouraging signs: "Now when these things begin to take

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[13] Luke 21:21–22.

[14] Matthew 24:17–20. Being written first, Mark 13:14ff is the earliest example of these flight prophecies. For discussion of their basis in a historical exodus of Jerusalemite Christians to Pella, Macedonia, prior to the Jewish War of 70, see Vicky Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making: Mark, Matthew and the Didache* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 101–134.

[15] Matthew 24:23–28.

place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."[16] To reiterate his point, Jesus provides a brief parable.

> From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.[17]

Jesus cautions, however, that the specific timing of these events is a mystery known only to God. Therefore, the faithful must remain vigilant and watchful. Luke speaks of avoiding faint hearts due to drunkenness and worldly cares by being watchful always, "praying that you may have strength to escape all these things."[18] Matthew (and to a lesser extent Mark) elaborates with multiple examples to reinforce the theme of watchfulness. Matthew first speaks of the victims in Genesis who were outside of Noah's ark feasting and marrying one another when the flood came and took them unawares. In his account, Jesus says, "Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left."[19] He then compares the Son of Man's coming with the return of an absent householder.

> Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the hypocrites; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.[20]

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[16] Luke 21:28.
[17] Mark 13:28–31.
[18] Luke 21:34–36.
[19] Matthew 24:40–41.
[20] Matthew 24:45–51.

Matthew concludes by relating several parables. The first tells the story of the ten virgins, among whom five foolishly forgot to provide themselves with enough oil for a wedding and were shut out while the other five wisely thought ahead and had enough. The second parable mentions three servants who were entrusted with their master's property but only two invested their resources and were able to give back twice as much as they had to start. The concluding passage in Matthew's version of the Little Apocalypse speaks directly to the conduct of God's faithful and how they will be judged according to how they served the Son of Man, or failed to do so, through their treatment of the hungry, naked, and the imprisoned people of the world.[21]

In terms of explicit directions for the faithful who would live to see the last days, the Little Apocalypse provides few details. Believers are certainly warned that they should expect persecutions. According to Luke, however, Jesus expressly discourages those brought before the authorities to prepare their defense in advance. Rather, the words that will confound their enemies will be miraculously bestowed: "Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict."[22] The only clear course of action specified are to those in Judea to flee to the mountains when Jerusalem is threatened. This, of course, can (and would) be read allegorically in later centuries, yet there existed within Christianity from the earliest times the belief that these statements

[21] Matthew 25:1–46.
[22] Luke 21:14–15.

were not apocalyptic but only for the fall of the Second Temple in the year 70.[23] Regardless, Jesus does not say precisely where in the mountains to make for nor what refugees should do once they arrive. Will they be in a community or scattered individuals? The Gospels are silent on these matters. The implication is that the flight would be sudden with no time for preparing supplies for an escape or even to retrieve them from one's home. Jesus, however, does caution repeatedly about making journeys to chase after false Christs. Indeed, avoiding deception is an oft-repeated though vaguely explained theme in all three accounts. There is one concern, however, that is far more strongly urged by Jesus in all three Gospels. Though said in various ways, the central advice for apocalyptic preparedness in the Little Apocalypse is summarized best in the closing words of Mark's account: "And what I say to you I say to all: Watch."[24] But as with the other pieces of advice, this remains general marching orders rather than specific tactics to face a clear threat. Nevertheless, these passages laid out the canonical words of Jesus during his earthly ministry to his apostles for apocalyptic readiness and activity, and watchfulness would remain important to Christian apocalyptic commentators and speculators up to the present day.

Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians

The first generation of Christians, as part of their understanding of the Gospel message, perpetuated the notion that the End was indeed approaching as they traveled around the Mediterranean Sea. Apocalyptic belief, however, was certainly not consistent

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[23] Francis X. Gumerlock, *Revelation and the First Century: Preterist Interpretations of the Apocalypse in Early Christianity* (Powder Springs, Ga.: American Vision, 2012), 81–90.
[24] Mark 13:37.

or unified, especially since Palestinian Jewish Christians were not the only people proclaiming an approaching Judgment.[25] There was, therefore, much misunderstanding and uncertainty among new Christian communities. One congregation among which these uncertainties became apparent was that of the Thessalonians, to whom the apostle Paul addressed two of his epistles.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians—written c. 50, making it the earliest extant Christian document—speaks to the moment of Christ's return and the transformations, for the living and the dead, that would take place at that time.[26] He tells his readers not to be "ignorant" about what is coming. This ignorance, however, is in relation to the process of Resurrection, which will be instigated by Christ and the angels. The comfort which Paul's words are meant to impart to the faithful rests upon God's power over death at the moment of Christ's return.[27] Paul finishes his first letter by likening the Lord's second coming to a thief in the night who comes at an unexpected hour. Perpetual readiness is needed, which includes sobriety, watchfulness, wakefulness, faith, love, and mutual encouragement. Paul concludes with a general exhortation to the Thessalonians, enjoining them to motivate the idle, respect those who labor among them, to avoid evil, to test but believe prophesying, to praise and pray continuously, and to continue all such edifying activities in order to remain blameless and holy in anticipation of the coming of Christ.[28] Thus, even when calling for moral separation from the sinfulness of the world, Paul's advice for the Thessalonians in this first letter remains general, as useful for someone awaiting the apocalypse as their own

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[25] Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come*, 220.
[26] McGinn, *Antichrist*, 41.
[27] 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.
[28] 1 Thessalonians 5:1–23.

physical death. Though he addresses eschatological events, Paul seeks to encourage typical Christian piety while assuring his readers that such attributes are precisely what will be important whenever Christ returns.[29]

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, apparently in answer to continuing apocalyptic anxieties felt by the community, deals with more specific issues preceding the Resurrection of the dead.[30] Here, rather than comforting his readers about the certainty of the Resurrection, Paul reassures the Thessalonians regarding the apocalyptic timetable. That day has certainly not come yet, he tells them, but it will. Clear signs, however, will precede it by which Christians will know the real Second Coming from a false one. Paramount will be a conflict from which will arise the "son of perdition" into clear view. But this great enemy to Christians will be prevented from coming sooner due to a force that, as Paul writes, was restraining him. When that force is withdrawn, however, this enemy will attain the height of his blasphemous power. As he arises deceptions will become common, and those who fall prey to them will be damned for withdrawing from the (Gospel) truth when Jesus comes and slays the son of perdition "with the breath of his mouth and destroy[s] him by his appearing and coming." Those who are faithful, however, should "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us," for the same God in whom they believe will "comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work

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[29] Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come*, 209.

[30] Though the authorship and date of 2 Thessalonians are not as firmly established among scholars as 1 Thessalonians, I treat it here as an authentic Pauline letter, as later medieval commentators would. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that the differences between the two letters do not necessarily prove different authors but rather different approaches to similar problems faced by the Christian community. McGinn, *Antichrist*, 42–45; and M. C. de Boer, "Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism. Volume 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 2006), 345–383, especially 375–376.

and word."[31] The remainder of the letter echoes the ending to Paul's first epistle, speaking of prayerfulness and praising obedience to religious authorities, the honor of labor, and community support and correction on spiritual matters.

Despite the rich attention these letters of Paul have received among apocalyptic commentators,[32] the apostle does not dwell on providing details about the time before Christ's return. Though his remarks bear similarities to some of Jesus's words in the Gospels, particularly regarding rampant deceptions encompassing the faithful, Paul avoids direct comment about what the faithful are expected to do as history reaches its climactic end. He certainly intends to provide the Thessalonians with comfort in both letters. For Paul, this means remarking on the signs of the End's approach, the deceptive character of the son of perdition—or Antichrist as he will come to be known, though Paul never uses the term—and, perhaps most importantly, the certainty that all of these things are part of God's plan. Evil will be defeated absolutely at the mere sight of Christ, and then the righteous dead and the living will be joined with God in eternal happiness. These are the most important reassurances Paul gives to apocalyptically anxious Christians. All they need worry about, according to Paul, is to lead lives in keeping with the Gospel message he and others have preached, self-policing their communities in order to be spiritually braced for whenever God chooses to remove the restraining influence that keeps the world safe.

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[31] 2 Thessalonians 2:1–17.
[32] Such as by Thietland of Einsiedeln in the 10th century, discussed below in chapter 4.

The Second General Epistle of Peter

Another canonical letter, the second general epistle attributed to the apostle Peter, also speaks of apocalyptic attitudes among early Christians. The letter takes time to come to eschatological material, slowly building towards it by first discussing the truthfulness of Christian faith in Jesus's life and his intrinsic connection to God the Father. Such truths are in sharp contrast to the unfortunate but unpreventable heresies and lies that will naturally arise. But ultimately, according to the author, the truth will live and the lie will be damned, just as God threw down the rebellious angels, flooded the earth in the time of Noah, and rescued Lot while condemning Sodom and Gomorrah.[33] Peter explains to his audience the deeper meaning of these events. If God can destroy whole cities or even the world in Noah's time but carefully preserve the lives of the righteous few, "then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."[34] As with Paul to the Thessalonians, Peter thus stresses how God protects the righteous, preserving them in his own chosen ways, from the common judgments.

The letter goes on to warn that, as in both the Gospels and Paul's letters, the End Times will be full of deceptions. Peter writes that "scoffers will come in the last days," spreading confusion about the End Times and casting doubt on the promised Resurrection of the dead.[35] Peter's answer to this is that such people have ignored a simple but important fact: God has always held full power over the heavens, the earth, and the waters, and by

[33] 2 Peter 2:1–7.
[34] 2 Peter 2:9.
[35] 2 Peter 3:3–4.

his command they will be dissolve by long-prepared fire. If God has not acted, it is because it is part of his plan, for he is patient and forbearing with plans that reach through unfathomable years. Nevertheless, he will inevitably act, and when he does his judgment will be sudden and unexpected, and no human works will survive the firestorm.[36] Peter then confronts his reader, saying, "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire!"[37] His words speak of human impotence and reverent fear in the face of Divine omnipotence. But in this letter, Peter echoes Paul that there is still hope and comfort in the shadow of such power.

> But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the forbearance of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him.[38]

As long as the faithful do not fall into error while maintaining the truth of the Gospel, they will be ready for the End Times. To Peter, as with Paul, an unquestionably sovereign God is the primary actor before the Judgment, and his divine prerogative remains absolute, no matter human (or non-human) efforts. In this context, Christian actions are therefore limited to submission to God's authority. Any other human deed that tries to act against this truth is inherently sinful and, as with all other ungodly works, will ultimately be burnt up in God's final display of cosmic sovereignty.

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[36] 2 Peter 3:5–10.
[37] 2 Peter 3:11–12.
[38] 2 Peter 3:13–15.

The Revelation of John

The Revelation (or Apocalypse) of St. John of Patmos represents perhaps the apocalypse par excellence and the principal source of nearly two thousand years of Christian apocalyptic speculation. Modern scholars have noted that the work—frequently though incorrectly attributed to the Apostle John—was intended to resonate with contemporary readers as an allegorical attack on oppressive Roman policies in the latter half of the 1st century.[39] Later and especially medieval Christians, however, believed John was remarking on the literal end of the world, even if they admitted the work could be read historically and not just prophetically. However it is read, John's work stands as an incredibly elaborate yet perplexing treatment on the End Times. Its power lies, in part, in ambiguous and bizarre imagery with which the book is replete. It is a "multivalent" text that uses dream logic, with both concrete and—literally—unimaginable tableaux, such as the six-winged creatures teeming with eyes that praise a slain but glorious lamb who is also the only one capable of unsealing a heavenly scroll.[40] The reader follows John through a brilliantly and confusingly illustrative vision of Heaven and the earth's future, detailing the rise of demonic powers over the world and God's miraculous judgments against the forces of evil. Throughout, Jesus Christ is depicted as the work's hero, overcoming the beastly dragon (Satan himself) and rescuing the beleaguered Church, Christ's own bride, at the end

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[39] Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Book of Revelation," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism. Volume 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 2006), 384–414; and Timothy Beal, *The Book of Revelation: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 33–42.

[40] Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, & Politics in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 34; and Beal, *Book of Revelation*, 30–31. See Revelation 4:1–5:14.

of time. The text is full of actions by armies, prophets, angels, demons, members of the Godhead, martyrs crying from their graves, and "first-fruit" followers of the lamb of God as the world is drowned under a seemingly endless deluge of mundane and supernatural catastrophes. These figures and images have thus provided no shortage of speculation on how the End Times might play out as Satan comes to exert direct control over the lives of earthly humans.

As a direct source of advice for apocalyptic preparations, however, John's Revelation is lacking in many details. Even those which it specifies remain ambiguous, allowing for literal as well as metaphorical readings of Christian actions in the text. Nevertheless, it is upon the raw data of this canonical book that future generations of Christians would construct many proofs for calls for specific actions in their own centuries.[41]

The text admonishes seven churches in Asia Minor to maintain moral and spiritual purity and uprightness, to repent and embrace Christ, to practice charity and good works, to avoid deceptions that might end in apostasy, to flee (whether physically or spiritually is unclear) all sources of corrupting, worldly influence, to listen to the Holy Spirit moving through the Christian communities, and to wait on the ultimate judgment and power of God. This advice, however, lacks consistent structure and is woven throughout John's text. Themes—based around the number seven—rather than plot provides the basis for most of the book's organization: letters to seven churches, seven seals loosed, seven trumpets blown, seven thunders spoken, and seven last plagues poured out.[42] Among the various

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[41] Pagels, *Revelations*, 171–175.
[42] Collins, "The Book of Revelation," 388–390.

septets, differences exist, but much is repeated or presented in slightly modified ways. A message from Christ to one of the seven churches, for example, can easily stand for the advice given to all. Christ commands the church in Thyatira to "only hold fast what you have, until I come. He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations."[43] Maintaining proper dogma and ethical standards while "conquering" in an unspecified manner future challenges are the limits to instructions given to the seven churches at the beginning of the book. Few details are added in the remaining text. Most of the miraculous events are aimed at unrepentant sinners or at humanity in general without specific advice for Christians encountering or living through these experiences. When Christian groups are mentioned, their actions are normally limited to requests for divine justice or praise of God.[44] Perhaps the most explicit (though not unambiguous) command for Christians living through these torrential days comes regarding the destruction of the arch-villain city of Babylon: "Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.'"[45] The exact manner of this exodus is left unexplained. Due to the highly stylized and metaphorical nature of John's book, it is unclear if this is meant to be a spiritual separation between Christians and their ungodly neighbors or a literal departure, reminiscent of Jesus's prophetic words on the Mount of Olives. If the latter, where are they to go? Are they to leave together as a corporate body or as individuals and small groups?

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[43] Revelation 2:25–26.
[44] See Revelation 6:9–11, 7:9–17, 8:3–4, 14:1–8.
[45] Revelation 18:4–5. Cf. Jeremiah 51:45.

If Babylon is symbolic of Rome, does that mean Christians should depart only from the capital of the empire or from other centers of Roman power? Or is the call to flee a purely rhetorical device? Whatever John's original sense, and however he would be interpreted by later generations, the advice given to Christians living through apocalyptic times is scant and shrouded by many unanswered questions.

Outside the Canon: The 1st and 2nd Centuries

The first generations of Christians, especially those living before the composition of John's Revelation, lacked the full text of what would become the New Testament or even the knowledge that such a canon of Scriptures would one day exist to ground future generations of the faithful. Nevertheless, with the circulation of texts and traditions accompanying the messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, early Christians tried to make sense of their new faith and the promises and responsibilities that came with it. This included the apocalyptic aspects of their religion: how they should prepare themselves for the End and what their roles in it might be.[46] As will soon become clear, the most basic ideas about Christian apocalyptic preparations and responsibilities that would be dominant throughout Late Antiquity were present within the first 150 years after the Crucifixion. The early churches desired to maintain unity among their members, uphold the moral principles of their new faith, even in the face of persecution, redirect anxieties of the future into personal spiritual renewal, avoid heterodoxy, and, above all, take comfort in a God who

[46] David Frankfurter, "Early Christian Apocalypticism: Literature and Social World," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism. Volume 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 2006), 415–453, especially 432–446.

has control over history. What they did not emphasize from the writings and traditions of the apostles was anything that involved taking concrete actions to prepare for disaster as a separate, distinct part of God's plan for his church. If they ever did, the evidence bequeathed to us does not permit us any knowledge of what those preparations, if any, might have been.

The Didache

The Didache, or "The Teaching," contains one of the earliest expressions of Christianity outside of the canonical books of the New Testament. So primitive is its content that it may have been composed as early as the first century, before Christian belief was codified in the Gospels and, therefore, before John's Revelation.[47] The Greek work, likely a product of the eastern Mediterranean (Egypt or Syria),[48] was known by several ancient authors, including Eusebius and Athanasius, and used in the composition of fourth-century theological works, but it was minor enough to have been lost until a manuscript dating to the 12th century was rediscovered and published in 1883.[49]

The Didache is half moral entreaty and half liturgical guide. The first part of the short book contains a treatise on the Two Ways, that is, the Way of Life and the Way of Death. The Way of Life, as explained here, follows the same broad strokes about abiding by a moral code as discussed throughout the New Testament. Love of God, kindness towards neighbors and enemies, honesty, humility, generosity, confession of sins, and

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[47] Andrew Louth, ed., *Early Christian Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 187–190.
[48] Ibid., 187.
[49] Ibid.

communion with saints are praised as part of the Way of Life. The practice of magic, lies, thefts, sexual abuses, greed, pride, hypocrisy, infanticide, eating things sacrificed to idols, and blasphemy are hurtful to God and neighbors and are part of the Way of Death. The rest of the Didache shifts focus away from broad moral exhortation to specific church practices. These include how baptisms should be conducted, what days to fast, to pray the Our Father thrice per day, a liturgy of the Eucharist, the role of prophets and apostles and how to recognize frauds, emphasis on conducting worship on the Lord's Day, and a brief discussion of bishops, deacons, and alms-giving.[50] The final part of the text, before it ends abruptly, gives advice to early Christians concerning the Last Days.

The eschatology presented in the Didache discusses events at the end of time very briefly and does not venture to speculate on details about the "Deceiver of the World" or the "fiery trial" through which all humanity will pass.[51] Nevertheless, the Didache continues its moral admonitions to the faithful. It does this by combining its two major themes: moral correction and proper church discipline.

> Be watchful over your life; never let your lamps go out or your loins be ungirt, but keep yourselves always in readiness, for you can never be sure of the hour when our Lord may be coming. Come often together for spiritual improvement; because all the past years of your faith will be no good to you at the end, unless you have made yourselves perfect.[52]

The Didache goes on to talk about false prophets in the last days running rampant, sheep becoming wolves as love turns to hate, and sinful men persecuting the good. When this happens, the Antichrist, called here the Deceiver of the World, will gain worshippers

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[50] Anonymous, "The Didache," in *Early Christian Writings*, ed. Andrew Louth, trans. Maxwell Staniforth (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 191–197.
[51] Ibid., 197–198.
[52] Ibid., 197.

and assume control over the earth through miracles while committing terrible, though unspecified wickedness. Then, before Christ returns in glory, the whole world will suffer calamity: "After that, all mankind will come up for their fiery trial; multitudes of them will stumble and perish, but such as remain steadfast in the faith will be saved by the Curse [or Cross]."[53] Maintaining one's place on the Way of Life, holding one's faith through all temptation and adversity, is central throughout the Didache. This is especially true in its final passage about the End Times. To remain on the Way of Life, the author urges the faithful to keep the company of saints in order that their habits for sanctity may rub off on others. At the close of the work, the author reiterates the same point: frequent fellowship within the church community is the only advice given to help prepare someone for the temptations and trials that will accompany the Last Days. To this end, the author of the Didache has kindly provided specific instructions for maintaining a faithful church community, a community that correctly baptizes, celebrates the Eucharist, tests prophets, fasts, prays, meets regularly, and obeys its appointed leaders. The institution of the Church on the local level is paramount, for only its members, closely supporting one another, will keep one safe whenever the Deceiver of the World arises.

Clement and Ignatius

Not all early Christian writings contain explicit advice for apocalyptic preparations. The first-century letter of Clement of Rome to the church at Corinth (known as First Clement, though Second Clement is neither an epistle nor believed to be by the same

[53] Ibid., 198.

author)[54] makes no direct reference to apocalyptic concerns. The furthest he goes, though only as part of his general exhortations to lead a moral, repentant life, is to warn his fellow Christians to seek God's "mercy from the judgment to come."[55] Clement might have simply been referring to the general resurrection or the Last Judgment that would accompany it. Curiously, though, he adds, "For where can any of us flee to, from His mighty hand; or what sort of world will receive one who is a fugitive from Him?"[56] Such is all Clement has to say about a coming judgment, ambiguous as it is. Nevertheless, shortly after this, while discussing how to lead an upright life pleasing to God, like the Didache's author, he also advises remaining close to Christians of outstanding character and maintaining an ordered church community. As for his point that flight from God is futile (a conscious reiteration of Psalms 139), it is possible Clement only had an eschatological rather than an apocalyptic judgment in mind. That is, he might have only been concerned with his audience's spiritual well-being at the Last Judgment and not any temporal tribulation as the world came to an end. Therefore, he might not have been specifically discouraging Christians from abandoning society in anticipation of the Last Days. Nevertheless, as will be seen later, the question of flight from apocalyptic disaster would continue to be discussed throughout Christianity's early centuries. Clement's early and ambiguous denunciation against fleeing God's providential judgment should thus be kept in mind.

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[54] Louth, *Early Christian Writings*, 19.
[55] Clement of Rome, "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians," in *Early Christian Writings*, ed. Andrew Louth, trans. Maxwell Staniforth (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 34 (hereafter "1 Clement"). See also St. Clement of Rome, "Epistle to the Corinthians," in *ANF* 1, p. 5–21.
[56] Clement of Rome, "1 Clement," 34.

Ignatius of Antioch provides more explicit (albeit still abbreviated) apocalyptic concerns than Clement in his letter to the church of Ephesus. Immediately after explaining how Christians are to pray for unbelievers, not to return violence done to them, and to lead lives of virtuous example in order to encourage conversion—even having competitions among believers to see "which of us can put up with the most ill-usage or privations or contempt" from the world—Ignatius reminds his readers that "[t]he end of all things is near."[57] This means Christians "from now onwards" must be especially humble and "tremble at God's patience, for fear it should turn into a judgment upon us."[58] Ignatius further writes, "Let us either flee from His future wrath, or else embrace His present grace; no matter which, so long as we are found in Jesus Christ with our true life before us."[59] His advice proposes flight, yet, coupled with an admonition to seek stronger faith in Christ, it appears to be spiritualized escape from evil. Considering how he had just finished explaining how Christians ought to imitate Christ through enduring violence, hatred, and want as witnesses before their abusers, Ignatius can hardly mean literal departure from society. He follows shortly afterward with familiar advice: "Do your best, then, to meet more often to give thanks and glory to God. When you meet frequently, the powers of Satan are confounded, and in the face of your corporate faith his maleficence crumbles. Nothing can better a state of peaceful accord, from which every trace of spiritual or earthly hostility has been banished."[60] As with the Didache, a reminder to beware of lapses in faith

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[57] Ignatius of Antioch, "The Epistle to the Ephesians," in *Early Christian Writings*, ed. Andrew Louth, trans. Maxwell Staniforth (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 64 (hereafter "Ephesians"). See also Ignatius of Antioch, "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians," in *ANF* 1, p. 49–58.
[58] Ignatius of Antioch, "Ephesians," 64.
[59] Ibid., 64.
[60] Ibid., 64.

as the End approaches is coupled with a call for strengthening the community ties within churches. This was an especially important point for Ignatius. Though his other letters contain little or no apocalyptic concerns, order and unity among believers—contrasted to perceived pagan disorder around him—is a topic he invokes throughout his writings.[61] Ignatius thus implicitly agrees with Clement that actual flight from God's judgment is pointless and explicitly with the Didache that believers must form ever closer bonds with each other, especially Christians of renowned faith, in order to be prepared for whatever the End will bring.

Irenaeus—Against Heresies

Specific actions by Christians remained underexplored during the 2nd century, as evidenced in Irenaeus's polemic *Against Heresies*. In his fifth book, in addition to advising faith communities to improve their moral standards by working closely together, Irenaeus discusses the Antichrist, persecutions, Christ's Second Coming, millennialism, and the General Resurrection. These two ideas—eschatological matters and moral improvement—go together because the approaching end of the age, as it is part of God's creation, is of particular benefit to the just, according to Irenaeus. Humans, especially those destined for union with God through Christ, are the main beneficiaries of creation. It was made for them, not they for creation. As such, all that happens in time can and should be made use of for personal purification and deepening of faith. Those who are apostate or otherwise blind will not see the valuable opportunities present throughout history and will be blown

[61] Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 41–120, 296–308.

away like chaff rather than learn from it. This is especially the case when tribulations mount up towards the end of this present (and last) age. Irenaeus goes so far as to say that "tribulation is necessary for those who are saved" since it is the ideal means by which Christians are reduced to their most essential parts by God.[62] Of all the mechanisms by which creation provides opportunities "preparing and rendering [the righteous soul] more adapted for eternal subjection to God," the tribulations accompanying the Antichrist will be "the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption."[63] Nevertheless, though Irenaeus speaks highly of the salvific value of End Time martyrdom, these trials are ultimately the final episodes of a long series of options available to Christians to demonstrate their faith. Aside from the intensity of the dangers, there is nothing qualitatively different about the Antichrist's persecutions compared to those that precede him which would require special instructions for overcoming them.

During his discussion of the Antichrist, Irenaeus only mentions one piece of apocalyptic speculation that had the potential to influence Christian actions. Can the Antichrist's name be known in advance and thus provide Christians with warning when such a name gains prominence? Nevertheless, in answering this question, Irenaeus discourages apocalyptic preparations. He addresses the cryptic number of the beast, 666, agreeing with Scripture that the number must refer to a name. What that name is, however, cannot be known with certainty. Because of the intentional obscurity in John's Apocalypse and the many possibilities offered by Greek alphabetic numerals, any speculation would be just that. "It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfilment of the

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[62] Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," in *ANF* 1, p. 557–558.
[63] Ibid., 558.

prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved."[64] Though Christians would like to know whom 666 signifies and thus be forewarned when such a name gains prominence, Irenaeus opposes this merely as incautious guesswork. The true bearer of the "number of the name" will be clearly manifest when he arrives without the need for over-enthusiastic speculation, and Christians will naturally avoid him. But the Holy Spirit, in his ultimate wisdom, has seen fit that revealing the Antichrist's name just yet is unnecessary. Whenever he does come, however, his reign will be short-lived, ended by Christ himself.[65]

Irenaeus, while acknowledging Christians' desire to speculate about and anticipate the End Times, did not believe it would yield useful results. God had provided all of history with opportunities to be active in the faith. The time of Antichrist would greatly increase the potential for martyrdom, but there was no reason to spend too much time trying to name him in advance of his era. God would see to it that Christians would not be taken unawares when the Antichrist revealed himself. No unique preparations would be necessary. Just as God has guided history for the sake of the righteous all along, everything would work itself out in its own time.

Relations with Rome before Constantine

The first two Christian centuries established the new faith and allowed it to grow. The churches knew, however, that they were in a dangerous position, even ignoring

[64] Ibid., 559.
[65] Ibid., 560.

apocalyptic fears. Roman authority had been the hand that drove in the nails at the Crucifixion. According to John of Patmos, the Whore of Babylon, inebriated by drinking the blood of Christian martyrs, sat upon seven hills, just like the Caesars.[66] This was not mere social critique. The fear of Roman persecution was real, made famous in the Acts of the Apostles and martyrdom accounts, like that of the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp (d. 155). Martyrdom helped define the early Church and soon became fundamental to its understanding of the Last Days, even if persecutions were in reality usually only infrequent and localized occurrences.[67] But martyrdoms were only part of still larger questions facing apocalyptic speculators. Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John of Patmos never explicitly said Rome would be the final enemy. They all spoke in veiled language. Rome might be the ultimate villain of history, or perhaps not, but someone would be the great oppressor. When the final persecutions came, what were Christians to do? Whom should they fear, Rome or another? Whether Rome was archvillain or not, what role would it play during the End Times and, by extension, what should Christians do about it? Such questions were increasingly on the minds of Christians in the 3rd century, no doubt due to the dual crises of church persecutions and internal state turmoil across the empire. The years prior to Constantine's success were troubling for both Christian and pagan subjects of Rome. Despite the state pressures, however, Christians refused to think of withdrawing wholesale from Roman authority in anticipation of the Apocalypse. In fact, the difficulties seem to have drawn many church authorities into seeing Rome not only as a necessary evil but as an unsuspecting ally in the

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[66] Revelation 17:6, 9. See also Pagels, *Revelations*, 29–35; and Collins, "The Book of Revelation," 386, 398–400.
[67] Frankfurter, "Early Christian Apocalypticism," 436–437.

world's final drama. In praising Rome in such a manner, however, Christians still refrained from inventing new apocalyptic responsibilities. Rome, even when it was aligned against the forces of ultimate evil, could do nothing against the will of God the omnipotent.

The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity

Martyrdom accounts serve several beneficial functions within a faith community. First, they provide a record of how a saint proved his or her sanctity and subsequent right to veneration. Second, they show how nobly and unjustly the victim died while maintaining steadfast belief, which can be useful for proselytizing converts intrigued by such devotion unto death. Third, they offer a template for potential future martyrs facing similar persecution. The tale of saints Perpetua and Felicity (d. 203), one of the oldest and most famous Christian martyrdom accounts, was expressly preserved with this final point in mind. The identity of the original editor of the martyrdom, who included what purports to be Perpetua's own thoughts while in prison awaiting execution, is unknown. It has been argued, however, that with the account's emphasis on "new prophecy," the work represents a Montanist perspective.[68] The editor frames Perpetua's story within the wider context of exemplary tales and exhortations. He saw the martyrdom account as evidence that the Holy Spirit was still providing revelations worthy of emulation—and here is where the editor demonstrates Montanist sympathies—as good as, if not superior to, older examples of faithfulness. Perpetua's example of the Holy Spirit in action through her prophetic visions

[68] See Rex Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions": Evidence of Montanism in The Passion of Perpetua and Felicita*s (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), especially 9, 44–57, 127–132.

leading up to her martyrdom is more recent than those within Scripture and therefore more worthy of attention:

> For these too will some day also be venerable and compelling for future generations, even if at the present time they are judged to be of lesser importance, due to the respect due to the past. But let those who would restrict the singular power of the one spirit to certain times understand this: that newer events are necessarily greater because they are more recent.[69]

The editor continues by explaining that the value of contemporary prophecy and exempla have special significance "because of the overflow of grace promised for the end of time. In the last days, says the Lord, 'I will pour out my Spirit on my servants and handmaidens; and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.'"[70] Acknowledging the value of contemporary martyrs and prophets like Perpetua was a way to uplift those "weak or despairing in their faith" who believed God's grace was a thing of the past. Publishing a story of how the Holy Spirit worked within a saint before her execution was thus more than merely an exemplum for those who would be persecuted by the Antichrist.[71] It was evidence that God's grace was flowing out to the faithful because the time was soon approaching and the churches should take comfort in new prophetic utterances. Though non-Montanist Christians would object to the belief that new revelations could supersede Scripture, the idea that martyrdom accounts could prepare the churches for the End Times through the heroic retelling of saintly determination was not at all controversial. Nevertheless, without room for "new prophecy," this meant *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* would provide important but otherwise non-revolutionary

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[69] Thomas J. Heffernan, trans., *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 125.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

catechetical guidance for apocalyptic activities.[72] That is, it explained how one could endure as a martyr but not what other options were open for those who would live to see the Antichrist's persecutions.

Tertullian

In addressing Roman pagans, the former Montanist Tertullian, unlike Perpetua's editor, hoped to express solidarity with all members of the empire in wishing to avoid the End Times. Certainly, he believed in the importance and righteousness of Christian martyrs, writing that "the blood of Christians is seed" for the Church's further growth.[73] Tertullian's stance against Roman customs that interfered with Christian theology—particularly on the question of making sacrifices to the emperor—was also firm. Nevertheless, he hoped to strike a conciliatory middle ground that would allow Christians to be an accepted part of the empire without bending to pagan practices and beliefs. In his *Apology*, Tertullian explains that Christians, while disinclined to offer sacrifices to the emperor, nonetheless offer up prayers for his well-being. To this he adds for his Roman audience a deeper reason why his coreligionists wish for the peace of the state.

> There is also another and a greater necessity for our offering prayer in behalf of the emperors, nay, for the complete stability of the empire, and for Roman interests in general. For we know that a mighty shock impending over the whole earth—in fact, the very end of all things threatening dreadful woes—is only retarded by the continued existence of the Roman empire. We have no desire, then, to be overtaken by these dire events; and in praying that their coming may be delayed, we are lending our aid to Rome's duration.[74]

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[72] Butler, *The New Prophecy*, 97–126.
[73] Tertullian, "Apology," in *ANF* 3, p. 55.
[74] Ibid., 42–43.

Tertullian repeats and elaborates on his claim that Christians as a body have eschatological reasons for praying for Rome's continuance a few chapters later. Christians, he says, "meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This violence God delights in."[75] During these communal prayers, Tertullian tells his audience that,

> We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation. We assemble to read our sacred writings, if any peculiarity of the times makes either forewarning or reminiscence needful. However it be in that respect, with the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast; and no less by inculcations of God's precepts we confirm good habits.[76]

Tertullian places prayers for the emperor in the context of wider church practice and moral concern. His chief interest is in convincing his fellow Romans that failure to sacrifice to the emperor in no way suggests Christians have ill will towards the state. By pairing this assertion with the claim that a stable empire is good not only for Romans but for Christians awaiting a non-Roman threat to inaugurate the End Times—"the final consummation"—Tertullian reinforces common bonds of civic responsibility that bridge religious divides. Such prayers for the emperor are offered up alongside recitation of Christian scriptures, discussion of common concerns needing "forewarning" or moral strengthening, and general reinforcement of "good habits." By these Christian prayers, Tertullian continues, many and varied disasters afflicting the world have been calmed.[77] In

[75] Ibid., 46.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 47–48.

his *On Prayer*, which addresses a Christian audience, Tertullian outlines the power Christians wield.

> But in days gone by, withal prayer used to call down plagues, scatter the armies of foes, withhold the wholesome influences of the showers. Now, however, the prayer of righteousness averts all God's anger, keeps bivouac on behalf of personal enemies, makes supplication on behalf of persecutors.…Under the arms of prayer guard we the standard of our General; await we in prayer the angel's trump.[78]

It is thus incumbent upon Christians to continue, and for Romans to permit, these prayers that will ward off evils in the world and especially the final evil that will bring this world to its "final consummation." Tertullian explains Christian civic responsibility across religious lines with an allusion to the parable of the tares and the wheat. God will not separate the good from the bad until the Final Judgment. Therefore, he explains, Christians naturally wish good on Rome so that they may also live well on the earth.[79]

Tertullian's conception of Christian activity prior to the start of the apocalypse is limited. In his *Apology*, this is partly a function of the audience to whom he is speaking. Nevertheless, as this chapter has argued, the lack of explicit, fully elaborated apocalyptic advice and expectations for Christians is itself in keeping with the first several centuries of Christian thought. For Tertullian, the only reason to explore even as much of Christian activity in relation to the "final consummation" as he does is because of the need to defend the faith against pagan adversaries who saw Christianity as a subversive enemy of the state. As for Christians themselves, Tertullian only speaks of the efficacy of prayer and that only for preventing the fall of Rome that would usher in the End Times. Prayer, as a routine part

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[78] Tertullian, "On Prayer," in *ANF* 3, p. 691.
[79] Tertullian, "Apology," 48–49.

of non-apocalyptic religious practice, is how Christians help uphold the state. And though these are Christian deeds, ultimately the power of prayer is dependent upon God. The fulfillment of prayer is evidence of His will and not of human agency. Tertullian's perspective on Christian activity in relation to the apocalypse is thus more a reiteration of the Divine will rather than an expression of human agency.

Victorinus of Pettau

The earliest extant commentary on the Apocalypse (and likely the first ever written) appears roughly two hundred years after John of Patmos recorded his visions. It was composed by Victorinus of Pettau (or Petovium) who likely died during the Diocletian persecutions in 304.[80] Through his commentary, Victorinus had the opportunity to develop and expound his speculations on apocalyptic preparations directly. Despite this opportunity, however, Victorinus only sprinkles suggestions about how he expects Christians to meet the tribulations to come throughout his work. Nevertheless, his commentary on the Apocalypse expresses and reinforces by then traditional ideas about apocalyptic preparation that would continue for several more centuries.

As with previous speculators, Victorinus's work emphasizes the power of prayer and the need for the mutual support of faith communities. Victorinus's particular ideas are almost certainly informed by the contemporary challenges confronting the churches and the assumption that Christians (present or at the coming of the Antichrist) must be encouraged to remain steadfast in the face of near-inevitable persecution. As such, the early

[80] E. Ann Matter, "The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 38–50.

chapters of the commentary emphasize the importance of preaching and penances, especially experienced through persecution.[81] Echoing the Gospels, Victorinus interprets the first of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse—a conqueror on a white horse with a crown and a bow—as part of Christian preaching. He writes,

> Through preachers the words of the Holy Spirit penetrate into the human heart as though they were arrows, and they conquer unbelief. The crown on the head is promised to the preachers by the Holy Spirit.…And therefore, the white horse is the word of preaching that was sent into the world by the Holy Spirit. For the Lord has said, "This gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to the nations, and then the end will come."[82]

The first horseman of preaching is followed in turn by destructive ones connected to the Antichrist.[83]

At first sight, these passages suggest Victorinus envisioned Christians having influence over the timing and course of the apocalyptic tribulations. Victorinus certainly extols the virtue of preaching, but he separates its execution from the Christian community in his later discussion of it. The task of proclaiming the Gospel and strengthening other believers is not given to rank and file Christians or even to priests but to a prophetic figure working on direct orders from God. Victorinus, for example, interprets the angel in the sun of Revelation 7 as the prophet Elijah "who was to come before the time of the antichrist to restore and to strengthen the churches from the intolerable persecution" and who will help bring Christians closer to Christ "through penitence" and "recall the Jews" to the true faith

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[81] Victorinus of Petrovium, "Commentary on the Apocalypse," in *Ancient Christian Texts: Latin Commentaries on Revelation*, ed. and trans. William C. Weinrich (Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 2–4, 8–10.
[82] Ibid., 10.
[83] Ibid., 10–11.

in him.[84] Victorinus later repeats his assertion that Elijah specifically will be responsible for the conversion of 144,000 Jews in total.[85] When the entire church and the 144,000 Jewish converts flee from persecution, the eagles' wings that carry the Church—that is, the leaders of this exodus—are the Two Witnesses: "Elias" (Victorinus means Elijah) and an unnamed second.[86] Though Victorinus had said preaching would precede the coming of the Antichrist, he clarifies that "this is the beginning of the coming of the antichrist. However, beforehand Elijah must preach, and there must be peaceful times. And when the three years and six months of the preaching of Elijah is ended, the dragon along with all the apostate angels is to be thrown out from heaven, where he had the power of ascent until that time."[87]

Victorinus may emphasize preaching that precedes the great catastrophes and announces the End Times, yet nowhere does he suggest that Christians are active participants. Rather, Victorinus, like his forebears, continues to attribute all agency to God and his direct agents. In this case, those agents include Elijah and another prophet, both of whom are like "angels" and eagles' wings. These prophetic, God-ordained, heavenly servants convert the Jews, preach in times of peace before the fall of Satan from heaven, protect the church during danger, and prepare Christian hearts for persecution and penitence. Christians reading Victorinus or their spiritual descendants may be *present* for these activities, but they will not be leading participants. At most, they must listen when

[84] Ibid., 11–12.
[85] Ibid., 20.
[86] Ibid., 16. For the Scriptural basis for the Two Witnesses, see Revelation 11:3–14.
[87] Victorinus, "Commentary on the Apocalypse," 17.

God's prophets preach, follow where they are led, and suffer patiently when the Antichrist catches them.

Victorinus does admit some importance to Christian activity in his commentary, though these responsibilities are quite limited to the understanding of Scripture in general and John's Apocalypse in particular. He castigates wealthy and well-positioned believers who have the luxury to study and interpret Scripture privately in their homes but who do not suffer for their faith nor share their knowledge with the community. According to Victorinus, "such persons [who study privately] would be of great benefit not only to themselves but to many" if they were active in their faith communities and led lives that could be examples to others.[88] Of course, such would be commendable outside of the apocalyptic age. Additionally, as with Tertullian, Victorinus stresses the importance of communal prayer in confronting the Antichrist. Ultimately, however, the prayers of the Church are "received and pour out against the kingdom of the antichrist…by the holy angels."[89] In other words, as with Elijah's preaching, heavenly ministers will execute what the church on earth should not even attempt to accomplish itself.

Victorinus established several important standards for apocalyptic exegesis for centuries to come, but his understanding of Christian activities leading up to and during the Antichrist's reign conforms to well-worn standards of relative Christian passivity—outside of individual and small group spiritual preparations—and heavenly agency in apocalyptic matters. As the commentary tradition continued, however, this would not always be the case.

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[88] Ibid., 5–6.
[89] Ibid., 12.

Lactantius

Lactantius (c. 250–c. 325) occupies a transitional point in Christian intellectual writing, when both hopes of a renewed golden age and fears of an inevitable Doomsday were intermingled in the Roman Empire. His *Divine Institutes* was composed just prior to Constantine's ascension to power in 312. After Constantine issued the so-called Edict of Milan the next year and thus legalized Christianity across the empire, Lactantius became a key advocate and educator for the emperor in understanding the newly favored religion. Nevertheless, his purpose changed little due to the events of 312 and 313. In the *Divine Institutes*, Lactantius sought to straddle the line between the Christian community and the world of Roman pagan sensibilities. The work set out to explain key Christian concepts to an educated audience that would not be quite as particular as the highest levels of the intelligentsia.[90] As such, Lactantius writes mostly from within the Roman intellectual tradition, wishing to reach an educated Roman audience to explain Christian belief in the context of this tradition and how it both fits with the good of pagan philosophy and rightly opposes the errors found in them.

After explaining a good many ticklish questions about Christianity, Lactantius reaches his finale in book 7, in which he writes about Christ's Second Coming, Judgment, and the blessed life after this one. By this point, he has already discussed the various

[90] See Oliver Nicholson, "Golden Age and End of the World: Myths of Mediterranean Life from Lactantius to Joshua the Stylite," in *The Mediaeval Mediterranean: Cross Cultural Contacts*, ed. M. Chiat and K. Reyerson (St. Cloud: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 11–18; and Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey, "Introduction, in *Divine Institutes*, trans. Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 1–54.

opinions of philosophies on matters of faith, error, wisdom, justice, worship, and how the proper (Christian) understanding of these things can improve both the individual and the community. These serve as groundwork for his discussion of the final purpose of proper belief and living, for which Lactantius delves into eschatological matters.

After some preliminary matters that emphasize the immortality of the soul and that God wants humans to act along specific lines in order to merit eternal rewards, Lactantius finally begins to explain Christian understanding of the End Times in book 7, chapter 14. There, he discusses how long the world will exist before prophetic events start to usher in its downfall. In chapter 15, he addresses how the end of the world will begin and Rome's place in these events. Lactantius clearly believes that the world would come to a climax 6,000 years after Creation and would be followed by a 7th millennium of righteous governance by Christ himself. But before that happened, he imagined believers living in the penultimate thousand years were already in the process of being fashioned "for justice by the teaching and precepts of God."[91] Such changes for humanity would prepare them for the millennium in which they would live as perfect beings.[92] To explain the coming of this new world, Lactantius uses the Hebrews' departure from Egypt as a microcosm of things to come. During the Exodus, God liberated a single blessed people after bringing judgment on one nation, Egypt. At the end of 6,000 years, however, with the faithful spread across many lands but nevertheless oppressed in all of them, God will bring ruin to the whole world in order to deliver his people from bondage and tyranny. God will do this

[91] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, trans. Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 419–421.
[92] Ibid., 421.

through signs, disasters, and portents, just like he did in Egypt but to a greater pitch.[93] The confusion caused by these disasters will lead to a complete breakdown in society. Rule of law will evaporate. Only force will safeguard property. Rome, suffering from old age and an inability to maintain itself, will cease to exist, replaced by an Asian power.[94]

Anticipating incredulous objections to such a statement, Lactantius argues that the suggestion that such an empire as Rome may one day cease to exist should not be thought impossible. "There is nothing constructed by human effort which cannot also be felled by human effort, because the achievements of mortals are mortal."[95] Lactantius uses Roman sources against the argument for its own immortality. "The Sibyls say openly that Rome will perish, and by judgment of God, because she held God's name in hatred and in her hostility to justice slew the people brought up to truth."[96] Even when the people see and recognize the full extent of God's wrath towards the evil ways of men, though they pray to him, God will not relent until the world's population has been all but annihilated. "Thus the human race will be finished off, and scarce a hundred will go where a thousand once went. Two thirds will die even of God's worshippers; one third will survive, those that were put to the proof."[97] Lactantius does not say how these fortunate few will survive. Remaining within society will do them no good, for the evil king that will arise in Rome's absence will persecute them with particularly cruel tortures and executions. During the worst of times when the world is being consumed through the work of evil rulers,

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[93] Ibid., 421–422.
[94] Ibid., 422.
[95] Ibid., 423.
[96] Ibid.. For Sibyls, see: J. Geffcken, ed., *Die Oracula Sibyllina* (Leipzig: 1902), 165, 171–173.
[97] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 425.

Lactantius says, the just and lovers of truth will separate themselves from the wicked and flee to the deserts. For Lactantius, having lived through the Great Persecution and studied those of the 3rd century, escape from persecution was a perfectly natural thing for Christians. Not even Christ rushed toward martyrdom, though he did accept it as part of the divine plan.[98] But those who will flee during the End Times will not escape, for the Antichrist (Lactantius does not name him as such for the sake of his pagan audience) will pursue them and lay siege to their refugee communities. In such a situation, the people of God have no earthly recourse or defense. But, he writes, "When they see themselves hemmed in on every side and under siege, they will cry to God with a loud voice and beg for help from heaven, and God will hear them and will send them a great king [Christ or the Archangel Michael] from heaven to rescue them and to free them, and to destroy all the impious with fire and sword."[99]

Lactantius's account for a pagan audience of the end of normal time prior to the coming of Christ and his thousand-year earthly reign provides much information on the decay of Rome and the crimes of oppressive powers but speaks little about the activities of Christians and the righteous. Even when he does give them his attention, he points out how ultimately futile their personal efforts are in opposing persecutions. This is also true for the eternal city. Rome, being a human construct, is mortal, and all mortal efforts end in ruin and death. This law applies to both great empires and Christians fleeing persecution. Throughout Lactantius's work, only God has real authority and power: everything else

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[98] Oliver Nicholson, "Flight from Persecution as Imitation of Christ: Lactantius' *Divine Institutes* IV. 18, 1–2," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, 40, no. 1 (April 1989): 48–65.
[99] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 426–427.

comes from evil and thus is doomed to judgment or, if good, remains mortal and fallible. Lactantius assigns no real duties or preparations to Christians during this transition period from human to divine authority on earth. Even his account of their flight to the desert is little more than a statement of fact—understandable panic at such rampant destruction by an evil king, as had happened in recent history—rather than a detailed plan for how best to weather persecution, since only a third of Christians will survive anyway. It is only Christ's return at the last minute in a display of righteous omnipotence against the seemingly invincible forces of evil that brings relief. Even at the evangelical level, Christians have little to do during this momentous time. Lactantius speaks of a great prophet arising in this dark time (in doing so, he inexplicably combines the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11 into a single person). He credits only this prophet—someone acting directly on behalf of God and thus removed from the average believer—with mass conversions, miracles, and direct opposition to the evil authorities. As with Victorinus's commentary, the larger Christian community is silent. When this prophet is removed from the scene, the Christians reenter the story but only as targets of wrath, not as proclaimers of prophetic truths or words of power.[100]

Lactantius's message to any Romans curious about Christianity and how they envision the end of the age is made directly through many repetitions and angles of approach. All humans, be they Roman or Christian, are ultimately doomed. No preventative actions or circumspection will succeed indefinitely in holding back decay or external threats. Remain and be martyred or flee and be hunted: it is all the same in the end

[100] Ibid., 425–426.

without Christ, for it is God alone who has the power, to which even the Sibyls attest. He will save his people not because of their special merits (blessed though they may be) but because of his omnipotence and righteousness. As with the Hebrews during the Exodus, the people of God will be delivered from harm only through divine intervention and, at most, the actions of a single, God-ordained prophet. Such is Lactantius's view of the Christian community: people in bondage to be freed but not in any way actors to help bring about Christ's millennial reign.

New and Old Understandings in a Post-Constantine Church

State-sponsored martyrdom within the Roman Empire quickly disappeared after Constantine's legalization of Christianity in 313. This left the churches in enviable confusion, not knowing from whom to draw inspiration for moral fortitude. Apocalyptic speculators might have already begun to imagine pre-Constantine Rome as a guard against a more destructive, satanic regime, but they still had assumed the pagan emperors and lesser officials would produce martyrs who would themselves be exempla for more fortunate Christians. One would imagine that the ascetic spiritual athletes—Anthony of Egypt (251–356) and Simeon Stylites of Antioch (c. 390–459), for example—would replace martyrs as foci for training for the end of days. This does not seem to be the case. Certainly, it is safer to say we know the views of Anthony's and Simeon's biographers better than we do the saints' private reasons for their extreme acts of devotion. Nevertheless, such spiritual athletes apparently were not seen to be in the same mold as the martyrs had been when later authors reflected upon moral discipline in anticipation of the

apocalypse. Athanasius (c. 296–373), whose apocalyptic views will be seen below, wrote much about Anthony's combat with devils in the desert, but the Antichrist and his armies would not come to occupy the wilderness. Furthermore, as Peter Brown has argued, such holy men were intrinsically part of their communities and helped them to function.[101] Such men were of value to a world that was expected to continue and not collapse. Therefore, despite the importance of the Desert Fathers to the development of church history, they had little immediate impact on apocalyptic speculations relevant to this investigation.

The question remains: what was Christianity's vision of apocalyptic preparations in a post-Constantine empire? Ultimately, Christian authors still hoped to use both the fear and excitement present in martyrdom accounts but with less interest in heroic stands and more in personal accountability. Also of concern to apocalyptic speculators was the disturbing (to them) number of heresies and heretics. Because heretics, so-called, fall outside the confines of the church of "true" believers, their apocalyptic activities will not be dwelt upon here. Nevertheless, maintenance of orthodoxy and orthopraxis became part of how believers would resist satanic temptations during the End Times. No longer did apocalyptic speculators assume—as they never entirely did before—that any church-going individual was in a safe community. Personal responsibility thus became a more emphasized topic in the new, Christian empire.

[101] Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101.

Athanasius

In the wake of legalization following Constantine's triumphs, Christian apocalyptic shifted its attention away from anxieties of state intervention and resumed intensified interested in doctrinal clarifications.[102] This is most notably seen with the Arian controversy and, to a lesser extent, Donatism.[103] Athanasius challenged Arius's Christology with vehemence and aplomb. In doing so in his *Orationes contra Arianos*, he remarked upon Jesus's knowledge of the end of the world and its significance for Christian believers.

In book 3 of his orations, Athanasius brings up the issue of apocalyptic prophecies in the context of Christ's divinity. His main thrust in this section is to dispute the Arian suggestion that Jesus had limited knowledge about the Last Day and thus was of lesser status than God the Father. The underlying assumption that both Arians and Athanasius agree upon is that perfect knowledge of future events is suggestive of divinity while a lack of foreknowledge would be a strike against it. In this matter, the Arian case for Jesus having been human is based upon the Scriptural passage which says the Father alone, and not the Son, knows the time of the end.[104] Athanasius explains Christ's seeming ignorance by saying his lack of specificity was calculated, an intentional effort with Christian good in mind. As all of Jesus's earthly activities were directed for the good of humanity, his limited

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[102] See Timothy David Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 171–173, 194.

[103] In contrast with what would become the orthodox view, Arians held that Jesus as the Son of God was a created being, having a divinity that was lesser in quality than God the Father. Donatists held that particularly grievous sins (such as denying one's Christian faith under threat of persecution or death) disqualified someone from administering the sacraments. See Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition 400–1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 6–10, 16-19, 29–33.

[104] Athanasius of Alexandria, "Discourse III," in *Against the Arians*, NPNF 4, p. 418–420. See Matthew 24:36; and Mark 13:32.

words about the End Times were enough to encourage the faithful "not [to] be startled or scared, when [certain signs] happen, but from [these signs Christians] may expect the end after them."[105] Jesus chose not to know as a man, but as God he was fully aware and provided information to the apostles strategically for their benefit. According to Athanasius, Jesus demonstrated that it is God (who he is) alone who knows the End, and for that reason his words emphasize how Christians must not be led astray by those, even angels, who might claim perfect knowledge of the Last Day. If someone speaks as if having certain knowledge while performing miracles, that person is not Christ but rather Antichrist. Jesus's silence was also meant to keep people from becoming apathetic. Had he explained too much about when to anticipate the Last Day, it would lead people to "become negligent of the time; for they will argue that then only must they attend to themselves. Therefore also has [God] been silent of the time when each shall die, lest men, being elated on the ground of knowledge, should forthwith neglect themselves for the greater part of their time."[106]

For Athanasius, apocalyptic preparation is no different than personal preparation for death. Knowledge of either can be good, as it gives assurances to the Christian, but too much would lead to error and careless morality. Humans need to remain in a balanced state of knowledge and ignorance concerning their own and the world's fate. Christ, in his divine wisdom, remained silent. Through that silence he provided a sure proof about the Antichrist. Anyone claiming to have foreknowledge of the End Times suggests, paradoxically, that Antichrist rather than Christ has appeared. Athanasius leaves his readers

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[105] Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, 420.
[106] Ibid.

with the idea that knowledge of the end, while good in small doses, will never be complete for anyone short of God and Christ. By doing so, he reasserts the ultimate authority of the Divine over humans, angels, and the forces of evil, who remain left in the dark (the Antichrist, when talking about the End Times, is himself merely guessing about the date). With certainty that the end is unknowable, Athanasius argues that humans cannot (and should not) prepare for a particular end. Rather, each Christian must prepare for the end of their own life as reflection of the universal end of the world, never knowing when either will occur.

John Chrysostom

With the legalization of Christianity, though the churches no longer feared Roman persecution, there was still a desire to invoke fear to maintain Christian ethical principles in an apocalyptic context. John Chrysostom (347–407), while concerned more with the Last Judgment than the apocalyptic drama on earth, provides us with several examples of this. In his homilies on First and Second Thessalonians, Chrysostom channels apocalyptic anxieties to encourage moral reform. To those who would rather see the dangers of the apocalypse and Last Judgment as empty threats, Chrysostom says the threats represent real possibilities and should be taken more seriously than even God's promises. Though he would like to believe no punishments await, Scripture persuades him otherwise, and as a minister entrusted with the care of souls, he feels duty bound to instruct others to escape punishment through reform.[107] "Let us not remember the kingdom [of heaven] so much as

[107] John Chrysostom, *Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, NPNF 13, 356–360 (1 Thessalonians, Hom. 8).

hell. For fear has more power than the promise.…No one of those who have hell before their eyes will fall into hell."[108] This ties in with Chrysostom's understanding of the value of teaching in matters of reform and concern for the End Times. Spiritual teachers like himself are important, but they are only half of the total equation. The teacher may begin by sowing the seed, but each Christian must cultivate the soil of their soul so that the plant may reach its full potential.[109] Nevertheless, Chrysostom does not believe that all activity can be justified as pedagogical aids. He rejects the argument that calculating the time of Christ's return might help the evangelization of pagans. God never intended to let Christians know when Christ would return because the Christian's fate will be the same if he is prepared. But as for the pagans, Chrysostom argues that if they do not believe without a date then there is no reason to think they will believe if one is provided. Knowledge would only lead to sloth. Uncertainty (parallel to his understanding of the benefits of fear) would encourage people to always be watching spiritually and morally.[110]

Throughout these homilies, Chrysostom's chief concern is to discourage the spreading of false or unhelpful information, like the date of Christ's return. Nevertheless, he implicitly encourages Christians to discuss apocalyptic details. The "scandalous" parts of the End Times—violence, persecution, death, plagues, hellfire, God's wrath—are not shameful topics to him. Rather, they are more important subjects to discuss, if one is so inclined, than the promises of heaven and one's final reward. His only concern is that one not speak too authoritatively about the details of these events.

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[108] Ibid., 383 (2 Thessalonians, Hom. 2).
[109] Ibid., 386–387 (2 Thessalonians, Hom. 3).
[110] Ibid., 361 (1 Thessalonians, Hom. 9).

Ultimately, Chrysostom's discussion of fear and uncertainty reinforces another of his central themes: the omnipotence of God. The apocalypse is where Christ demonstrates his absolute power over all of creation. The way God will gather all Christians spread across the world together at the sounding of the archangel's trumpet demonstrates to Chrysostom the clear hierarchy of heaven. God commands, the archangel blows the trumpet, the lesser angels collect the Christians, and the saints happily but passively accept their escort into the air before the Last Judgment.[111]

At first, the Roman Empire seems to have some power and agency. According to Chrysostom, it—rather than the "grace of the Spirit"—is the main force preventing the initial rising of the Antichrist. Only by working from the shadows will the Antichrist bring about the downfall of Rome, demonstrating just how formidable an adversary he truly is.[112] Yet while the power of the empire will collapse and lead to the final persecution of the Church, this is quickly contrasted with Christ's return and his one-sided confrontation with the Antichrist. Just like fire destroys weak creatures from a distance, "so also Christ, by His commandment only, and Coming. It is enough for Him to be present, and all these things are destroyed."[113] Christ's omnipotence so outshines evil that he instantly defeats the Antichrist without even attacking directly. Christ easily defeats what brought down Rome itself.

At the same time, like previous apocalyptic speculators, Chrysostom does not imagine Christians will play any major part in the sequence of events during the

[111] Ibid., 355–356 (1 Thessalonians, Hom. 8).
[112] Ibid. 388–389 (2 Thessalonians, Hom. 4).
[113] Ibid., 389.

apocalypse. Aside from personal moral reform, their activities in his version of the apocalypse are confined to saying prayers. "Thus let us make war with our enemies with prayers and supplications. For if thus the ancients made war with men in arms, much more ought we so to make war with men without arms."[114] Chrysostom writes this without directly invoking the apocalypse but shortly after discussing Christ's singular triumph over the Antichrist. If the Romans cannot prevent the forces of evil from winning on earth forever, then it is fitting that Christians seek out the Heavenly Ruler who alone will have the victory. With these great forces in play on the world stage—Rome, the Antichrist, and Christ himself—it seems only reasonable to Chrysostom that Christians would play no direct part in the apocalyptic drama, waiting only to be gathered by the angels.

Taking Measure of Early Fifth-Century Authorities

Early in the 5th century, the history of apocalypticism in the Latin West received what would become its most orthodox expression for the next eight centuries through the works of Jerome (c. 347–420) and Augustine of Hippo (354–430). Both men preferred interpreting prophetic passages in Scripture according to a spiritual rather than literal reading.[115] Their approach was based on the work of an African Donatist, Tyconius, writing in the late 4th century. Tyconius's *Liber Regularum* outlined seven hermeneutical principles for understanding Scripture. His commentary on the Apocalypse, interpreted spiritually

[114] Ibid., 391.
[115] Bernard McGinn, "Introduction: John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 19.

rather than carnally using these methods, has been lost.[116] Nevertheless, while Tyconius's own perspectives are missing, his impact on both Jerome and especially Augustine is testament to his intellectual achievements, with several of his ideas surviving in and promoted by the bishop of Hippo.

Jerome

Jerome's views on Christian activity before, during, and after the time of the Antichrist are at once typical of Late Antique theology while also remaining surprising in the way he expresses them. None demonstrate this more than his understanding of proselytization preceding the End Times. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Jerome has a largely spiritualized view of Christ's Little Apocalypse. His preparation advice is correspondingly limited as well. This restraint goes far beyond what one would expect when he reaches Jesus's prophecy concerning the Great Commission (Christ's mandate to his followers to preach and spread his teachings far and wide):

> "*And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the consummation will come."* The sign of the Lord's coming is the proclamation of the Gospel in the whole world. Thus no one will have an excuse. We perceive that this is either already completed or will be completed in a short time. For I do not think any nation remains that is ignorant of the name of Christ. Even if it does not have a proclaimer, yet it cannot be ignorant of the report of the faith (coming) from the surrounding nations.[117]

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[116] Jerome and Gennadius, *De Viris Inlustribus*, ed. Carl Albrecht Bernoulli (Freiburg and Leipzig, 1895), 68–69.

[117] Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 271.

The confidence with which Jerome casually dismisses any urgency or even necessity for Christians to embark upon missionary endeavors, especially in the context of apocalyptic events, is remarkable. As we have seen, up to this point in Christian intellectual history, believers' agency leading up to the apocalyptic drama has certainly been minimized. Jerome's view that Christians may no longer even be needed to fulfill this specific prerequisite for Christ's return, however, both perpetuates and elevates Christian apocalyptic passivity. This would not be the only time Jerome expressed his doubts about Christians' ability to effect change during the apocalyptic drama.

Far more than his examination of Matthew's Gospel, Jerome's greatest foray into apocalyptic concerns is his Commentary on Daniel, which is itself a pre-Christian Hebrew work with prophetic images of recurring interest to Jesus's followers. In terms of apocalyptic preparations, the commentary yields few but significant clues. In interpreting the emergence of four beasts, allegorical of four kingdoms, Jerome declares that such are earthly realms only, and the saints will be possessors of but the one heavenly kingdom. With that, he dismisses in its entirety as mere fable all arguments that Christians will establish a millennial kingdom after the Antichrist's persecutions.[118] Though not strictly concerned with preparations for the end, Jerome's thoughts here about the saints and their lack of any earthly political state help explain his thinking in an earlier passage. In dealing with the miraculously written message on the wall to King Belshazzar which Daniel in chapter 5 interprets as the monarch's imminent destruction at the hands of the Medes and Persians, Jerome writes that some have related this passage to the fall of the Antichrist.

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[118] Jerome, *Jerome's Commentary in Daniel*, trans. Gleason L. Archer (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1958), 81.

Jerome finds this interpretation unsatisfactory. If the passage were about the Antichrist, he says, then how does one interpret the person of Daniel, the inscription, and, most importantly, the Medes and the Persians responsible for killing Belshazzar and taking his kingdom for their own? For Jerome, the saints will naturally rule after the Antichrist.[119] But the Antichrist's kingdom is of this earth, and the saints will have no kingdom in this world. Jerome's implication, in questioning the logic of interpreting Belshazzar as representative of the Antichrist, is that the saints cannot possibly be the Medes and Persians. In terms of Christian activity prior to the end, this suggests Jerome could not fathom the saints participating in actions that led to the Antichrist's defeat. In another place, Jerome mentions briefly a small resistance cell of saints who gather together to oppose the Antichrist. How they resist the Antichrist is unclear. In any event, their efforts prove ineffectual, though they do undergo spiritual refinement through their struggles and deaths. Jerome then juxtaposes this inability to successfully defeat the Antichrist with what he sees as the only source of true victory: the arrival of Christ himself.[120] This is one of the few statements—limited though it is—from Late Antiquity I have encountered that directly speaks of Christians attacking the Antichrist. Nevertheless, as Jerome makes clear here and in his refusal to believe the Medes and Persians could signify the saints overthrowing the Antichrist, he does not advocate Christians prepare for this confrontation. As in his commentary on Matthew, Jerome alludes to potential Christian activity before expressing his doubts about its efficacy in the long-term. The only things remaining for Christians to participate in are the spiritual counsels common to all Christians at all times.

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[119] Ibid., 55–62.
[120] Ibid., 118–144.

Augustine and Hesychius

The impact Augustine of Hippo had on theology in general and apocalyptic speculation specifically is well established among scholars.[121] Regarding the End Times, he is credited with having steered the Latin Church away from active anticipation of an imminent return of Christ towards a spiritualized view of the apocalypse. Augustine taught that the end would indeed be played out in history, just as the Incarnation had, but it was incumbent upon Christians to worry less about the destruction of the world than upon each individual's death. God's timing would remain mysterious and unpredictable. Christians should therefore occupy themselves with moral and spiritual concerns rather than wild speculation about Christ's return. In so arguing, Augustine used the hermeneutical methods of Tyconius, thus transforming a Donatist work into what would become the orthodox position.

Augustine's (anti-)apocalypticism, however, has come under reevaluation in recent decades, as well as his impact on apocalyptic speculation in the early Middle Ages. Richard Landes, for example, believes Augustine's supposed triumph over millennial expectations has been overstated.[122] Furthermore, when examined under the lens of apocalyptic preparations, Augustine appears neither as an innovator nor as an unquestioned guide for the Church. His views in the *City of God* are designed to steer the reader away from

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[121] Paula Fredriksen, "Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 20–37.
[122] Richard Landes, "The Silenced Millennium and the Fall of Rome: Augustine and the Year 6000 AM I," in *Augustine and Apocalyptic*, ed. John Doody, Kari Kloos, and Kim Paffenroth (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 151–175.

imminent concerns and towards a spiritualized understanding of apocalyptic events that will certainly come but at a time greatly removed from the present. In book 20 of the *City of God*, Augustine outlines his thoughts on the coming of the Antichrist and events leading up to the Final Judgment, though few passages suggest any interest in the question of Christian preparation for the apocalypse. Following Jerome and others, he firmly believed that any casual reader of books like Daniel "cannot conceivably doubt that the reign of Antichrist is to be endured, if only for a brief space of time, with its bitter savagery against the Church, until by the final judgment of God the saints receive their everlasting kingdom."[123] During this period, the faith shown by Christians enduring persecution—while taking unspecified precautions to avoid the stratagems of the devil—will put previous martyrs to shame. The courage of parents is particularly praised, for they will bravely seek baptism for their children and others who convert despite tremendous persecutions.[124] During these persecutions, however, Augustine implies that Christian communities will remain where they are making no special movements away from danger. According to Augustine, the prophesied villainous armies of Gog and Magog will find the various churches wherever they happen to be, that is, spread out among all nations and specifically not gathered together in one place or far from centers of enemy control.[125] When Gog and Magog are defeated by fire from heaven,[126] Augustine gives two explanations for this fire. It could signify the zeal of the saints, in which case the fire that devours the enemies of God is more an emotional torment than a physical attack.

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[123] Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 945.
[124] Ibid., 910–914.
[125] Ibid., 920.
[126] See Revelation 20:9.

Alternatively, he says, this fire may simply come from Christ himself upon his return to earth.[127] In either case, Augustine does not imply the saints will be responsible for going out against the armies of the Antichrist. Their undirected faith will be enough. The passivity of Christians in military affairs is reinforced in the last chapter of book 20. When speaking of the relief of Jerusalem promised in Zechariah, Augustine writes, "Now can we think that it is in the power of anyone but God to remove all the nations hostile to the holy city of Jerusalem[?]…This is without doubt an act of God."[128] The other divine act in the relief of Jerusalem will be the conversion of the Jews, but this will be accomplished by God's chosen servant, Elijah, not the members of the earthly church.[129] In all, what little Augustine has to say in the *City of God* about Christian activity is fairly traditional, despite the potential activities the then recent attack on Rome—the city was sacked in 410 by Visigoths, the first time the Rome had fallen to invaders in 800 years—might have encouraged the bishop to consider but ultimately dismiss.

City of God, however, is not the only place Augustine discussed apocalyptic concerns in the light of current events. A series of letters exchanged between him and Hesychius, bishop of Salona, sheds a different light on early fifth-century concerns about apocalyptic preparations.[130] Surprisingly, like Jerome, whose commentary on Daniel he strongly endorses, Augustine reveals in these letters a puzzling attitude towards the Great Commission explicable only by Late Antique Christianity's traditional view of human non-

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[127] Augustine, *City of God*, 920–921.
[128] Ibid., 960. See Zechariah 12:9–10.
[129] Augustine, *City of God*, 957–958, 960.
[130] For a succinct breakdown of this exchange, see Roland Teske, SJ, "Augustine on the End of the Word: 'Cautious Ignorance,'" in *Augustine and Apocalyptic*, ed. John Doody, Kari Kloos, and Kim Paffenroth (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 193–206.

intervention regarding End Time events. In a letter to Hesychius from 419 or 420—a response to an initial letter by the bishop of Salona, now lost, regarding calculating the date of Christ's return[131]—Augustine urges his fellow bishop to read Jerome's commentary on Daniel if he wishes to understand the apocalypse. Naturally, Augustine argues that the end of the world is impossible to predict with any degree of assurance, as he demonstrates from Scripture. He then addresses the fulfillment of Jesus's prophecy that the end would come after the gospel had been spread across the world. It is impossible, he says, that the end would occur before, and the likelihood of that happening soon is unlikely. But would the universal proclamation of the gospel by Christians mean the end was actually near? Despite the seemingly clear implications contained in the Great Commission, Augustine's answer is surprisingly "no." He explains:

> If, then, the servants of God undertook this labor so that they roamed the world and gathered as best they could what remained of the nations where the gospel was not yet preached, we could from this observe to some extent how far the present time is from the end of the world. If because of some inaccessible and inhospitable places it does not seem possible for the servants of God to roam the whole world and to provide reliable reports about the many great nations that are still without the gospel of Christ, still less do I think that we can grasp from the scriptures how much time there will be before the end, since we read in them, *No one can know the times that the Father has established by his own authority* (Acts 1:7). Hence, if we already had absolutely certain reports that the gospel was being preached in all nations, we still could not say how much time remained before the end, but we would be correct to say that it is now coming closer and closer.[132]

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[131] Landes, "Silenced Millennium," 165.

[132] Augustine of Hippo, *The Works of Saint Augustine, A Translation for the 21st Century: Letters 156–210 (Epistulae)*, trans. Roland Teske, SJ, ed. Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City Press, 2004), 321 (hereafter *Saint Augustine Epistulae*).

Augustine then hypothesizes about the instantaneous conversion of whole nations of barbarians and thus the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy in less than a century. He dismisses the likelihood of such events, however, saying hindsight rather than conjecture would be the only way to say if it were possible.[133]

Though we lack his first letter that started the conversation on apocalyptic timing, we do have Hesychius's response to Augustine. The Dalmatian bishop quickly agrees with Augustine's central argument, that the time of Christ's return is unknowable. Nevertheless, Hesychius persists with his interest in apocalyptic matters. "We should long for and await the coming of the Lord. For it is great happiness for those who long for his coming."[134] Hesychius defends his interests as part of his pastoral duty. "But by seeing and believing signs of his coming it is right that I wait for it and distribute this food to believers so that they may await and long for his coming."[135] That several signs suggesting Christ's imminent return have already been fulfilled is obvious to Hesychius.[136] Knowing more about the quickly approaching End Times would be a benefit, to him and his congregation. Hesychius's self-recognized pastoral responsibilities, however, were an outlier of Late Antique Christian apocalyptic thought.

Augustine responded to his colleague's enthusiasm with a lengthy letter (about ten times the length of his first) discussing the end of the world.[137] In this second reply, Augustine praises Hesychius's pious interests in sharing knowledge about the apocalypse,

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[133] Ibid., 321–322.
[134] Hesychius, in Augustine, *Saint Augustine Epistulae*, 324.
[135] Ibid., 325.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Augustine refers to this letter in *City of God*, 902 (Book 20, Chapter 5). I discuss it and the other letters after rather than before the *City of God* to provide better contrast to Augustine's views and because *City of God* represents his more visible opinions down through the centuries.

but his message urges caution in such zeal. Morality and concern for the individual at the point of death should be of more interest than the ending of the world. Jesus's command in the Little Apocalypse was for all to watch, which for Augustine means the Church throughout time and not only those living in the Last Days.[138] He goes on to question how likely the 5th century is to witness the Last Judgment precisely because of the disasters befalling the world that Hesychius believes indicate Christ's return. Would not the end come when people proclaimed peace and safety? Augustine finds no one in the Roman Empire saying such things, so it would be wrong to think that prophecy would be fulfilled.[139] Christians need only know that Christ's return will remain a mystery, for that alone is sufficient to encourage them to be children of light. A proper spiritual teacher like Paul (in contrast to Hesychius) said only to his congregation that Christ would return as a thief. From this, the Christian community should deduce that moral living would be their only recourse in such an unsure state.[140]

Surely, Hesychius's longing for the Final Judgment is holy, but disinterest in apocalyptic predictions does not negate this piety. Augustine urges his fellow bishop to rethink himself, saying a true believer longing for Christ's return is not one who awaits a specific or imminent date but "rather, the person who awaits his coming, whether it is near or far off, with the sincerity of faith, the firmness of hope, and the ardor of love."[141] He repeats from his previous letter the impossibility that all the nations of the earth have received the gospel. Scripture itself shows how the prophecy that all nations must first be

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[138] Augustine, *Saint Augustine Epistulae*, 329–331.
[139] Ibid., 332–333.
[140] Ibid., 333.
[141] Ibid., 335.

preached to before the end comes cannot be expected in the near future.[142] Notably, by bring up the Great Commission, Augustine is not advocating for renewed efforts for Christian missionaries. He is simply pointing out what separates the prophecies from present reality.

Augustine ends his letter by describing three hypothetical Christians who long for the Last Judgment: one expects the end soon, one expects it in the distant future, and one is self-consciously ignorant of its time. All are good and pious, but only the last is the wisest. The first and the second will be just as happy whenever Christ returns, but they will have given their enemies the opportunity to attack them, either because Christ did not return as quickly as they said or because they cannot abide being patient for him. The one who admits his ignorance can boast of his piety without the danger of being wrong. Augustine concludes by apologizing to Hesychius for being the third type of Christian, confessing he longs to believe Hesychius to be right but fearing danger if the Dalmatian bishop proves to be mistaken (as he believes is highly likely).[143]

These letters provide a more complete picture of Augustine's apocalypticism. Important as it was for future generations, however, it is hardly revolutionary regarding Christian preparations for the End Times. Aside from moral and spiritual fortitude within the Church, the Great Commission is the only aspect of apocalyptic preparedness that Augustine addresses. Even then, however, like Jerome, he casts doubt on its practical value in contributing to God's providential plans. Augustine does not go as far as Jerome in suggesting the gospel will spread across the world without the help of Christians, but he

[142] Ibid., 350–352.
[143] Ibid., 352–354.

does portray it as an enormous project that cannot possibly be completed before those living have already died, even if one assumed miraculous conversion rates. Once again, we find another Late Antique Christian thinker focused on internal, spiritual concerns. The potential role Christians might play leading up to the apocalypse is not to be found, even concerning a passage that, at least to a modern perspective, practically demands to be read as advice to believers approaching the End Times. This hesitancy was a ubiquitous mark of Late Antique Christian thought, though as we will see in later chapters, it would not endure.

As for Hesychius, it would appear the Dalmatian bishop is among the few Christians before the 7th century we have evidence for who has untraditional plans for how to prepare his congregation for the End Times. His preparations are modest, especially compared to what will be seen starting to develop in the 10th and 11th centuries, but they represent a view that seems implicit in many texts discussed so far but never fully expressed. Hesychius believed that if the End Times were truly approaching, as bishop, he should be at the forefront of sharing proper, reliable, orthodox apocalyptic warnings. Better understanding of the End Times would help believers under his care strengthen their faith because with it would come love of and longing for God. This is similar to the view Chrysostom attacked, which had argued knowing the date of Christ's return would help convert the pagans. What Hesychius's opinion suggests about the "real" presence of apocalyptic concerns in the early 5th century is not within the scope of this investigation, although it seems Augustine did not have the final word on the matter.[144] What Hesychius's

[144] Landes, "Silenced Millennium," 165–172.

letter does demonstrate, however, are the apocalyptic views that were radical enough to make most ecclesiastics nervous about preaching them yet respectable enough to demand refutation by Augustine. For the waning days of the Western Empire, we are left with surprisingly few practical steps for Christians to undertake during the End Times, even when we hear from someone as anxious as Hesychius.

Quodvultdeus

A final example from the 5th century comes from one of Augustine's students, Bishop Quodvultdeus of Carthage (d. 450). Unlike Augustine, whose reflections on Rome's sack of 410 emerged from a life-long process of intellectual and spiritual development, Quodvultdeus experienced first-hand the trauma of barbarian attacks. In 439, following the Vandal invasion of North Africa, the bishop of Carthage was exiled, making his way to Naples on a slowly sinking ship. Once safely there, he composed his *Liber promissionum et praedictorum Dei*, explaining God's providence for his chosen people (the Hebrews and then Christians) throughout time, culminating in Christ's glorious kingdom.[145] His eschatology, however, has been overlooked until relatively recently. In this, Quodvultdeus was greatly influenced by both his older colleague, Augustine, and by his experience of Vandal savagery.[146] His conviction that the Antichrist was indeed imminent demonstrates how much even he was willing to divert from his master's views.

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[145] Thomas M. Finn, *Quodvultdeus: The Creedal Homilies* (Paulist Press, 2004), 1–2.
[146] For a thorough discussion of Quodvultdeus's life and intentions in his works, see Daniel Van Slyke, *Quodvultdeus of Carthage: The Apocalyptic Theology of a Roman African in Exile* (Strathfield, New South Wales: St. Paul's Publications, 2003).

In his *Liber promissionum et praedictorum*, Quodvultdeus devotes special attention to apocalyptic matters under the title "Diminium Temporis in Signis Antichristi." Quodvultdeus lays out twenty promises and predictions made in Scripture pertaining to the approaching but brief reign of the Antichrist before Christ's Second Coming. All the prophesied events that make up the apocalyptic drama, according to Quodvultdeus's prologue to the section, come "by the lord's gift and by the working of his grace."[147] With this declaration, Quodvultdeus explains his vision of the Antichrist's time on earth. Though nuances within it can be discerned that differ from his predecessor, the *Liber* deals with subjects typical of Late Antique apocalyptic anxieties: persecutions implemented by the Antichrist, the role of heretics (Arians in this case) as his accomplices, the ministry of the Two Witnesses, and so forth. Despite his clearly apparent concern for apocalyptic events, Quodvultdeus refrains from clear advice to his readers. Nevertheless, his message is more in the form of his *Liber* than its specifics. The promises and predictions of God, emphasized constantly throughout the text, reinforce the same idea he laid out in the prologue to his section on the Antichrist. God's providence has and will continue to guide world history. Quodvultdeus might have been concerned about the Vandals and the Antichrist, but even the chaos they caused was part of God's plan, which would one day lead to Christ's victory and the reward of the saints.

Similar dalliances with apocalyptic preparedness—inspired by barbarian activities but ultimately admitting little new advice for Christians beyond spiritual fortitude—can be seen in his sermon, *De Cataclysmo*. This work provides better pastoral advice than the

[147] Quodvultdeus, *Opera*, CCSL 60, ed. René Braun (Turnholti: Typographi Brepolis, 1976), 190.

Liber, though in doing so it reveals the limits even an apocalyptically minded bishop in exile could suggest. In *De Cataclysmo*, Quodvultdeus, as someone familiar with adversity, asks his audience how they expected to weather tempests and disasters in this world. Reliance on one's baptism, he writes, is insufficient. Those who are baptized have indeed been made clean, but in order to conquer the attacks of the devil, one must not presume that baptism marks final victory. Good works and a firm spiritual foundation are required for the long fight, but true victory comes as a gift from Christ.[148] Quodvultdeus follows with a discussion of two uses of water in symbolic baptisms: Peter joining Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee and the Hebrews escaping from Pharaoh through the Red Sea. Both passages highlight the cleansing power of water (and baptism). More importantly, however, they reveal the power of God, whose hand caught the sinking Peter and who was responsible for the Exodus.[149] With Pharaoh as both religious and secular authority, Quodvultdeus likens the escape from Egypt to previous Roman persecutions and contemporary heresies, including Arianism and Manichaeism. These are troubles afflicting Christ's flock, but God himself will protect his sheep.[150] It is not until near the end of his sermon that Quodvultdeus brings these threads together to address fear of barbarians and the ruin of the world. He ponders the Cross and the symbolism of its dimensions (suggested by Paul in Eph. 3). Quodvultdeus concludes that, by reflecting upon the Cross, Christians will be led themselves up to a higher spiritual state that joins them with their crucified God and savior. These steps will lead one to holiness by which the ruin of the world and the

[148] Ibid., 409–410.
[149] Ibid., 410–414.
[150] Ibid., 414–418.

fear of barbarian attacks would slip away, since they have joined in the peace that unites them with God.[151] For Quodvultdeus, one flees destruction by turning inward, relying on God to abide by his promises so long as Christians do their part in seeking him. Such advice marches in step with the purpose of his *Liber*.

Quodvultdeus also draws connections between the barbarian crisis and apocalyptic anxieties in two other sermons: *De Tempore Barbarico I* and *II*. Both works, however, differ little from *De Cataclysmo* in their broad appeal to spiritual fortitude and urging of Christian willingness to become martyrs for Christ, specifically like Perpetua and Felicity.[152] Thus, despite his place as a refugee and apocalyptic watchman, the advice of Bishop Quodvultdeus for those Christians suffering under barbarians or the Antichrist ventures no farther than admonitions (albeit strong ones) for moral and spiritual self-renewal. Though he differed from his mentor Augustine in the precise ways one should view the approaching apocalypse, both African bishops were united in their conviction that divine grace alone would be the primary force during the End Times, as it had always been throughout history.

Gregory of Tours and the End of Late Antiquity

Most of the 5th and early 6th centuries must be passed over with little comment. Certainly, there were texts that demonstrate continuing interest in apocalyptic subjects, such as partial commentaries on Revelation by Apringius of Beja and Oecumius (c. 6th century), a series of hermeneutical homilies on the same by Bishop Caesarius of Arles (c.

[151] Ibid., 418–419.
[152] References to Perpetua and Felicity come from ibid., 430–431, in his first sermon concerning barbarians.

470–542), the jeremiad *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* by the historian monk Gildas (d. 569/570), or even Procopius's inflammatory *Secret History*.[153] As will be clear by now, despite the occasional shift of emphasis or depiction of apocalyptic content, none of these texts contain surprises regarding preparations for the End Times. Nevertheless, I would be remiss to skip over the 6th century in its entirety and to move directly to the beginning of intellectual changes of the 7th century without providing some sampling of how the apocalypse was expected to be experienced by Christians during this time. Therefore, I end this chapter of the history of Christian thought on apocalyptic preparations with a brief look at invocations of the Last Judgment in Gregory of Tours's *Historia Francorum*.

The record left of Merovingian France by Gregory, bishop of Tours (c. 538–594), for all of its sorrow for the state of secular affairs, contains very little for scholars of apocalyptic thought to work with. Gregory's historical actors inhabit a world that he clearly believes is in disarray, yet it is a world that Gregory does not suggest is in its last death throes. Nevertheless, brief mention should be made of the few instances in which the French bishop chooses to mention the approaching Last Judgment in relation to the society he wished to record.

Gregory does indeed begin his account of the feuds, wars, and questionable deeds of the Franks by making explicit reference to the Antichrist. In his prologue, which serves as his creedal statement of orthodox conformity to the decisions reached at the ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325, Gregory writes, "Of the end of the world I truly believe those

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[153] See Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, trans. John N. Suggit (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2006); Gildas, *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH AA 13 (Berlin: 1888); and Justyna Migdał, "Magic, Demons and Apocalypse in the Composition of *Historia Arcana* by Procopius of Caesarea," *Źródła Humanistyki Europejskiej*, vol. 5 (2012): 127–146.

things which I have learnt from those who have gone before, but that before this the Antichrist shall come."[154] The bishop briefly includes in his version of End Time events the Antichrist's promotion of circumcision and his own image to be worshipped in Jerusalem, along with a declaration that Christ made it clear the date of the apocalypse would remain hidden. Among "those who have gone before" that informed Gregory of the End Times were Jerome and Victorinus, whom he explicitly mentions as having been an inspiration to his historical account.[155] Nevertheless, Gregory's interest in the apocalypse begins and ends here. Only in a handful of cases does the Last Judgment or the apocalypse appear again in his history. How it is used, however, is suggestive of how apocalyptic preparations were seen in Merovingian Gaul.

The subject of the Last Judgment and the end of the world appear only four times in Gregory's history outside of his prologue, and these only in the last two books, that is, during the time Gregory himself was active in Merovingian society. One of these instances is only in reference to a theological discussion about the nature of the Resurrection.[156] The other three are oaths. In book 9, a treaty between King Childebert and King Guntram concludes:

> Now that agreement has been come to on all these points, the parties concerned swear in the name of God Almighty, and by the inseparable Trinity, by all things divine and by the awful Day of Judgement, that they will observe, in full detail, without fraud or treachery or wish to deceive, each and every provision as it is written above.[157]

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[154] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Frank*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), 68.
[155] Ibid., 68–69.
[156] Ibid., 560–566.
[157] Ibid., 507.

Similarly, in a copy of a letter of foundation from Saint Radegund (a sixth-century Thuringian princess cum religious devotee), Gregory records: "I conjure you, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and by the awful Day of Judgment, just as if I stood before you, to ensure that no tyrant may stand in my way, but that the rightful king may crown my wishes."[158] Finally, the last invocation of the End Times comes in Gregory's own conclusion to his history. After listing the books he has written, he addresses himself to his episcopal heirs:

> I know very well that my style in these books is lacking in polish. Nevertheless I conjure you all, you Bishops of the Lord who will have charge of Tours cathedral after my unworthy self, I conjure you all, I say, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Judgment Day feared by all sinners, that you never permit these books to be destroyed, or to be rewritten, or to be reproduced in part only with sections omitted, for otherwise when you emerge in confusion from this Judgment Day you will be condemned with the Devil. Keep them in your possession, intact, with no amendments and just as I have left them to you.[159]

The scant invocations of the apocalypse make the few instances when Gregory chooses to name it stand out. In all three of these instances above, allusion to the Day of Judgment is used as an oath, binding monarchs together, a saint's charge to a religious establishment, and a bishop's instructions to his successors. Preparation is clearly absent from discussion of the End Times in these instances. As Gregory explained in his prologue, he knows perfectly well that Christ's return cannot be anticipated. What comes through for both Gregory and the works he quotes is consistent with this worldview. For these oaths,

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[158] Ibid., 536.

[159] Ibid., 603. Gregory's threat that distortion, omission, or enlargement of his work will bring on the horrors of the Judgment strongly echoes John's conclusion of his vision. "I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." Revelation 22:18–19.

the expectation of the "awful Day of Judgment" and the accompanying dangers that come with it is as certain as the Trinity itself and thus beyond doubt. The inevitability of the Day of Judgment, however, does not seem to provoke other special actions. It is because they believe nothing can be done to prevent, delay, accelerate, avoid, or otherwise prepare for the Day of Judgment that makes it worthy of an oath to Gregory and his contemporaries. Once again, even in the uncertain world of the early Middle Ages, apocalyptic anxiety refused to venture beyond the firm, traditional belief that God alone would be responsible for the concluding age of the world.

Conclusion

The central question during this overview of Late Antique apocalyptic thought has been, "What did Christians imagine their role and responsibilities would be as the End Times approached?" Up to the pontificate of Gregory I,[160] the answer is simple and clear: nothing.

During the first 500 years after the composition of John's Apocalypse, Christian texts involving the End Times predominantly lacked specifics regarding suggested preparations or responsibilities for Christians as apocalyptic actors that were not equally suitable for non-apocalyptic time. To be sure, universal calls for rigorous spiritual reform to live an idealized Christian lifestyle and escape hellfire was not void of responsibility and immense personal effort, but these were always applicable and did not necessarily involve apocalyptic speculations. Commentators were slow to go beyond the words of Jesus who

[160] Whose work will be discussed in chapter 2.

urged watchfulness. Whether one agreed with Augustine that watchfulness should apply generally or with Heschius that it was necessary for this present chaotic world, there was little else for Christians to do specifically in preparation for the final drama of world history. The words of Christ that spoke of flight were not taken to suggest Christians should depart from society and form protective enclaves away from Roman persecution. Flight might be a natural result of the Antichrist's assaults, but this, too, might be miraculously performed or simply allude to a spiritual resistance to attacks, culminating in martyrdom. The Antichrist himself and his armies would only be defeated by Christ—a true God's victory over a false God. Humans could not defeat the Antichrist. For Jerome, he would be responsible for Rome's fall, and the few Christians who organize resistance against him would fail. This imbalance of power was agreed upon no matter the author's belief in or rejection of the apocalypse's imminence.

Because of humanity's inherent impotence during this time, apocalyptic instructions often focused on spiritual concerns, telling readers to be watchful of one's own moral state as a Christian and to take flight from sin and depravity. To this end, commentators emphasized certain moral behaviors and beliefs to be especially circumspect about, such as good works, church ritual, avoidance of heresies, prayerfulness, repentance, and humility. Such admonitions, of course, could be found within Scripture, and they could be taught and practiced outside of an apocalyptic context. Individual commentators who addressed eschatological concerns had their own preferred moral prescriptions they thought would be ideal in the Last Days, though most of these were in close agreement. Beyond an individual's moral well-being, these admonitions stressed aspects of preparation

that emphasized unity among Christians. Christians were already going to be separated from the rest of the unrepentant world as a category of their own to be targeted, but that was not enough. They also needed to self-unify beforehand to ensure proper dogmatic and spiritual training (free of heretical lies and fables) so that each individual Christian would be fortified to endure temptation and persecution to the end. Early in Christian history, calls for communities to gather closer were direct and more emphatic, as expressed in the Didache. Martyr tales could be guides for preparing for the Last Judgment, though they were not always read in apocalyptic terms. As Christianity became more popular, but also split by confessional disputes, community meant more often the avoidance of heresies, though the older sense remained as well.

No matter the moral prescriptions, however, all Late Antique apocalyptic speculators agreed that the End Times would proceed as God chose and that Christians would play no part in directing the course of events. Even the Great Commission, which prescribed the conversion of the nations, could be viewed as lacking Christian activity as the end approached, as seen in Jerome's commentary on Matthew, or as a necessary but not definitive prerequisite to the start of the apocalyptic drama, as Augustine told Hesychius. Even evangelization during the apocalypse, according to Victorinus, was not a matter for ordinary clergy but for specially prepared prophets. Christians would be subject to the Antichrist's attacks, the spiritual leadership of Elijah and Enoch, and the guiding hand of God. They would not shape its beginning, sequence, or end. Compared to the powers of the Antichrist, Christians are nothing, but so, too, is he compared to Divine Omnipotence. Christians need only trust in God, for they should care more about the Last

Judgment than about the problems of this world, whether long before or during the apocalyptic drama. His grace saved believers through Christ's death on the Cross. Likewise, his grace would usher them through dark times into the light of their eternal reward.

The message we have from the variety of Christian authors examined here—founders, bishops, apologists, millennialists, spiritualizers, historians, and homilists—is quite clear. Whether written by the most cautious thinkers or the most radical alarmists, the sources we have are amazingly consistent and conservative in their advice. This does not mean they were completely disinterested in the question, merely that when they cared to address it their chief concerns lay in three areas. First, that the proper sources of authority and community within the Church on earth be maintained. Second, that moral and spiritual standards for individuals be pursued with increased vigor. Third and most important, that God's sovereign control over history be expounded, supported, and relied upon. In short, maintaining orthodoxy, charity, and unity while relying on God were the only things Christians were expected to do when the time of Christ's return drew near. Still, the sources discussed here are not exhaustive of Late Antique apocalyptic thought, but they are highly suggestive of at least a surprisingly consistent worldview among Christian intellectuals and pastoral guides.

Considering the value historians so often place on the transition from Classical Roman to medieval history, the lack of more substantial apocalyptic suggestions might appear anticlimactic. But Late Antique Christians still believed themselves to be in a world that, despite the upheavals they or later historians could point to, was familiar enough to

maintain their basic apocalyptic principles intact regarding human agency. The mystery of why so little changed is the same one encountered by Sherlock Holmes in Arthur Conan Doyle's "Silver Blaze." When evaluating the evidence for the crime in that story, Holmes draws the detective's attention to "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time." When the detective replies that the dog had been silent all that night, Holmes wisely responds, "That was the curious incident."[161] With all this discussion of hundreds of years of thought, there have been almost no references whatsoever to apocalyptic preparations that one today might expect. To us, it is curious that this dog did not bark. But, as in Doyle's story, the reason for this is simple: the dog did not bark because the person passing by was no stranger. In Late Antiquity, despite the many changes in Roman society, there was enough familiarity to keep Christian intellectuals comfortable: an emperor, pagan barbarians causing trouble, Christological heresies. Troubling as history might be, nothing was new under the sun, which was Augustine's thesis in the *City of God* after the sack of Rome. Nevertheless, this would change in the Middle Ages. The world would be seen as unfamiliar, as strange, and then the dog would bark.

[161] Arthur Conan Doyle, "Silver Blaze," in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories, Vol. 1* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), 472.

Chapter 2: Running to and fro: Byzantium, Ireland, and the Early Foundations of a New Apocalyptic Tradition

For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man.[1]

The rise and spread of Christianity through the peaks and nadirs of the Roman Empire in the West provoked many adjustments to how Christians believed Christ's Second Coming and the apocalyptic drama would play out. Nevertheless, from the time of the first adherents of what would become Christianity to the pontificate of Gregory the Great over five centuries later, the kind of preparation emphasized for those who were supposed to live through the End Times had remained internally focused. Christians were routinely expected to be mindful of their spiritual wellbeing as part of the larger community of believers, but they expected the events of the apocalypse to be initiated, carried out, and completed by non-Christian or even (and especially) non-human agents. Even passages from Scripture almost begging to be interpreted as apocalyptic rallying cries, such as the Great Commission, became spiritualized or seen to be unnecessary for Christians themselves to be responsible for. With the collapse of imperial stability in the West, calls for an externally realized form of preparation were still uncommon, or at least unattested to in the documentary evidence. Hesychius's concern for less spiritualized preparatory measures in his exchanges with Augustine stands as an exception in the late Classical era. Repeatedly and consistently, God's grace was described as indeed sufficient for those who would suffer the Last Days if they truly sought to perfect their lives in the same manner as

[1] Matthew 24:27.

the faithful living in previous ages. The apocalyptic drama itself would involve pagan, demonic, prophetic, angelic, and divine actors. It was the climax of world history, but it was the world as it had always been: a corrupt world rebelling from the control of an omnipotent God who would come to set right what was wrong for the good of his humble, obedient, faithful, and prophetically inconsequential sheep.

That is how Christian apocalyptic preparations stood at the start of the 7th century. By the 11th century, however, such views would no longer be uncontested or even dominant in some circles. According to James Palmer, "The seventh century witnessed…the development of a wider reconceptualization of humanity's endings and its duties to act."[2] By the 10th and 11th centuries, apocalyptic duties first emphasized and expressed at the beginning of this period had firmly intruded upon tradition and, in some cases, become mainstream. The role of preaching, imperial activities, reform of the Church, demilitarization and safe-guarding of Christendom, military ventures, and religious travel came to be seen as part of a growing number of possible activities Christians expected to participate in as the apocalyptic drama approached its climax. Doubtless, apocalyptic speculations often mirror the moods, preoccupations, and social movements of the societies in which they are composed. It is overly hasty to conclude, however, that thoughts on apocalyptic preparations move in lockstep with a whole society. If that were so, one would expect late classical apocalypticists to have placed a greater emphasis on fleeing to deserts or monastic isolation, for example. But that did not happen because the ideology of the

[2] James T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 81.

Christian faith, however much it lacked uniformity on many other issues, held that God alone was responsible for the end.

Here it must be reiterated: actions and preparations in the face of the End are not natural, inevitable, or prone to fixed outcomes and expressions. They are historically driven and culturally motivated. Human agency during apocalyptic crises cannot be assumed, for it is the nature of prophesy to be contingent upon powers beyond the ken of mortals. As with all things, it takes applied intellectual effort to believe that predestined fate, wielded by divine omnipotence, can be made malleable enough to bend to human actions or to think mere mortals would be instruments for its fulfillment. Moral or social reform, military or political conquest, spiritual or physical isolation, desperate preaching or judgmental silence, advancement or rejection of scientific tools, survivalism or fatalism, individual reflection or communal revolution: all are born of historical processes anchored to, but also expressing, particular intellectual and cultural assumptions of the relationship between human and divine agency. Without this in mind, the study of apocalypticism overlooks one of the key features of prophesy and judgment: whether and to what extent humans can make significant choices as part of cosmic history.

The changes that would greatly transform European Christianity in the 10th and 11th century took time and grew out of several disparate contexts in the early medieval Christian world. Before we can examine the many ways that apocalyptic preparations were envisioned and multiplied around the year 1000, we must examine two necessary prerequisites that eroded the “traditional,” inward-focused expectations of apocalyptic preparations. The root causes for this change came from two geographically and culturally

separated sources: the Eastern Roman Empire in the 7th century and the British Isles shortly thereafter. This chapter will look to these two regions to explain how the older, pervasive tradition began to make room for newer apocalyptic speculations, especially in the West. These were not instantly transformative, but their significance and context require inspection. How these forces met, combined, and came to supplant traditional views will be the subject of subsequent chapters.

Politics of the Apocalypse in the Eastern Roman Empire

By weathering the tides of change that ended the empire in the West, Byzantium carried with it not only a stronger political unity compared to the rest of Europe but also a deeper and more articulate sense of historical (and prophetic) identity.[3] While the Franks, the English, and the Irish (among others) were gradually wedding their local traditions and authorities to Christianity following the breakup of the western Roman empire, the eastern Romans were carrying on an apocalyptic tradition that had hinged upon the fate of the empire from its inception in the 1st century. While the role of the Roman Empire changed throughout the centuries after John of Patmos's vision—being portrayed as variously persecutor or protector of the faith—few doubted its apocalyptic importance. Though Augustine of Hippo had urged Christians in the wake of the 410 sacking of Rome not to think of the empire as necessary for the return of Christ, his words were for Romans

[3] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 30; R. D. Scott, "Malalas, *The Secret History*, and Justinian's Propaganda," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 39 (1985), 99–109; Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 66; and Gerhard Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie: Die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Grossreichen (Daniel 2 und 7) und den tausenjährigen Friedensreiche (Apok. 20)* (Munich: Fink, 1972).

watching the known world fall apart around them.[4] In Constantinople and the East, while the upheavals of Late Antiquity were alarming, their emperor (the only one that really mattered) and his capital remained unconquered. Through the 6th century and into the early 7th, Byzantium could boast not only dogged persistence in the face of war, natural disasters, internal conflict, and plague, but even some successes worthy of hope for the empire's future, as represented in the persons of Justinian (r. 527–565) and Heraclius (r. 610–641).

Indeed, during this time, even when apocalyptic concerns threatened the heart of the eastern empire, old traditions prevailed. Take for example the events of 557. In that year, an earthquake and series of aftershocks devastated the imperial city of Constantinople. A contemporary author, Agathias, reports that the pervasive fears caused by the catastrophe provoked many to believe that the world was ending. The churches quickly became crowded with penitents, and prophets (charlatans, without doubt, as far as the historian was concerned, since they claimed to know the hidden mind of God) made predictions that provoked even more terror. Faced with an apocalyptic scenario, the people of Constantinople began preparing for the end of the world. While the fear lasted, Agathias tells us, the people performed pious actions: charitable giving, fervent prayers, just dealings in business and execution of the law, pious seclusion, renunciation of luxurious lifestyles, and other good deeds. As the chronicler critically summarizes: "The ideals to which people constantly pay lip-service but rarely put into practice were then eagerly pursued."[5] In other words, apocalyptic preparations in 557 were no different than the "ideals" every Christian

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[4] Augustine, *City of God*, 931–935.
[5] Agathias, *The Histories*, trans. Joseph D. Frendo (New York: Walter D. Gruyter, 1975), 137–141, quote from 140. See also Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 1, who opens his monograph with the same anecdote but to different effect.

knew by heart were expected of him or her. But when the turmoil faded, life in Constantinople went back to normal. Or had it even changed that much to begin with, considering they had only done what they had long said was proper to Christian living?

Nevertheless, change, at least in the intellectual world of apocalyptic belief, came. When the longevity of Byzantium would be threatened by the spread of Islam, so catastrophic for Sassanid Persia, the politics of apocalyptic speculation (and therefore preparation) reacted—but within a long-standing tradition. So powerful would Byzantine post-Islamic apocalyptic thought be and its understanding of the role of Christians during the End Times, however, that it would prove capable of transcending its historical origins and inspire western political prophesy for centuries after. To see how eastern ideas fit in with larger themes affecting medieval European End Times preparations, we now turn to examine Byzantine apocalyptic thought as it developed in the 6th and 7th centuries, leading to theories of imperial agency and political involvement in the West in the apocalyptic drama. Those in the West, cut off from explicit claims to Roman imperial succession and continuity for most of the early Middle Ages, may have lacked Byzantium's robust intellectual connection between the apocalyptic and the political. By the start of the 9th century, this would no longer be the case.

Byzantine Apocalyptic Speculation Before the Rise of Islam

The legacy of Alexander the Great remained a potent image for those imagining catastrophes at the end of the world. The fourth-century BCE Macedonian king had been linked to the armies of Gog and Magog starting in the 5th century CE as a result of

penetrations by the Huns across the Caucasus in 395 CE.[6] According to legend, it was he who had confronted these dreadful peoples and, unable to subdue them himself, erected a wall that would stand until the End, when they would break loose and wreak havoc.[7] Alexander and his "Gates of the North" persisted within eastern Mediterranean imaginations for some time, into Arab and Turkic inheritors, and was used for a variety of purposes, not all of which were exclusively (or even primarily) apocalyptic. Of course, as a paragon of royal authority, military prowess (especially against Persia), and heroic destiny, Alexander found his way into the work of authors who wished to tap his fame for or link him to political considerations in Byzantium. So it was in the early 7th century.

Around 630, a Syriac author composed a text that scholars call the *Alexander Legend* (sometimes the *Syriac Alexander Legend*). It was written on the heels of (and likely in response to) the military successes of Heraclius against the Sassanid Persians. In it, and building upon earlier Christian conceptions of the great conqueror, Alexander is a pious instrument of God's will in fighting the Persians of his day, just as contemporary propaganda portrayed Heraclius.[8] According to Earnest A. Wallis Budge's translation of the text, Alexander's gate, made of bronze and iron and infused with magic to prevent its

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[6] McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 56; and Andrew R. Anderson, *Alexander's Gate: Gog and Magog and the Enclosed Nations*, monographs of the Medieval Academy of America, no. 5 (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1932). For a translation of "Christian Legend Concerning Alexander" with reference to the Huns, see Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great, Being the Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1889), 144–158.

[7] As McGinn notes in *Visions*, 56, the most complete version of this early apocalyptic legend can be found in the work of the 5th century Syrian author Jacob of Serugh. This, along with other Christian Alexander accounts, has been published with the Syriac text and an English translation in Budge, *History of Alexander the Great*, 163–200.

[8] Lutz Greisiger, "Opening the Gates of the North in 627: War, Anti-Byzantine Sentiment and Apocalyptic Expectancy in the Near East Prior to the Arab Invasion," in *Peoples of the Apocalypse: Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios*, eds. Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder, and Rebekka Voß (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 63–79, at 72.

destruction, will not fall until the time of "another king when the world shall come to an end by the will of God the ruler of creation."[9] As the world devolves into sin and wickedness, God will ordain that the time for his wrath has come, made possible by the fury of Gog and Magog. But human hands will not open the gates. "And the Lord shall send His sign from heaven and a voice shall call on the gate, and it shall be destroyed and fall at the beck of the Lord, and it shall not be opened by the key which I [Alexander] have made for it."[10] While all of this is in keeping with traditional emphasis on God's omnipotence, the *Alexander Legend* leaves some room for earthly actors. "Then the kingdom of the Greeks shall move itself, and shall come and take a hammer of iron in its right hand and a hammer of brass in its left…so shall the power of the kingdoms melt away before the might of the kingdom of the Greeks which is that of the Romans."[11] When all the fury of the Greco-Romans is finished, "there shall not be found any among the nations and tongues who dwell in the world that shall stand before the Romans."[12] The message of the Syriac author, fully in step with traditional Byzantine propaganda,[13] emphasized imperial might and the longevity of the eastern empire. Simultaneously, it also implied that, while God would be wholly responsible for the release of wrathful armies at the end of time, earthly rather than angelic armies would hold back the tide of invasion, ultimately leading to the undisputed triumph of Romans over the nations.

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[9] Budge, *History of Alexander the Great*, 154.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 155.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Greisiger, "Opening the Gates of the North in 627," 74.

Due to the strong political undertones of the work, the *Alexander Legend* cannot be used unquestioningly as a document expressing apocalyptic beliefs.[14] Nevertheless, in it we can see a clear assumption, or perhaps hope, that Byzantine Christians would have a participatory role in apocalyptic events and against a key prophetic foe. As has been pointed out by Lutz Greisger, however, the *Alexander Legend*, while describing a cataclysmic clash of peoples, does not present an apocalyptic scenario per se but rather, with the triumph of Rome against worldly foes, "seems to avert any eschatological implications."[15] The later recollections of Heraclius, following cues from the *Alexander Legend*, demonstrate subtleties in apocalyptic understanding of human agency in prophetic events. Both the tenth-century Armenian work of Movsēs Dasxuranc'i and Pseudo-Fredegar's seventh-century Latin Frankish chronicle speak of Heraclius himself being responsible for opening Alexander's gates and leading out a fierce people to fight on his behalf.[16] On the one hand, a human agent is given more power. That is to say, the gates are opened to Gog and Magog by Heraclius's will, not by God's. On the other hand, because these accounts speak not of prophesy but of history, Gog and Magog lose their apocalyptic immediacy. They make up a fearful army, but that army has not begun the war of the Antichrist. Heraclius thus is able to take on an important role and control, at least for a time, an apocalyptic menace, but he does so without usurping God's ultimate authority.

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[14] No apocalyptic text is without a political context. What I mean above is that the *Alexander Legend* does not self-consciously attempt to explicate End Time symbolism the way, for example, a commentary of John's Apocalypse might.
[15] Greisiger, "Opening the Gates of the North in 627," 77.
[16] Ibid., 76n57–58.

Heraclius opens Alexander's Gates and releases Gog and Magog, but he does not kick off the End Times. Only God can do that.

Nevertheless, while Byzantine propaganda and apocalyptic scenarios kept God as the ultimate authority, by the early 7th century it had introduced the clear implication that imperial Christian armies could be important participants in the apocalyptic drama. As we shall see, this innovation would remain strong in European imaginations and in how authors speculated about apocalyptic preparations for centuries to come. And it would not be long after Heraclius's successes and the *Alexander Legend* when Byzantine imperial politics about the End Times would find an even greater source of inspiration.

Pseudo-Methodius and the Last World Emperor

The success and spread of Islam starting in the 7th century had profound effects on the empires that had survived through Late Antiquity. The Persian Sassanid Empire fell in 651 after having reached its greatest territorial extent only a few decades earlier.[17] Byzantium, after having recovered much of its holdings from the Persians, found many of its domains now in the hands of a previously unknown but very robust new faction. While the trend of recent Near Eastern scholarship has been to emphasize accommodation and détente between Christians and Muslims—an important corrective to older Orientalist histories that saw Islam as a pure menace to Middle Eastern Christians and European mores[18]—nevertheless, it remains true that some contemporary Byzantine Christians were

[17] Warren Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival 780–842* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 2–3.
[18] Harald Suermann, "Copts and the Islam of the Seventh Century," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, eds. Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark N. Swanson, and David Thomas (Boston: Brill, 2006), 95–110.

frightened by what the Arab conquests might mean for themselves, the empire, and cosmic history. One author whose voice was heard extensively throughout the Middle Ages, directly and indirectly, was a Byzantine Christian known to us now only as Pseudo-Methodius. Beyond the hints of his life and status that historians have been able to piece together through an analysis of his writing, nothing is known about Pseudo-Methodius the man. Though his date and identity were debated in the 20th century, the consensus view now understands him to have been a Syrian Christian writing towards the end of the 7th century.[19] As such, and as is made clear in his text, he was witness to the great surge of activity that led Islam to gain control over the Levant and rule it unopposed for centuries after.

Pseudo-Methodius's *Revelation*,[20] his only known work, is an apocalyptic vision, inventive history, and piece of political propaganda rolled into one. It has two sections. The first is a history of kings, primarily of Greek origin, highlighting the legend of Alexander and his caging of Gog and Magog behind the Gates of the North. The second part treats with apocalyptic expectations, especially concerning the Antichrist, and how the new Arab invaders factor into End Times prophecy. Aside from the thematic links between the Arab invasions with the apocalyptic peoples of Gog and Magog (though they are expressly different peoples), the connecting thread between parts one and two is the succession of kings from the ancient past to the seventh-century present, with the Romans the heirs to

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[19] H. Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart, 2000), 78–82.

[20] For the complete text with translation of Greek and Latin versions, see Benjamin Garstad, ed. and trans., *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius: An Alexandrian World Chronicle* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

the Greeks. No kingdom or people can match the Romans, especially when linked to the Holy Cross of Christ. But prophecy clearly states the coming of a great evil before the Final Judgment. As a dictate of God, even Rome (unstoppable in all other respects) must bend to divine omnipotence.[21]

The conquests that Pseudo-Methodius likely experienced and wrote about in his *Revelation*, like the punishments of the Hebrews in the Old Testament, are brought about not because of God's love for the aggressors but because of his displeasure with the conquered. This would (or had) occurred in the seventh and last millennium of world history. Leaving the deserts, "these sons of Ismael" would overthrow the existing Persian Empire, spoil Egypt and Syria, wreak havoc upon the coasts and islands, and subject Christians to harm and oppression.[22] Pseudo-Methodius says this adversity is the punishment that Paul prophesied would of necessity occur before the coming of the son of perdition, or the Antichrist.[23] Yet, while the Arab conquests do not represent the final satanic offensive, they are portrayed as universally dire to Christendom, shattering lives and fortunes while also revealing secret apostates. "And they will be cruel and murderers and bloodthirsty and destroyers and a testing furnace for all Christians.…Also all who are called Christians are not Christians.…And without compulsion and blows and wounds they will deny Christ and will associate with the unbelievers."[24]

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[21] Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 42–3.
[22] Ibid., 44–6.
[23] Ibid., 46. The prophesy comes from II Thess. 2:3.
[24] Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 46–47.

Christians must not despair, however, for a Greek king will arise when the Ishmaelites are most assured of their victory. According to Pseudo-Methodius, this king will completely reverse the misfortunes afflicting Christians, putting their enemies to the sword, conquering what had been taken, pillaging the home of their enemies, restoring hope to the oppressed, returning the exiled, placing their tormentors in bondage, and bringing peace to the whole earth "the like of which had never existed, because it is the last peace of the perfection of the world."[25] It is only after this great peace, when priests are free from taxation and hold a respectable place throughout society, that the Gates of the North are opened and Gog and Magog will storm out against the Roman Empire in fulfillment of Christian apocalyptic tradition. During this final conflict, the Greek king will enter Jerusalem. There, in an act of supreme piety, he will surrender his crown to God and "immediately every leader and all powers will cease."[26] The son of perdition will then reveal himself, causing many to fall away from the faith due to his deceptions and false miracles. But God himself will end his rule when "at the coming of Our Lord from heaven he will be delivered to Hell-fire and to outer darkness," and his followers will join him, but the blessed faithful will abide with Christ in joy forever.[27]

Pseudo-Methodius, like so many other apocalyptic speculators, had a message for his contemporaries that was not limited to the narration of prophetic events. The seventh-century *Revelation* has long been seen as a political, not just an apocalyptic, text.[28] The role of kings, a succession of empires (an idea gleaned from visions in Daniel, chapters 2

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[25] Ibid., 49.
[26] Ibid., 50.
[27] Ibid., 51.
[28] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 107–119.

and 7), perceived moral decay in society, and the praise for the power and majesty of the Greco-Roman world despite incursions into its eastern territories by Arab ("Ishmaelite") invaders clearly highlight the political interests of the author. The fear of collapse for the whole Byzantine Empire during these invasions seems implicit throughout the text, as the forces of Gog and Magog appear in the first part, invoking the idea of an unstoppable army that will sweep away all Christian resistance during the End Times. Yet while Gog and Magog, caged by Alexander the Great, will be the apocalyptic wave that breaks against the world when the son of perdition arrives, they are expressly not the same people as the Ishmaelites who would (or had) wrestle large portions of the Near East and Africa from Byzantium. Though a force of ruin and a sign of the approaching end, Pseudo-Methodius makes it clear the Arabs are not agents of that final confrontation. They will be defeated by a Greek king who will usher in an era of peace and unquestioned universal Roman supremacy until the real apocalyptic armies of Gog and Magog appear and the king relinquishes his crown to God in Jerusalem. As Gerrit J. Reinink has argued, such a scenario is ultimately one that is based upon—and attempted to persuade others to have—hope in Byzantine political history. The role of this last Greek king in defeating the Ishmaelites and then abdicating just before the arrival of the Antichrist meant that the Byzantine Empire would endure the Arab conquests. This was in contrast to some contemporaries who saw the new threat in the East as a successor empire that was prophesied to eclipse the Romans.[29] According to Pseudo-Methodius, Byzantium would

[29] Gerrit J. Reinick, "Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic East: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), 149–187, specifically at 157–158; and Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 116.

still remain the katechon (from the Greek τὸ κατέχον, meaning "that which withholds/restrains"). Generally speaking, the katechon was the force spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7 that withheld the Antichrist from coming to power and Judgment Day from arriving.[30] It was a responsibility that was doomed to ultimate failure but was important while it lasted. As discussed in chapter 1, Rome had played this role for Tertullian and Lactantius, but its glory had faded without the coming of the Antichrist. Pseudo-Methodius's text recontextualizes the concept for a new generation facing adversity. The movement in Byzantine political and religious thought in this direction had come before the outbreak of Islam on the world stage. As discussed above, Heraclius had combined imperial propaganda, the *Alexander Legend*, and apocalyptic exuberance in the early 7th century. A resurgent Byzantine Empire casting off an eastern invasion and military threat had already been put forward as evidence for an enduring political order that would uphold its duty as katechon.[31] Though the Arab invasions had shaken this conviction since the reign of Heraclius, Pseudo-Methodius believed and argued that it was still a valid interpretation of Byzantium's role in world history. The empire would endure through all external threats short of the divine dictate that nothing could endure the apocalyptic force of Gog and Magog led by the son of perdition.

Yet even here, and very importantly for future generations, the emperor responsible for defeating the Ishmaelites would have an active part to play in the start of the last act of

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[30] 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7: "And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way."

[31] Gerrit J. Reinick, "Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies during the Reign of Heraclius," in *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation*, ed. Gerrit J. Reinick and Bernard H. Stolte, Groningen Studies in Cultural Change 2 (Dudley, Mass.: 2002), 81–94; and Greisiger, "Opening the Gates of the North in 627," 71.

the apocalyptic drama. Pseudo-Methodius was original in his declaration that the last and possibly greatest Roman emperor would surrender his authority directly to God while present in the city of Jerusalem. As we shall see later when discussing how it was used in tenth-century France, this prediction, which became known as the "Last World Emperor" prophecy, would become a cornerstone of Christian apocalyptic speculation in the Latin West for centuries to come.[32] For seventh-century Byzantium, it is significant because it speaks to the development of the idea of agency, however limited, for Christian actors in apocalyptic events. As we have seen, Christian apocalyptic tradition had long eschewed implying Christians would have any direct effect on the timing and sequence of End Time events. In Pseudo-Methodius's *Revelation*, however, we see that a contemporary Christian not present in Scripture would by his concrete actions trigger the reveal of the Antichrist and thus the final stage of world history. These actions are tied to specific geographies and known political institutions, not merely ambiguous allegories from ancient authorities speaking of long-vanished or far-away kingdoms. The Last World Emperor could be any future (or present) Byzantine emperor, and his activities in Jerusalem were well within the bounds of practical imaginings. Moreover, the logical sequence of cause and effect was simple and straight-forward: if the emperor does a specific thing—abdicate his rule to God at Jerusalem—then the End will immediately begin, but if he has not done this then obviously the world is not about to end. Pseudo-Methodius was offering comfort to his

[32] Daniel Verhelst, "La préhistoire des conceptions d'Adson concernant l'Antichrist," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 40 (1973): 52–103; Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 107–117; and Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 107–129.

readers who had endured the Arab conquests, but it was a comfort that elevated a mere human to be the lynchpin of the apocalyptic drama.

Pseudo-Methodius Goes West

The decline of the western Roman world occurred gradually. With a few exceptions, such as the sacks of Rome or the conquest of North Africa by the Vandals, Christian apocalypticists had time to adapt to their new environment and find relatively simple ways to adjust traditional apocalyptic understanding to contemporary circumstances. While Rome might have been the restraining force keeping the Antichrist at bay for Lactantius in the early 4th century, by the early 5th century Augustine was persuasively arguing that the political stability of the empire was not as pivotal to Christian history as had once been believed. Despite the lived experiences of some leading them to believe the end was approaching (like Hesychius) or of those who saw the world in a general decline towards the Day of Judgment (like Gregory the Great), the political collapse of Rome was no longer reason for apocalyptic concern. The appearance of Islam in the 7th century changed this. There had been instances, prior to the Arab conquests, of Byzantine speculation about a divinely blessed emperor, or even a satanic one—both were applied to Justinian in the 6th century.[33] These examples, however, were too specific to be of use to later generations of apocalyptic commentators (especially in the West) and were forgotten among those interested in the End Times. The rise of Islam and its success against the Persians and Byzantines triggered a different sort of apocalyptic perspective, one born

[33] Scott, “Malalas, The Secret History, and Justinian's Propaganda,” 107–109.

out of political concerns but which could be inspirational even outside of its eastern context.

Unlike apocalyptically infused propaganda about Justinian and Heraclius, Pseudo-Methodius's work provided sufficient detail to be of interest while remaining vague enough that it could be of great use, especially after it had passed through the hands of translators, redactors, and interpreters seeking answers outside of the Byzantine context. The importance of Pseudo-Methodius's apocalyptic writing is therefore unquestionable, being exported from its Syrian origins into the Greek- and later Latin-speaking world in relatively short order. Paul Alexander wrote that its translation from Syriac into Greek "mark[ed] the end of Antiquity, and the beginning of that of the Middle Ages. None of the apocalyptic writings written after the translation was made fail to show traces of its influence."[34] As the text moved west, redactors abbreviated or removed the fanciful histories while promulgating the prophetic sections. Daniel, not Methodius, came to be seen as the primary voice in the text, which only increased its assumed authority.[35] Before the year 800, the Syriac original had been translated into Greek and, from these versions, into Latin.[36] At least five Latin manuscripts of Pseudo-Methodius dating to the 8th century have been identified (out of a total of nearly 200), though he did not seem to enjoy much attention during the 9th and early 10th centuries in the West (as far as the manuscript tradition is concerned).[37] Nevertheless, the prophecy of a last emperor or king who would surrender

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[34] Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 14.
[35] Ibid., 61.
[36] Ibid., 60.
[37] Johannes Fried, "Awaiting the End of Time around the Turn of the Year 1000," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David. C. Van Meter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17–63, at 25.

power to Christ in Jerusalem before the start of the apocalyptic drama proved a powerful and enduring image. The prophecy found its greatest fame in the version expressed by Adso of Montier-en-Der in the mid-10th century in a letter to Queen Gerberga, the wife of King Louis IV of France. This letter, its context, and its place in changing understandings of apocalyptic preparations will be treated in chapters three and four. Suffice it for the present to say that Adso's interpretation of Pseudo-Methodius's prophecy (though certainly not his complete work) became the standard prophetic biography for the Antichrist in the West and would inspire apocalyptically minded authors for centuries, including poets and vernacular playwrights.[38] It would also mean that the political message of a strong, apocalyptic emperor—divorced from the Byzantine context in which Pseudo-Methodius wrote—would endure and thrive, leaving a lasting influence on imperial politics, conceptions of Jerusalem, and Christian agency within the Latin West.

These matters will be treated later. Now we must see how Western Europe in the early Middle Ages began to develop its own understanding of Christian apocalyptic agency. Belief that Christians could, and even should, take active steps in anticipation of the end of the world beyond general moral reform grew independently in the Latin-speaking West, though interaction with the Greek East would certainly commingle to produce original, blended results. Since we have seen what raw material the East contributed to this mixture, we turn now to what the West produced. In the next chapter, we will examine where, how, and to what end these ingredients came together.

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[38] Richard K. Emmerson and David F. Hult, trans., *Antichrist and Judgment Day: The Middle French* Jour du Jugemet (Asheville, North Carolina: Pegasus Press, 1998); W. W. Greg, ed., *The Play of the Antichrist from the Chester Cycle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935); and John Wright, trans., *The Play of Antichrist* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1967), known as *Ludus de Antichristo* in Latin.

Antecedents for Apocalyptic Preaching: Hesychius and Gregory the Great

Preaching divinely inspired truths for the conversion of sinners and the edification of the Church has been fundamental to the Christian experience. In its first centuries under the Roman Empire, Christianity understood the purpose of preaching before and during the apocalypse to be a continuation of earlier exhortations to live morally with faith in Christ. Some specifics about the sequence of events for the apocalyptic drama might be helpful in preventing believers from falling prey to devilish lies and to steel them for the persecutions to come. Preaching as a specific responsibility for the community before and during the End Times, however, was not emphasized. Local churches were to strengthen their members spiritually as a corporate body, but the most impressive conversions and spiritual aids were to be provided by divinely appointed sources. The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11, often identified as Enoch and Elijah, were commonly thought to have been preserved from death in order to bear the responsibility of converting those who could still be saved and of leading the Church as the Antichrist waged his bloody war against the faithful. Preaching was important in the daily feeding of the Lord's sheep, but it was not seen as a weapon to be wielded against the forces of evil during the End Times by the common flock or their local shepherds. By the 11th century, however, the regular preacher would become an important, even pivotal, player in the apocalyptic drama. The foundations for this shift, however, began much earlier.

The first Christian commentator to my knowledge to have passionately advocated for preaching as an important and necessary way to prepare the Church for the Antichrist,

beyond mere moral exhortations to godliness, was Hesychius, bishop of Salona, in the mid-5th century. Unlike his pen-pal Augustine, Hesychius believed in a real and imminent apocalypse. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Dalmatian bishop urged his colleague in Hippo to see the advantage, even the need, of feeding their flocks with food fit to prepare them for the approaching End. Preaching to the people the details of the apocalypse, especially the signs of the times, the probability that these were being fulfilled in their sight, and the likely date of the End, was his vision for how to prepare the Church for the Antichrist's advent. Subsequent emphasis on Augustine's spiritualized interpretation of the apocalypse by the majority of ecclesiastical officials might lead historians to conclude Hesychius's concerns about a real and imminent apocalypse were forgotten or of minimal importance until after the turn of the millennium.[39] As James Palmer has pointed out, however, such conclusions are premature and lead to an inaccurate view of early medieval apocalypticism as symptomatic of hysteria among a small minority.[40] By the year 1000, preaching the apocalypse was indeed being discussed in Western Europe similarly to how Hesychius had proposed, but the urge to disseminate information about the End Times from the pulpits did not emerge overnight, nor did its tenth- and eleventh-century advocates share the same ideas as the Dalmatian bishop.

More significant to the Latin West than Hesychius, however, was the pope whom scholars typically see as standing at the pivot point between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages: Gregory I, called the Great. Preaching and pastoral care were of particular concern for Gregory. By the time of his pontificate (590–604), Christians outside of

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[39] See Landes, "The Silenced Millennium," 151–152, 165–172.
[40] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 27.

Byzantine imperial control had had sufficient time to reflect upon the changed world in which they lived. As seen in the invocation of the Last Judgment in Gregory of Tours's (c. 538–594) *Historia Francorum*, fatalism and pessimism about the future of society were a part of sixth-century eschatological speculation. Pope Gregory I, writing in the shadow of decayed Roman glories, expressed similar anxiety as the bishop of Tours. Nevertheless, despite the opportunities available to draw on recent problems to encourage the faithful to prepare for what might have seemed like the very edge of the apocalypse, the pope, like his Late Antique forebears, refrained from giving too explicit and concrete advice. Gregory's well-known role in championing Benedictine monasticism and the evangelization of England make it clear the pope was not hesitant when it came to initiating significant policy for the Church. When it came to apocalyptic speculation, however, Gregory deferred to what had become traditional reliance on the omnipotence of God. Nevertheless, Gregory voiced apocalyptic anxieties in his works but in a way to comfort his audience by asking them to divest themselves of worldly concerns. One might also say that he asked them to forego practical preparations for the End Times in favor of general moral reforms that were concerned with escaping hell rather than the Antichrist. As Alan Bernstein puts it, for Gregory and his contemporaries, the "perceptions of the afterlife are now becoming clearer because the end time is approaching."[41]

Through sermons and other works focused on moral improvement, Gregory encouraged the faithful who might fear an apocalypse building up around them to devote themselves to patience and endurance. But like Hesychius, Gregory also believed

[41] Alen E. Bernstein, *Hell and its Rivals: Death and Retribution among Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 34–35.

preaching could prepare the Church for whatever tricks and persecutions the enemy delivered, whether before or during the final drama.[42] Brief discussion of how Gregory I sought to comfort apocalyptically minded Christians through moral exhortations will help establish the theological backdrop for seventh- and eighth-century Hiberno-English belief that preaching and the apocalyptic went hand-in-hand.

In a sermon based upon Luke 21:23–33 concerning the reappearance of Christ, Gregory reflects upon how his audience may be reacting to what seems to be the obviously approaching End Times. Admitting that the current state of the world looks bleak, Gregory wants his listeners to be "watchful and disposed to caution, that they not grow lax out of a sense of security or torpid out of ignorance. Let fear make them ever alert, and alertness strengthen them in good works."[43] Fear of what is inevitable, as he sees it, must not lead to abandoning old activities, especially those of religious value. He continues:

> Those who love God are ordered to rejoice and be merry at the world's end.…Someone who does not rejoice as the end of the world approaches testifies that he is its friend, and this convicts him of being God's enemy.…To grieve at the destruction of the world suits those whose hearts are rooted in the love of it, those who do not seek the life to come, who do not even realize that it exists. But we who acknowledge the eternal joys of our heavenly homeland should hasten to it with all speed; we must choose to set out for it very quickly and to come to it by the shortest way.[44]

Gregory's advice as he proceeds with his homily is to stress detachment from temporary goods in favor of eternal goods, lest love for the world and the future lead to

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[42] See Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 59. I do not fully agree with Palmer when discussing Gregory's preaching, however, since the pope was working from an older traditions that minimized human agency.
[43] Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. Dom David Hurst (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 16.
[44] Ibid., 17.

their destruction.[45] His ultimate advice is not to ignore the approaching day of Christ's return and the accompanying worldly disasters. Rather, he tells his audience to "give hard thought to that day" by changing their lives and habits to avoid evil temptations and to draw closer to God. "The more you now anticipate his severity by fear, the more securely will you behold the coming of your eternal Judge."[46] Gregory's sermon suggests that the world's degradation was itself clear evidence that it was indeed nearing its appointed end, which should lead Christians to move away from love of the world and towards godly reflections and repentance.

Elsewhere, Gregory provides a further glimpse of his understanding of what Christians can do in the face of an ever-approaching apocalypse in a degraded world. Gregory returns to the prophecies of wars and troubled times in another sermon on Luke 21:9–19. Once again, Gregory holds that knowledge of these coming calamities should ease Christians' minds. "Blows we see coming strike us forcibly, and we accept the evils of the world more patiently, if we are fortified against them by the shield of foreknowledge."[47] He acknowledges that disorders may come from heaven, earth, the elements, or other people, yet all of them must be endured by the faithful.[48] This call for endurance, which very likely must be sustained to the death, echoes the words of Perpetua's editor. Gregory writes, "The death of the righteous is a help to the good, but a testimony to the wicked, so that for the same reason the evil may perish without an excuse and the elect

[45] Ibid., 19.
[46] Ibid., 20.
[47] Ibid., 301.
[48] Ibid., 302.

take a model for life."[49] Nevertheless, Gregory acknowledges how disturbing such eventualities must strike some Christians and tells them that Christ, as quoted by Luke, wishes to assuage their fears.[50] Falling back on general encouragement of theological virtues, patience through adversity becomes Gregory's chief concern for the rest of the sermon with apocalyptic expectations quickly forgotten. He does enjoin his audience, however, that martyrdom that derives from internal transformation rather than external persecution or military activity is to be held in higher regard.[51]

As with Chrysostom before him, Gregory consistently portrays fear as beneficial because of how it encourages people to readjust their priorities towards their eternal rewards.[52] For Gregory, hellfire rather than the Antichrist was to be feared more by those seeking moral reform. The former was eternal for all the damned while the latter was temporary and qualitatively little different than past persecutors. Ultimately, joy is the proper emotional response to seeing the Antichrist arise, for it meant the coming of Christ for his bride.

In his sermons, Gregory I strays very little in his understanding of apocalyptic preparations from his Late Antique predecessors. While acknowledging that his own times have the air of the apocalyptic about them, Gregory emphasizes that these evils demonstrate how Christians should focus on individual godliness, patience (in both the theological and personal sense), and devotion to church affairs while detaching themselves

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[49] Ibid., 304.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 307–8.
[52] Bernstein, *Hell and Its Rivals*, 61–65.

from concerns about the world and its problems.[53] Gregory was hardly isolationist in his ecclesiastical policies, so it would be an overstatement to say Gregory urged Christians to withdraw from public and civic life as the apocalypse neared. Rather, Gregory's advice was the same as what many other theologians had espoused. One need not worry about the End Times too much—though some fear is appropriate—since God is overseeing both world history and the fate of individual Christians. Personal devotions should increase, which have always meant a degree of detachment from worldly affairs and concerns, but Christians need not take radical steps that might go against traditional piety. Christians need not doubt that the End will come nor be too anxious until it arrives. Instead, they should be happy when they see it approaching.

Furthermore, in his *Moralia in Job*, an exegesis on the book of Job—the righteous man who suffered great misery by the will of God through no fault of his own—Gregory confronts core concerns for a Church passing through times of anxiety. Though Gregory reiterates the unpredictability of God's apocalyptic calendar,[54] nevertheless, the Church's chief concern must be to endure. For Gregory, this requires holy preachers instructing those with less understanding. He describes various levels of Scriptural meaning, only some of which can be understood by the many.[55] As the world advances closer to the End, the signs of its approach make themselves more noticeable. These, in turn, will be opportunities for holy preachers to shine, providing the fertile rain that will bring forth the fruit of good

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[53] Ibid., 46, 48, 55–57.
[54] Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, ed. M. Adriaen. CCSL 143, 3 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979–1985), 23.
[55] Ibid., 40–41.

works and a healthy, spiritually minded Church.[56] More to the point, the instructional support provided to the Christian community will allow believers to resist the Antichrist directly. Gregory specifies that not only will the Two Witnesses, Enoch and Elijah, be able to reprove the Antichrist but so, too, will all those who are truly called the elect.[57] The power of preaching seems clear, yet Gregory qualifies it with an important caveat. He says that the elect clearly do not have the ability to oppose the embodiment of evil by their will alone. Those who speak against the Antichrist in his absence (as he suggests his contemporaries do) prove nothing of their actual abilities when confronted with the apocalyptic villain. Only God's spirit moving through his holy people will be of any real value.[58] Gregory thus lays a firm foundation for the importance of preaching prior to the End Times (advice he practiced himself), but he is careful to qualify his guidance with a statement of absolute reliance on the Divine. This caveat keeps Gregory rooted in the older apocalyptic tradition that implicitly rejected the idea that humans had any meaningful agency when it came to the fulfillment and sequence of the apocalyptic drama. Despite Gregory's relative conservatism, however, later apocalyptic commentators would pick up similar ideas but also mold them in ways he had not intended.

An Early Irish Apocalypse Handbook

Out beyond the borders of the Roman Empire even at the height of its power, Irish monks and Christians from the 5th century on embraced the Gospel, promoting it like none

[56] Ibid., 466–467.
[57] Ibid., 793–794.
[58] Ibid.

had done before. Missionary monks transformed their island and helped bring their form of Christianity to the English in later centuries. Because these travels—known as *peregrinatio*—often combined Christian zeal with the earlier Irish punishment of exile in a kind of self-imposed penance, these monks carried with them an interest in preaching and judgment.[59] For this reason, penitentials—reference works for clerics with recommended punishments for various sins—were especially important to Irish Christianity. With these, through private confessions with a priest, Christians knew the earthly price that must be paid for each sin before one could return to the favor of the Lord. Though penitentials would have been used in monasteries, handbooks would also have been an efficient way for travelers to carry with them important, relatively condensed religious instructions. The value of such guides could best be realized only if they were made known to the Christian population throughout Ireland and its neighboring regions. With monastics and clergy possessing an above average education for the time and a cultural piety that encouraged self-imposed exile and religious travel, Irish Christians were well-disposed to emphasize preaching as a universal and transformative good for society. The resultant spread of such ecclesiastical handbooks (and the custom of private confession for penance in Western Europe) testifies to their importance in Irish and European Christian history.[60]

Into this proselytizing milieu come two Hiberno-Latin Apocalypse commentaries of the 7th and 8th centuries: Pseudo-Jerome's *Handbook on the Apocalypse of the Apostle*

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[59] Michael Richter, *Ireland and her Neighbors in the Seventh Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 41–47; and T. M. Charles-Edwards, "The social background to Irish p*eregrinatio*," *Celtica* 11 (1976): 43–59.

[60] Richter, 63; James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical: An Introduction and Guide* (Reprint, Dublin: Four Court Press, [1929] 1993), 235–240; and John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Princpal* Libri Poenitentiales *and Selections from Related Documents* (Reprint, New York: Columbia University Press, [1938] 1990), 23–50.

John and the anonymously written "On the Mysteries in the Apocalypse of John" in the *Pauca problesmata de enigmatibus ex tomis canonicis* (also known as the Irish *Reference Bible*).[61] In both, the role of preaching is clearly presented as linked to the apocalyptic drama. St. Patrick himself in the 5th century saw the conversion of his adopted country as helping to fulfill the proselytizing directive of the Great Commission in anticipation of the End Times.[62] Eschatology remained an important topic in Ireland long after Patrick's death. The *Handbook on the Apocalypse of the Apostle John* is a brief work, composed in the 7th century. Eschewing a detailed gloss of every passage, the author (mistakenly believed to have been Jerome, and in one manuscript Isidore of Seville)[63] focuses on what seem to him the most important parts of John's book as well as those that could be easily presented for repetition and mass consumption. Throughout the short work, however, several subjects are frequently displayed. These include the importance of penance, the universality of John's vision, and, perhaps most prominent, preaching.

In explicating the phrase "Grace to you and peace from God" (Rev. 1:4), the author reveals his understanding of grace. "There cannot be peace unless grace precedes. Grace is understood in three ways, that is, baptism, penance, and perseverance."[64] This sentiment is echoed a bit later: "God knocks in three ways: through compunction of the heart, through preaching, and through tribulation."[65] Again, a short space later: "The New testament is

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[61] See Pseudo-Jerome, *Commemoratorium de Apocalpsi Iohannis Apostoli*, in *CCSL* 107, cols. 159–229; and *Reference Bible*, "De enigmatibus ex Apocalypsi Johannis," in *CCSL* 107, cols. 231–295.
[62] Patrick, *Confessio*, in *Libri epistolarum sancti Patricii episcopi*, ed. Ludwig Bieler, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1993), I. 76; and Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 81.
[63] Francis X. Gumerlock ed. *Early Latin Commentaries on the Apocalypse* (Medieval Institute Publications, 2016), 1.
[64] Pseudo-Jerome, *Handbook on the Apocalypse of the Apostle John*, in *Early Latin Commentaries on the Apocalypse*, ed. Francis X. Gumerlock (Medieval Institute Publications, 2016), 22.
[65] Ibid., 24. See discussion of this trip below.

understood where there are three colors: water and sulfur and fire. Through water, baptism is understood; through sulfur, penance; and through fire, martyrdom."[66] The author returns to these same grace-imparting virtues at the end of the handbook, praising those who wash "their bodies through chastity, through baptism, through martyrdom, or through penance."[67] References to these same ideas recur throughout the text.

From these comments we gather that grace, according to Pseudo-Jerome, is understood and imparted by God primarily through the catalyst of human activities. Baptism's importance as a vehicle for grace goes back to the early years of the faith,[68] and righteous suffering is at the foundations of Christianity. As presented, these three sources of grace represent the stages of a Christian's life: beginning (baptism), end (martyrdom), and everything between (penance). Notably, these are sources of grace that all Christians, laity and clergy alike, can experience. This must be intentional on the part of Pseudo-Jerome. The universality of the contents of the Apocalypse and the figures in it are common refrains for the author. According to him, John, in receiving revelations about Christ's passion, the resurrection, and the Day of Judgment, represents the whole of humanity.[69] John is also a figure of the human race being called to witness the opening of the seven seals, the first of which is a vision of a triumphant Christ.[70] Later, he represents all preachers and saints when he is given a reed to measure the temple, which the text interprets as preaching the gospel to the Church.[71] Other allusions are made of one or a few people

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[66] Ibid., 25.
[67] Ibid., 36.
[68] Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013), 598.
[69] Pseudo-Jerome, *Handbook on the Apocalypse*, 23.
[70] Ibid., 26.
[71] Ibid., 30.

signifying either all Christians or all humans throughout time.[72] It is thus likely Pseudo-Jerome would have chosen his sources of grace to reinforce the connection between those he was instructing and the audiences they would one day address as part of his understanding of the book's universal themes and applicability.

In the context of an apocalyptic handbook, Pseudo-Jerome's emphasis of these three virtues—baptism, penance, and martyrdom—represents a subtle but important shift in apocalyptic speculations. Though personal accountability and moral reform had been a hallmark of Christian apocalyptic preparations for centuries, here the exhortation to penance in the face of the looming End Times goes hand-in-hand with an emphasis on preaching in a work written expressly for use as a pastoral aid. Preaching itself is an unmistakable theme throughout the work. Among the symbols the text says represent preachers or preaching are trumpets, candlesticks, breasts, eyes, feet, voices from the throne, wings, a bow, angels, a rainbow, a reed, fire, a sickle, a bowl poured onto the sun, the sound of a mill, birds, fruit, and leaves.[73] Even the lack of preaching receives multiple symbols: famine, still winds, and silence in heaven.[74] As interpretations are not explicit in John's Apocalypse, the emphasis on preaching is a deliberate choice on the part of Pseudo-Jerome. Additionally, penance is often closely linked to preaching within the text. For example, like his trio of sanctifying actions, Pseudo-Jerome writes, "God knocks in three ways: through compunction of the heart, through preaching, and through tribulation."[75] While these three have significance for the faithful at all times, the apocalyptic drama

[72] Ibid., 27, 31, 34, 35.
[73] Ibid., 23, 25, 26, 28–35.
[74] Ibid., 26–28.
[75] Ibid., 24.

would bring them all to the forefront of human interest. One of the most extraordinary aspects of the Antichrist's reign is that preaching will be suspended. According to Pseudo-Jerome, this will affect all people: throughout the four corners of the world, preaching will stop in churches, for the heathen, and for all humans. After that, only martyrdom will be left.[76] This interruption is expressly attributed to the advent of the Antichrist.[77] Aside from the implication that this will be the result of persecution, Pseudo-Jerome does not explain how the Antichrist achieves this censorship or if it will be a deliberate silence on the part of Christian preachers. The latter possibility is suggested when John is given a reed to measure the temple (that is, preaching to the Church) but instructed not to measure the outer courtyard (which represents heretics, philosophers, and heathen that are not part of the Church) during the forty-two months of the Antichrist's rule.[78] Preaching before sinners, specifically the Antichrist, will still be done by Enoch and Elijah, though the handbook does not make itself clear on this point.[79] Curiously, Enoch and Elijah, in their roles as the Two Witnesses, are specifically called to preach in John's vision, yet they receive very little attention from Pseudo-Jerome. Unlike the late classical authors examined in the previous chapter, Elijah and Enoch are not said to lead the faithful in any special way, nor are they singled out as particularly imbued with the Holy Spirit to preach. That gift is instead consistently attributed to many Christians, with one's preaching ability a signifier for an individual's "strength" or "weakness" in the faith.[80] Pseudo-Jerome does

[76] Ibid., 27.
[77] Ibid., 28.
[78] Ibid., 30.
[79] Ibid., 30–31.
[80] Ibid., 30.

speak of the Two Witnesses' public speaking before the Antichrist and their personal charisma to move people, encourage martyrdom, and convict sinners.[81] Their unique place in the Apocalypse, however, is curtailed by the ubiquity with which the commentator discusses preachers throughout the handbook.

Though the handbook maintains the tradition of providing few (if any) direct suggestions for how Christians might prepare themselves ahead of time to go through the apocalypse, its interest in preaching, both before and during the End Times drama, is a departure from older, continental commentaries. Humans indeed will be active up until and through the reign of Antichrist with the specific job of preaching for purposes of encouragement, conversion, and rebuking. Curiously, though, the author believes preaching will be largely silenced while the Antichrist holds power. This view is itself notable, especially considering how ubiquitous preaching is throughout the rest of the handbook. The form of the work itself is also testament to the author's perspective: a short, easily digestible and accessible document highlighting rather than analyzing John's Apocalypse with attention paid to symbols and the repetition of significant themes and trios. For Irish monks and preachers on the move, this work was designed to live up to its own internal rhetoric. Of course, none of what Pseudo-Jerome wrote delves specifically into the question of human agency during the End Times, and his interest in divine grace remains part of the older apocalyptic interpretive tradition of reliance on God's power to redeem his martyrs and punish sinners. Nevertheless, his emphasis of preaching, penance, and preaching of penance to the faithful as well as fears that such admonitions may be

[81] Ibid., 30–31.

unavailable after the rise of the Antichrist are suggestive of themes that, as will be seen, would go on to illicit more apocalyptic speculation and concerns about preparations.

Irish *Reference Bible*

Another text of Hiberno-Latin origin dating to the 8th century provides an expanded commentary on John's Apocalypse. "On the Mysteries of the Apocalypse of John," contained in the Irish *Reference Bible*, is more traditional in form. Though the subject of preaching does not occupy as high a percentage of the text as it did for Pseudo-Jerome's *Handbook*, preaching and proper teaching (as well as proper listening) are topics of special note here. The anonymous author(s) writes about dynamic tensions not just between believers and unbelievers but between those in the Church who teach or listen to good doctrine and those who do neither. While there are blessings for "the teacher who teaches and the student who hears and those who keep them by good works,"[82] there remain many in the church in need of conversion still, who turn from Christ and either simply pay lip-service to the Gospel or fall into outright heresy.[83] This three-part division of the world—those who teach, those who listen, and those who do neither—is fundamental to the text, with teachers holding the highest position and those who refuse to spread or abide by sound doctrine consumed by fire.[84] Though hearing and living by the Scriptures is burdensome, the labor eases and is replaced by sweet sensations when the Gospel is taught to others.[85]

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[82] *Reference Bible*, "On the Mysteries in the Apocalypse of John," in *Early Latin Commentaries on the Apocalypse*, ed. Francis X. Gumerlock (Medieval Institute Publications, 2016), 45.
[83] Ibid., 47.
[84] Ibid., 59–60, 75
[85] Ibid., 63.

But to whom should preachers direct their voices during the time of the Antichrist, and on what subjects should they speak? Fortunately, the text offers very clear answers to these questions.

Though positive statements about preaching to receptive students are found throughout the work, the commentary also provides a very clear understanding about who would not be the target of apocalyptic preaching. When the persecutions of the Antichrist arrive, many in the Church will be destroyed, either through apostasy or by submitting to martyrdom.[86] When John speaks of the heavens being rolled up like a scroll, the author writes, "In the same way, the anguished church will be rolled up in the time of persecution, separated from people, so that the people will not be able to know the things which will be in it."[87] The separation, the author explains, will not be a physical escape but merely an internal retreat into the spiritual protection offered by "the mystical doctrines of the Holy Scripture…the examples of Christ…the heights of the faith…[and] strong works."[88] Though the Church will receive a respite from persecution during the preaching of the Two Witnesses,[89] they will not use the opportunity to convert the fallen. Similar to Pseudo-Jerome, the eighth-century author interprets the measuring of the temple but not the courtyard of Revelation 11 to mean that the heretics, the nations, and those outside the Church should not be taught during the entire reign of the Antichrist.[90] Those who have

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[86] Ibid., 56.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., 56–57. Physical flight during persecution is brought up briefly later in the commentary. The author, drawing from Jerome's commentary on Daniel, writes that the flight of the woman from danger in Revelation 13 might signify the church seeking safety from the Antichrist in the deserts of Arabia. This idea, however, is undeveloped, forgotten as soon as it is mentioned, and even Jerome does not dwell on the theory in his work. See *Reference Bible*, "On the Mysteries in the Apocalypse," 66.
[89] Ibid., 58.
[90] Ibid., 64.

left the Church or were never part of it will not receive the benefit of the church's wisdom and spiritual guidance not simply due to their own obstinacy but because the source of proper teaching will be denied to them. There will, however, continue to be interaction between preachers and those outside the church according to the commentary, but these interactions will be focused on the impending just judgment of God against sinners. When hail mingled with blood falls from heaven and burns a third of the grass, the vengeance of heaven (the hail) will be preached by a human (the blood) against the third of the Church destined to fall away (the burnt grass).[91] It will not be the preachers' responsibility to refute evil preachers working on behalf of Satan, whose public teachings kill souls.[92] Their destruction will be achieved by divine power.[93] Good preachers will simply be spokesmen for God's wrath, harbingers of judgment rather than executioners themselves. When preaching to their fellow Christians, they will have much the same function.

While conversion outside of the Church is specifically denied, preachers will have one very clear purpose inside the Church: convicting fellow believers to repent. Like with Pseudo-Jerome's *Handbook*, this involves emphasizing baptism, penance, and compunction of the heart.[94] Some Christians will be capable of correcting their behavior before judgment arrives. The persecutions at the end of the world, including imprisonments, will test some sinful Christians.[95] This is the primary message of the commentary, and the expectation of preachers during the End Times, that persecutions will

[91] Ibid., 59.
[92] Ibid., 62.
[93] Ibid., 59.
[94] Ibid., 48, 52, 74.
[95] Ibid., 49.

try the faith of believers, but such penance will lead on to true repentance. Furthermore, these same preachers who try to convict the faithful of their sinfulness will cause the persecutions to begin. According to the author, it is "through preaching the angels [that is, the devil and three others] are loosed for the persecution of the church."[96] Their wrath, however, does not fall onto the faithful alone. In the process, the third part of the Church, who are neither good teachers nor good students, will perish (whether physically or spiritually is not specified).[97]

Like Pseudo-Jerome's *Handbook*, the *Reference Bible*'s commentary on John's Apocalypse does not attempt to suggest what preparations Christians should be making in anticipation of the End Times outside of traditional admonitions to live moral lives of self-reflective piety. These admonishments, however, are firmly rooted in evocations of hellfire and the need for penance. Moreover, preachers consistently occupy a pivotal place in the apocalyptic drama, with the Christian world divided based on one's relationship to preaching. There are those who preach well, those who listen well, and those who do neither and who will suffer eternally for it. In this way, preachers are truly the shepherds of the Church, protecting the faithful from those who have "the clothing of a Christian, but within is a ravenous wolf."[98] Anyone outside the Church when the Antichrist arrives are persecutors only. Their damnation is assured, so preachers need not bother sharing with them the words of the Gospel—one final punishment before hell! The hypocrites inside the Church, however, are the real danger. Proper preaching now will help those with ears to

[96] Ibid., 62.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 76.

hear prepare for the Antichrist's persecutions and accept martyrdom, but inevitably a third of those who claim to be Christians will fall away. Nevertheless, preachers are only human instruments, albeit infused with angelic wisdom.[99] The triumph will be God's alone.

Bede, Time, and Preaching

The importance of history, prophecy, and the interaction between the two were significant topics for the celebrated Bede (d. 735) in his Northumbian monastery of Jarrow. While his history of the English church is almost universally known among medieval scholars, along with Bede's polemical goals in that work to shame lax contemporaries with tales of past ecclesiastical glories, Bede's literary career actually began and ended with apocalyptic time on his mind.[100] Indeed, in 708, near the start of his scholarly endeavors, Bede came under suspicion of heresy for some of his ideas on chronology. He defended himself in his *Epistola ad Pleguinam* but also used the opportunity to attack what he considered false eschatological ideas, especially those which expected the world to end after 6,000 years. Grounded in a thorough understanding of Christian literary tradition, Bede's orthodoxy was soon confirmed.[101]

Though Augustinian in his view of the End Times, Bede clearly held a keen interest in apocalyptic and eschatological topics.[102] In his monastery at Jarrow, Bede read and synthesized several earlier commentaries and theological tracts (including some discussed

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[99] Ibid., 83.
[100] Bede, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation*, trans. Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 1, 39–50. See also Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001).
[101] Peter Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 42–51.
[102] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 96.

in the previous chapter) in his exploration of historic, prophetic, and eschatological time. Bede, however, went beyond the work of a mere editor by interpreting, explaining, and adding to the words of others in order to craft his own understanding of apocalyptic topics. His first work was a three-volume commentary on Revelation. Later in life, he took up the theme of the ages of the world (and its inevitable culmination) in his *De temporibus* (*On Times*), and the 157-line Latin poem *De die iudicii* (with its Old English translation, known as "Judgement Day II") is attributed to Bede's pen.[103]

Eschatology was thus a life-long interest for Bede. Despite his objections to Irish monastic and computational practices, his work was informed by the Irish penitential tradition.[104] As Graham Caie put it, "Much of Bede's eschatological work is devoted to instilling a penitential mood in his readers. The fear of punishment, the desire for heaven, the sorrows for one's sins are all important stages in the pilgrimage of penance in his works."[105] This is especially the case in the poem dedicated to the Day of Judgment, Bede's *De die iudicii*.[106] Describing the sudden dread and panic of a Christian realizing how precarious the state of his soul is in relation to divine judgment, the short work focuses on internal, spiritual change. It has nothing to say about the Antichrist or humans participating

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[103] Bede, *Bede*: *On the Nature of Things and On Times*, trans. Calvin B. Kendall and Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 117–131. In *On Times*, or *De temporibus*, Bede, following the work of Isidore of Seville, presents the six ages of the world from Creation to the present, ending the work saying simply, "The rest of the sixth age is known to God alone," 131. In these chapters and earlier, Kendall and Wallis maintain Bede is writing with the intention of "deflating apocalyptic speculation," 177. For a discussion on authorship, including the theory that Alcuin was the true poet (which Caie ultimately rejects) and how to understand the relationship between the Latin and Old English versions of the poem, see Graham D. Caie, ed., *The Old English Poem "Judgement Day II"* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 32–45.
[104] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, in PL 95, cols. 158–165; and Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Bath Press, 1991), 103–113.
[105] Caie, *The Old English Poem "Judgement Day II,"* 34.
[106] Following Caie, I here assume the work is by Bede. If Alcuin were the author, however, it would not change the fact that penance and preaching went together for Bede, which was later to inform his fellow Northumbrian (who will be discussed more in chapter 3).

in the apocalyptic drama save for being defendants before the judgment seat.[107] Its purpose is clearly to provoke self-examination and repentance in a brief and accessible form that could be easily transported, much like the handbooks. As such, the poem is part of the larger Anglo-Irish penitential and devotional genre.[108] The poem would remain of interest to later generations; no earlier than the mid-10th century, it would be translated from Latin into Old English.[109]

Though Bede's commentary on Revelation was not nearly as compact and portable as *De die iudicii* or Pseudo-Jerome's *Handbook on the Apocalypse of the Apostle John*, it nevertheless came from the same mentality that sought to combine penance and pastoral outreach, especially when discussing apocalyptic themes. Though he refrains from expressing millennial expectations of a rapidly approaching End, like his Irish colleagues, Bede's understanding of John's Apocalypse prioritized the power of preaching and holy exempla inspiring the Church before and during the apocalyptic drama. According to Bede but inspired by Tyconius and Primasius (from whence many of his citations come), preaching is the duty of the Church.[110] These teachings will, in turn, protect the Church during the time of Antichrist.[111] Those who are great teachers, both in word and through their example as honorable saints—whose efficacious prayers also safeguard the faithful—

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[107] A full version of the Latin and Old English versions of the poem, with a modern English translation, can be found in J. Rawson Lumby, ed., *De Domes Dæge* (London: Early English Text Society, 1876), 2–26. A more recent version of just the Old English poem with modern English is in Caie, *The Old English Poem "Judgement Day II,"* 84–103.
[108] Caie, *The Old English Poem "Judgement Day II,"* 43.
[109] Ibid., 10. See chapter 4 below for discussion of late tenth- and early eleventh-century English vernacular apocalyptic thought.
[110] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, 161.
[111] Ibid., 146.

are especially worthy of praise and will be sought out all the more when crises mount.[112] Bede notes elsewhere, however, that teachings about the End Times must not presume to speculate on the timing, imminence, or delay of the apocalypse, which is dangerous.[113] Nevertheless, there are other, more important and efficacious lessons to teach regarding John's apocalyptic vision. Bede writes that the spiritual education and edification of the Church *precedes* conversion ministries. "The Church, preparing to preach to the nations, first warms herself with the fire of charity."[114] Bede goes on, saying, "No one can be incorporated into the members of the Church save one who learns from preachers by listening to the mysteries of the faith."[115] The time of the Antichrist will be good for both internal and external growth, for it will test those in the Church who have built up spiritual defenses and provide opportunities for Jewish converts.[116] In keeping with older traditions associated with the Two Witnesses, however, Jewish conversion will be best effected by the preaching of Elijah.[117] Though Bede omits any apocalyptic reading of the text, he further says that the pouring out of the seven last plagues represent the power of preachers. They can deliver the judgment of God by imposing spiritual punishments, bringing sinners into the faith, or by cutting at the hearts of sinners who wish not to believe.[118] Nevertheless, Bede says that the saints looking down on sinners from heaven specifically do not pray strictly for their deaths but for their conversion, which should be emulated on earth, too.[119]

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[112] Ibid., 128, 132, 147–148, 167, 262–265.
[113] Bede, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, trans. Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 240–241.
[114] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, 221.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid., 127; and Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, 179.
[118] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, 222.
[119] Ibid., 145.

At the End Times, however, though preaching by the Church will be targeted for persecution, "the more it is oppressed, the more it shines, and the more freely it thunders forth."[120] Regarding what the rest of the Church will do during the Antichrist's assaults, especially those members who have received preparatory education, Bede is unfortunately ambiguous. He writes that the Church "prudently hides from the waves [*fluctibus*] of her persecutors,"[121] and, like his Irish peers, says it will withdraw itself during the Antichrist's attacks.[122] The English monk, however, remains mute about what defensive flight or hiding means. This implies Bede had traditional interior defensiveness in mind, which would have been in keeping with both his continental sources and his Irish contemporaries. Battles are mentioned in his commentary, but either they refer to Christ's victory over the Antichrist or to general victories of the Church which, lacking further explanation, must be seen as successful perseverance through adversity if not purely spiritual contests against evil.

Though Bede's work with computation and the ages of the world has received substantial treatment by scholars, apocalyptic and otherwise, and his commentary on Revelation is testament to both his early success as a scholar and interest in eschatological themes, there is general agreement that Bede was conservative in his views of the end of the world.[123] His attitude towards apocalyptic preparations is likewise built upon tradition. Of note, however, is that this tradition, whether directly or indirectly connected, includes the same interest in preaching as the focal point of John's Apocalypse as the two Hiberno-Latin commentaries discussed above. Though Elijah's preaching to the Jews is part of an

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[120] Ibid., 249.
[121] Ibid., 229. Latin clarification is contained in cited translation.
[122] Ibid., 146.
[123] Ibid., 51–57.

older tradition dating back to the first centuries of Christian thought, Bede emphasizes the importance of preaching by non-prophets. According to both Bede and the Irish sources, the Two Witnesses are praiseworthy exempla for how Christians can preach to others, but they are not the only voices teaching the Church. Moral edification had long been part of the Christian apocalyptic preparation tradition, but in Bede's time the responsibility to teach moral guidance was receiving greater recognition and emphasis in an apocalyptic context. Preachers were also consistently seen in Britain and Ireland as speaking primarily to fellow Christians, warning them of fire and brimstone judgments, and bringing about these judgments by their very words. Proselytization was certainly desirable, but the work of those speaking the truths of the Gospel started locally. If those outside the Church converted, that was of course something to rejoice over, but external preaching beyond the Christian community was not to be emphasized as part of apocalyptic activities. Though Bede avoids perpetuating millennial anxieties in his work, this same preoccupation with preaching and its link to the apocalypse, highly emphasized by insular authors, continued to gain traction in British minds.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at early changes to traditional late classical Christian speculation on apocalyptic agency and preparations. In the eastern Mediterranean, it was believed that the absolute omnipotence and sovereignty of God could invite human actors (albeit only kings and emperors) to share some role in ushering in the apocalyptic drama. As Islam grew and spread (while itself absorbing and perpetuating an apocalyptic scenario

that minimized human agency[124]), so, too, did the ideas of Pseudo-Methodius. In his attempt to reassure eastern Romans that the empire would endure even such catastrophes as the Arab advance, he laid the foundations for a fully human apocalyptic figurehead, the Last World Emperor. This person would not be divine, angelic, demonic, or a person previously known to history or Scripture. Though larger than life, this emperor would be a human actor, motivated and assailed by mundane matters, until his own choices and deeds brought him to seize Jerusalem from his foes and piously relinquish his crown to Jesus, thus inaugurating the apocalyptic drama proper. If such a vision of the future were true, it meant humans could act on the world, not just their own spiritual lives, to help the emperor (whoever he might be) in this endeavor. Though Pseudo-Methodius may only have mentioned this prophetic emperor as having agency regarding the apocalypse, if one human, even an emperor, could be part of God's plan, the door was open for those associated with the emperor to play parts, too.

At the opposite end of Europe, as Pseudo-Methodius's ideas were being translated and passed westward, Irish and English monks were formulating their own innovations to the traditional model of apocalyptic preparedness. Their aims were far different than the Syrian's. Instead of joining apocalyptic speculation and history to create a political vision of imperial strength, these authors combined insular proselytizing wanderlust with apocalyptic instruction. This was not a major leap from traditional spiritual preparations (indeed, they were following the lead of Pope Gregory I), but it was a significant one. Christian authors had long enjoined fellow believers to perfect themselves spiritually so

[124] See the Addendum to this chapter.

that they could present themselves without shame at the Day of Judgment. Bede and his Irish predecessors took what to them must have seemed the next logical step: the faithful can best prepare spiritually if they have first been instructed in the key issues of the apocalyptic drama. This would both prepare their souls for trial on earth (if the End was soon) and for the Day of Judgment (universal for all no matter when they died). It would also help address and calm any wild speculation about the apocalypse—its timing, its villains, and its temptations—that might be circulating among the body of believers. It was a modest change to the traditional, but it opened the way in Ireland and Britain for the apocalypse to be discussed openly by members of the clergy as a part of their ministry duties.

These two changes, both from opposite ends of Europe, separated by language, politics, and culture (save for their shared Christian faith), would eventually meet. When they did, it would be on soil foreign to both and in a political context neither could have anticipated. As they mixed together—unaware, to be sure—they would transform and produce new apocalyptic speculations and assumptions about humanity's role in the End Times quite distinct from their late classical models. The results of this transformation would affect not only apocalyptic theory but the politics, religious life, and histories of Christian Europe and the Near East. The story of that meeting—between insular apocalyptic preaching and Byzantine apocalyptic politics—is the topic of the next chapter.

Addendum: Early Islam and Apocalyptic Agency

The story of Islam's success starting in the early 7th century cannot be told here, nor do its eschatological speculations fit neatly into the present work, which is concerned chiefly with Christian thought. Nevertheless, as a monotheistic heir of both Christianity and Judaism that remained in dialogue with parts of Christian Europe, brief mention should be made of how the apocalypse was envisioned by Muslim authorities in the first few centuries of its existence. By doing so, the Christian tradition of downplaying human agency in apocalyptic matters that preceded the rise of Islam will be more clearly seen. In like manner, the transformations that accompanied the intermixing of Byzantine and Hiberno-English apocalyptic thought after the 8th century will stand out all the better for having a contemporary outside foil.

While the Gospels linked the spread of Jesus's message through the Great Commission to the End Times, albeit vaguely, the spread of Islam, the *dawah* ("invitation"), was providential but not necessarily apocalyptic.[125] Parts of the world would indeed find their way to embracing Islam, but there would be plenty of evil forces outside of the faith when the Day of Reckoning dawned. Regarding that day, the Qur'an is clear: God alone knows when his judgment will come, and not even Muhammed can affect the timing God has planned.[126] The omnipotence and absolute sovereignty of God, as in early Christian apocalypticism, is prominently displayed in early Islamic thought. This can be

[125] Many places in the Qur'an speak of the *dawah*, but Sura 6 treats at great length about general proselytizing efforts towards polytheists and other non-believers. It stresses that non-believers are to be preached to out of the truth revealed in the Qur'an while criticizing those who reject it for seeming to wait only for angels or divine signs to show them God's message. See Qur'an 6:19, 158.
[126] Qur'an 33:63; and 6:57.

seen also in the Qur'an's discussion of Gog and Magog in a passage reminiscent of the Greco-Roman imagining of Alexander the Great.

> Until, when he reached (a tract) between two mountains, he found, beneath them, a people who scarcely understood a word. They said: "O Zul-qarnain! the Gog and Magog (People) do great mischief on earth: shall we then render thee tribute in order that thou mightest erect a barrier between us and them? He said: "(The power) in which my Lord has established me is better (than tribute): Help me therefore with strength (and labour): I will erect a strong barrier between you and them: "Bring me blocks of iron." At length, when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountain-sides, He said, "Blow (with your bellows)" Then, when he had made it (red) as fire, he said: "Bring me, that I may pour over it, molten lead." Thus were they made powerless to scale it or to dig through it. He said: "This is a mercy from my Lord: But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it into dust; and the promise of my Lord is true." On that day We shall leave them to surge like waves on one another: the trumpet will be blown, and We shall collect them all together. And We shall present Hell that day for Unbelievers to see, all spread out, (Unbelievers) whose eyes had been under a veil from remembrance of Me, and who had been unable even to hear.[127]

As with the *Alexander Legend*, the person Dhu al-Qarnayn of the Qur'an did an important work caging Gog and Magog behind his gate. But that was in the past. The future, when the fierce armies break out, is completely under the control of God who will effect their release according to his will alone. This passage demonstrates the influence the Eastern Roman Empire had on the Arabian Peninsula in apocalyptic matters in Islam's earliest days. It is noteworthy that this influence was not limited to the content of apocalyptic scenarios (e.g. the imprisoning of rampaging hordes behind an iron gate in the mountains far away) but also duplicated its assumptions about human agency in the face

[127] Qur'an 18:93–101. Quotation from Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *An English Translation of the Holy Qur-an with Full Arabic Text* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1990), 415–416.

of prophetic events. This is not the only place early Islam mirrors Late Antique Christian notions of apocalyptic preparedness and agency.

The *hadiths*, or reports, compiled in the 9th century by several different authors purport to pass on sayings and acts of the Prophet Mohammed made in front of his followers. They attempt to clarify topics and appropriate lifestyles for Muslims not otherwise made explicit in the Qur'an. These touched on a variety of issues from proper observance of Ramadan, judicial matters, good hygiene, respect for the prophet and other believers, restatements of matters of faith, and beliefs about the End Times. The Hour, or time of Afflictions, spoken of in the hadiths represented the Islamic apocalyptic scenario in which ad-Dajjal—a false messiah who brings destruction, roughly equivalent to the Antichrist—opposes God's faithful until his ultimate defeat at the hands of the prophet Jesus, the son of Mary. Having returned to earth by the will of God, Jesus will lead an army against ad-Dajjal and slay him, thus ending the threat of this satanic menace as the world enters a time of peace and judgment from God.[128] While the nature of Jesus and his relationship to God is certainly different from Christian tradition, the parallels between his defeat of ad-Dajjal in the hadith tradition and his victory over the Antichrist in John's Apocalypse are obvious. In both versions, while armies are mentioned (whether angelic or human), the emphasis is squarely on Jesus, a figure (whether human prophet or divine person) who occupies a special, privileged position and whose God-appointed mission overshadows the agency of ordinary members of the faith. As with the prophets and angels believed to participate in the Christian apocalypse, it is ultimately God, working through

[128] See Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, "54: The Book of Tribulations and Portents of the Last Hour," in *Sahih Muslim*, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, at https://sunnah.com/muslim/54, accessed July 20, 2020.

his servants, who brings about the fall of the End Time adversary to the faith, removing the chance for a mere human to boast of the deed. This is reinforced within the hadiths themselves. When asked by a follower if Ibn Sayyad, someone suspected of being Ad-Dajjal, should be beheaded if the inquirer had the chance, Mohammed answered, "If he is the one (the Dajjal), you will not be given power over him, and if he is not, you will not do well in killing him."[129] By God's will, no living Muslim is capable of harming ad-Dajjal and changing apocalyptic events.

The hadiths, however, do speak of preparations and specific actions faithful Muslims should undertake during the time of Affliction. These, however, reinforce the idea that any expectation of human effort being efficacious during the End Times is misguided. In the hadith collection of Muhammed Al-Bukhari (810–870), in the Book of Afflictions, when asked if destruction will come even to those surrounded by good and faithful people, the Prophet answered that it certainly would as long as evil increased.[130] Moreover, he warned Muslims what they should do when they saw civil strife (*fitnah*) and apocalyptic destructions approaching.

> There will be afflictions (in the near future) during which a sitting person will be better than a standing one, and the standing one will be better than the walking one, and the walking one will be better than the running one, and whoever will expose himself to these afflictions, they will destroy him. So whoever can find a place of protection or refuge from them, should take shelter in it.[131]

Another hadith collection by Abu Dawud (817/818–889) elaborated further on this point:

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[129] Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Vol. 3, trans. Ahmad Hasan (Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1984), 1206.
[130] Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Translation of the Meanings of "Sahih Al-Bukhari,"* Vol. 9, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Lahore, Pakistan: Kazi Publications, 1979), 148.
[131] *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 157.

> He who has camels should remain with his camels, he who has sheep should remain with his sheep, and he who has land should remain with his land. He [Abu Bakrah] asked: If anyone has nothing of them (what should he do?) He [Mohammed] replied: He should go to his sword, strike its edge on a stone, and then escape if he can.[132]

These traditions emphasize the inherent danger all Muslims would face while urging them not to attempt to oppose the great disorders in society that the apocalyptic drama would bring. In very stark terms, these hadiths emphasize passivity and pacifism of the highest order. The least action is the best, and it is better to blunt one's sword and flee than to use it in combat against ad-Dajjal and the evils of society. Blunting swords also avoids the risk of killing a Muslim and going to hell as a result.[133] One should remain peaceably at home or, barring that, flee to the mountains or among the Bedouins.[134]

The tradition is not without its contradictions or mysteries regarding the role of humans as the Last Hour approaches. A great war against the Byzantines, culminating in the conquest of Constantinople, will precede the coming of ad-Dajjal by only a year, suggesting actions that might help instigate the apocalyptic drama.[135] Furthermore, while Muslims will be incapable of slaying ad-Dajjal (a feat reserved for Jesus the son of Mary after he descends back to earth), they are encouraged to live faithful lives and maintain community accountability among their fellow believers. Mohammed is reported to have said he would dispute ad-Dajjal himself if he should arrive in the prophet's lifetime. Otherwise, "if he comes forth when I am not among you, a man must dispute on his own

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[132] Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, 1182.
[133] Ibid., 1186–1188; and Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 158.
[134] Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, 1186; and Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 163–164.
[135] Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, 1194–1195.

behalf, and Allah will take my place in looking after every Muslim."[136] While they could not kill their great enemy, there were specific verses and prayers from the Qur'an said to be particularly efficacious which Muslims should memorize and recite. Those who do so "will be protected from the trial of the Dajjal (Antichrist)."[137]

Islamic apocalyptic speculation went far beyond these instructions and warnings. In them, however, we can see Muslims of the first few centuries passing on a tradition of apocalyptic preparedness and believers' activities that echoes the traditions of their Christian neighbors. How permeable the lines between Christian and Islamic thought were cannot be decided here. Nevertheless, the general tenor of apocalyptic thought for both religions remained in tune during the early Middle Ages. As seen in both the Qur'an and the hadith collections, while Muslims are urged to be faithful and encouraging to fellow believers, there is little they can do once the great apocalyptic enemy arrives. Flight or non-violent resistance are their only options, and passivity at home is best of all, for God alone has the power. It is by his will, executed through specifically chosen agents, that the Last Hour will close and the righteous be delivered from evil.

Yet the hadiths do leave open one interesting possibility. Muslims, if impotent during the Last Hour, may be responsible for bringing it about through their conquest of Constantinople. As discussed above, this idea, too, has its counterpart in Byzantine apocalyptic speculation. As we shall see, the idea of a military conquest preceding the full apocalyptic drama that developed in the Eastern Roman Empire during the 7th century

[136] Ibid., 1202.
[137] Ibid., 1202–1203.

would have a long life in Latin Christendom afterwards through the incorporation of Pseudo-Methodius's work into a Frankish context.

Chapter 3: *Excellentissime regine*: Carolingians, Ottonians, and the Mother of Medieval Apocalyptic Thought

> And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne.[1]

The previous chapter discussed the emergence of human apocalyptic agency in the political and proselytizing realms. Both the Byzantine and Hiberno-English views of the apocalyptic drama held that humans could have roles in the sequence of events leading up to Christ's return, albeit in limited and tightly circumscribed ways. Nevertheless, the ideas expressed by these Christian prophets and commentators in the early Middle Ages provided the intellectual foundation for many more to come, theorists who would add to and expand upon the basic patterns already discussed. As will be seen, however, first these two perspectives—the Last World Emperor as presented by Pseudo-Methodius and the apocalyptically minded preachers of Ireland and England—needed to meet and comingle before their ideas could take on a life of their own. The place of their meeting was the Frankish Empire of the Carolingians.

Separating the religious from the political is a difficult task for historians at the best of times. In the medieval context, such attempts devolve into Sisyphean impossibilities.

[1] Revelation 12:1–5.

Motivations—whether for a prince or a bishop—could arise from piety, opportunism, or both simultaneously. The political and the religious spheres were highly permeable, complementary, and overlapping. As had been expressed centuries earlier and would be repeated well after the Carolingians had been replaced by other dynasties, the church and the state might, at best, be said to wield different types of powers or "swords,"[2] but their goal to achieve social and spiritual harmony for the Christian faithful was shared. That Christ would return as both God and king makes clear distinctions all the more problematic when studying the apocalyptic.

With that said, while one cannot neatly separate political or secular motivations from religious piety in the Middle Ages, this chapter will focus more (but not exclusively) on the former as it relates to the Carolingian and post-Carolingian comingling of Byzantine and Hiberno-English apocalyptic thought. This is done to simplify the narrative, combining like sources and actors together to follow fewer historical strands at one time. In the next chapter, these roles will be reversed, and matters of a more self-consciously spiritual nature and moral quality will be examined. Put another way, this chapter will focus on how secular rulers interacted with apocalyptic ideas (though with the help of clerics), while the next will deal with ecclesiastic and monastic leaders using apocalyptic thought as they sought to transform the religious (and political) landscape. It must not be forgotten, of course, that these two aspects were almost never mutually exclusive to contemporary commentators

[2] The doctrine of the "two swords," as denoting secular and ecclesiastical power was first expressed in a letter by Pope Gelasius I to Emperor Anastasius I Dicorus in the East in 494. The letter has come to be known by the title *Famuli vestrae pietatis*. The idea would be express again most famously by Pope Boniface VIII in his *Unam sanctam* in 1302. The imagery of "two swords" wielded by Christians comes from Luke 22:38. See Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition*, 75, 337–338; and Anthony Black, *Political Thought in Europe, 1250–1450* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 42–58.

and historical actors. Frequently—and increasingly—they were complementary components to emerging ideas of humanity's part in the apocalyptic drama. Grounded in that caveat, it remains to be seen how a Syrian political prophecy and Irish penitential preaching met in continental Europe and what the results of their union were.

Eighth-Century Foundations: East Meets West at the Court of Charlemagne

The empire that Charlemagne would found was in many ways a chimera: Frankish warriors, Italian alliances, Germanic custom, Roman religion, English scholars, and subjects from a variety of demographic, linguistic, and cultural origins, with both peaceful and violent contacts from the Iberian Peninsula and the North Sea to the Bosphorus and the Middle East. To call Francia in the 8th century a crossroads would perhaps be to overstate the matter. Nevertheless, it is without question that, under the Carolingians, ideas from disparate origins met and comingled in ways that would leave many lasting effects on European society. The same is true for apocalyptic speculations. Scholars—most notably Richard Landes and James Palmer[3]—have remarked upon the importance of *computus* (the calculation of dates) in the Carolingian world and its connection to apocalyptic anxieties. Concern for apocalyptic date-setting was important both for medieval people as well as for historians studying them. This dissertation is not so much concerned about when people thought the End would come so much as what, if anything,

[3] Richard Landes, "Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography, 100–800 C.E.," in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. D. F. Verbeke, D. Verhelst, and A. Welkenhysen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 137–211; and James T. Palmer, "Calculating Time and the End of Time in the Carolingian World, c.740–820," *The English Historical Review* 126, no. 523 (Dec. 2011): 1307–1331.

Christians thought they could or should do as it approached. For that reason, detailed discussion of *computus* as it relates to the apocalypse is unnecessary. Nevertheless, it must be said that scholarship that has focused on early medieval *computus* has assumed that Carolingians devoted time and energies to bring about or prevent the start of the apocalyptic drama. Such human agency is asserted more than it is demonstrated, having not previously considered the full meaning of "preparations," which is at the heart of this dissertation. It is true, however, that with the Carolingians we begin to see some notion of End Time preparations. Nevertheless, the clearest examples of belief in apocalyptic human agency comes well after the 9th century. We now turn to the influx and use of apocalyptic ideas into Francia in the 8th century and how these laid the foundation for later changes in European mentalities concerning human agency in the End Times drama.

As discussed in chapter 1, Gregory of Tours testifies to belief that the Last Judgment was seen as an inevitability, but he left no explicit evidence that humans were in a position to shape those future events. Heresies would arise at the End that must be resisted, but so would other sins which his history does not hesitate to point out thrived in Frankish political society. The Merovingian dynasty was concerned with the here and now—power, wealth, and esteem (as one might expect from any dynasty)—rather than preparing for the advent of the Antichrist, battles with Gog and Magog, the overthrow of society, and the End of Time. Spiritual accommodations and activities were important for the afterlife, as well as for success in this life through the intercession of holy men, saints, and the divine. But the Merovingians did not concern themselves with the apocalyptic drama. They, like their Roman predecessors, expected (when they thought about it) that

the apocalypse was for angels, devils, prophets, and, of course, God to sort out. Humans were merely spectators.[4]

Across the English Channel, however, this was not strictly the case. As we have seen previously in chapter 2, by the time of Bede, Irish and English Christians had begun to flavor apocalyptic speculations with a cautious amount of human agency, primarily in the form of human preachers and holy men. The activities of these men were still quite traditional: they were there to strengthen believers' faith so that they would not fall prey to the lies of heretics and the minions of the Antichrist. While the duties of these preachers had changed little from that of Late Classical authors, what was remarkable was that they were being explicitly mentioned when discussing apocalyptic events at all. Indeed, the use of penitentials and other catechetical handbooks coming out of Ireland to help teach others the important tenets of the faith and to instruct priests in the care of souls also included similar works on John's Apocalypse. There remained a strong urge within the institutional church to keep discussion of the Apocalypse focused on its spiritual and historical truths rather than its prophetic truths, which occupied Bede (himself a product of this Hiberno-English legacy) his entire literary career. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the 8th century in western Europe, there had begun to be discussion of the End Times with the assumption that humans might be participants, even in a subsidiary role. And, just as Irish missionaries had exported their ideas to England, so, too, would English scholarship on the apocalypse

[4] According Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 68–78, Gregory of Tours's *Histories* argues for changes within society through his use of eschatological and apocalyptic anecdotes and prodigies. But even the teaching of eschatological themes under Merovingian rule Palmer links to older precedents. In essence, Palmer shows here and throughout that work that eschatological thought could prompt action; nevertheless, those actions were done for individual salvation and social harmony but not to help realize the apocalypse itself through human actions.

flow into, merge with, and influence continental speculation on humanity's role in the final drama.

Saint Boniface (c. 680–d. 754), the oft-praised missionary archbishop to Germans beyond the Rhine, formed an important part of the chain linking insular preaching (and its related apocalyptic attitudes) to the Continent. Born with the name Winfrid in Wessex and trained from childhood in the monastery of Nursling, Boniface was among the many English and Irish Christians drawn by wanderlust to travel in fulfillment of their spiritual edification and vocation.[5] In addition to his founding the renowned monastery of Fulda, his surviving letters and his *vita*—composed less than fifteen years after his death by an English priest living in Mainz named Willibald[6]—testify to the emphasis he and those associated with him placed on preaching and teaching. Willibald's *Life* makes frequent mention of the saint's preaching, which he notes as typical for his homeland, and dedicates one of its nine chapters to Boniface's early love and mastery of teaching.[7] He makes special note that Boniface's skill as a teacher was not only edifying for missionary work outside of traditionally Christian territory but was necessary in correcting the poor quality of religious education that existed among areas formerly converted which had fallen into error through corrupt and ill-trained priests.[8] Boniface's own letters, upon which Willibald drew for much of his narrative, testify to this in the saint's own voice.[9] The importance of

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[5] Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head, eds., *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 107–108, 142.
[6] Ibid., 107.
[7] Ibid., 111, 114–116.
[8] Ibid., 122, 127, 130–131.
[9] See, for example, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, trans. Ephraim Emerton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 78–83 (Letter XL), 114–117 (Letter LI), and 157–159 (Letter LXX).

Boniface's efforts at religious education was also recognized outside of the Frankish domains. In 744, a letter from Pope Zacharias compliments Boniface for discovering and dealing with two "pseudo-prophets" who had been spreading false doctrines and living unchaste lives. The pope notes, "All these things we declare to be abominable and sinful, and Your Fraternity has done well to convict the men and put them in custody and to call them the servants and forerunners of Antichrist."[10]

To be sure, there is little evidence that Boniface was particularly apocalyptically minded,[11] though his work did inspire such ideas in others. In his *Life*, when discussing Boniface's efforts to hold a synod, which had not occurred in the area in living memory, Willibald writes:

> For it is in the nature of the world to fall into ruin even though it is daily restored, while if no attempt is made to reform it it quickly disintegrates and rushes headlong to its predetermined doom. Therefore if in the course of this mortal life means have been discovered to remedy such evils they should be preserved and strongly defended by Catholics and fixed indelibly in the mind. Otherwise human forgetfulness and the enticement of pleasure, both of them instigated by the devil, will prove a stumbling block.[12]

This is a small but telling suggestion regarding apocalyptic belief. It implies that outspoken holy men like Boniface, as instructors and shepherds of their flocks, were capable of slowing down the inevitable drift of society towards the End Times, or at least that their absence would accelerate the process. While we cannot say if Boniface shared these exact views, they form a link with the Anglo-Irish belief that preachers were among the few who could have some agency and impact on the apocalyptic drama. Even if Boniface did not

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[10] Ibid., 94–96 (Letter XLV).
[11] Ibid., 15.
[12] Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, 132.

believe such things, his life's work helped allow them to be better shared outside of England. Indeed, as Willibald notes, Boniface's inspirational preaching and success on the Continent resulted in "an exceedingly large number of holy men [traveling from Britain] to his aid, among them readers, writers, and learned men trained in the other arts."[13] Willibald was himself a product of this cultural exchange, though he did not come with this wave, arriving in Frankish territory only after the saint's death. Boniface also sent letters to his colleagues in England for copies of works by none other than Bede (whom he had never met and seemingly only learned about after Bede's death), specifically asking for the monk's commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon and his homilies "which would form a convenient and useful manual for us in preaching."[14] While Boniface did not exhibit outwardly apocalyptic views (as far as we can tell), his work emphasized and encouraged the patterns of preaching and education to be brought to continental Europe that we have already seen linked to apocalyptic interest in Ireland and Britain.

Whether or not the successes of Christianity on the Continent can be primarily attributed to the importation of English personnel—and scholarship is increasingly recognizing the role of other groups in these endeavors and debunking myths of Merovingian France lacking real religious value, desperately in need of outside help that it could not provide for itself—those in Frankish territories certainly emphasized and lauded the role of British missionaries and scholars. This was in part thanks to the association of

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[13] Ibid., 128.

[14] *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 132–134 (Letters LIX, LX), quotation from 168 (Letter LXXV). Boniface was certainly not alone in his enthusiastic importation of Bede's works. For example, Lull (c.710–786), also originally from Wessex and archbishop of Mainz, requested and received several Bedan texts as well as relics of the monk. See Douglas Dales, *Alcuin: Theology and Thought* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2013), 22.

many of them, especially Boniface, with the Carolingians during their ascension to power, going back to Charles Martel's father, Pippin of Herstal (d. 714), and reaching their zenith under Charlemagne.[15] The most notable bridge between England and the Continent was most certainly Alcuin of York (c.735–804), who came to head the palace school at Aachen in 786/787 and would remain an important figure in Charlemagne's court.[16] Alcuin was a direct heir of Bede's educational legacy, being trained under Egbert, the archbishop of York, who was himself a student of the Northumbrian monk.[17] In Francia, he was part of a network of insular scholars Charlemagne had attracted, but Alcuin remained in touch with others back in England and Ireland.[18] Among these sought-after intellectuals, Alcuin was highly esteemed, even by his professional rivals.[19] His efforts led to the formation of a palace school at Aachen in which Christian humanism and biblical exegesis rooted the study of more classical disciplines as Alcuin attempted to impart his insular-flavored religious morality into continental culture.[20] How to properly catechize the clergy, the laity, the semi-pagan within Frankish lands, and the fully pagan peoples to the east was a chief interest for Alcuin and those who succeeded him.

It is in this educational context that Alcuin's two works on John's Apocalypse must be placed. The first is a typical biblical commentary, though incomplete.[21] While a prologue pays special tribute to several inspirational forebears, including Bede, Gregory

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[15] James T. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World, 690–900* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 2–9, 12–14.
[16] Ibid., 3.
[17] Dales, *Alcuin*, 20.
[18] Ibid., 39–42.
[19] Ibid., 193. These included Notker, Einhard, and Theodulf of Orléans.
[20] Ibid., 194–195.
[21] Alcuin, *Commentariorum in Apocalypsin*, in PL 100, cols. 1086–1156. There is some disagreement over the authorship, though it was certainly part of the Carolingian epoch.

the Great, Primasius, Tyconius, Victorinus, Jerome, and Augustine, the majority of the work closely follows the *Expositionis in Apocalypsin* of Ambrosius Autpertus.[22] Ambrosius (730–784) was a Frankish monk who composed his commentary while in Italy. If Alcuin was the author of the derivative commentary attributed to him, he might well have had access to Ambrosius's work while on a visit to Rome.[23] Alcuin's commentary stops at Revelation 12, though Ambrosius's runs the entire length of the biblical book. Ambrosius's commentary, itself derived from earlier works, is thoroughly orthodox, reading John's Apocalypse in a spiritual light while rejecting attempts to inject historical interpretations into the text.[24] Alcuin followed his lead, echoing that, while the literal images in Revelation could induce holy fear, "this is not a reason to violently reduce figurative statements to their literal meaning."[25] Aside from having a spiritual understanding of the text, the English theologian was also keen to pick out and include portions of Ambrosius's commentary which emphasized the power and importance of preaching. For Alcuin, the most powerful and praiseworthy aspects of the Church were contained in its preaching. For example, when persecution comes, the Church does not physically leave the presence of the wicked but instead tends only to its own, speaking

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[22] John Litteral, "Editor's Introduction," in *Consolamini Commentary Series: Alcuin of York on Revelation, Commentary and the Questions and Answers Manual*, trans. Sarah Van Der Pas (West Monroe, La.: Consolamini Publications, 2016), viii-ix; and Ambrosius Autpertus, *Ambrosii Autperti Opera: Expositionis in Apocalypsin*, CCCM 27, ed. Robert Weber O.S.B. (Turnhout: Brepols: 1975).
[23] John Litteral, "Editor's Introduction," xi.
[24] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 125. One view Ambrosius rejected was none other than Pseudo-Methodius's view that Gog and Magog represented specific, identifiable peoples rather than a throng of generic adversaries that would emerge all over the world. See Ambrosius Autpertus, *Expositionis in Apocalypsin*, IX, 722–731.
[25] Alcuin, "Commentary on Revelation," in *Consolamini Commentary Series: Alcuin of York on Revelation, Commentary and the Questions and Answers Manual*, trans. Sarah Van Der Pas (West Monroe, La.: Consolamini Publications, 2016), 95.

good things to the faithful while indirectly punishing the faithless by abstaining to preach to them.[26] The flight of the woman clothed with the sun of Revelation 12 is thus not an act of physical separation from danger but rather a spiritual exercise by holy men to distance themselves from sin and temptation.[27] Alternatively, the preaching power of the Church (symbolized by the Two Witnesses) can kill the wicked by declaring anathemas.[28] It is in the context of these witnesses symbolizing preachers that Alcuin states that the final combat with the Antichrist and his followers will be both physical and spiritual. The physical conflict, however, seems mostly to mean martyrdom for the faithful.[29] Spiritual warfare is waged primarily by preachers who must oppose the "depraved preachers" in league with the Antichrist.[30] The war against Satan, however, is not something new to the end of the world, as signified by Michael's struggle against the dragon. But in a departure from traditional exegesis, he says that "the struggle against the Devil belongs both to us and to the angels." According to Alcuin's commentary, echoing Ambrosius, humans and angels wage a fully coordinated war against Satan, because "neither do we fight without the angels' fighting, nor do the angels without our fighting."[31] While both Alcuin and Ambrosius do not believe this war is confined only to the End Times—since heretics and devils are perennial threats to the Church—their assertation that humans and angels have equal duties in combatting the forces of evil is an innovation in the context of apocalyptic commentaries.

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[26] Ibid., 92–93.
[27]Ibid., 156.
[28] Ibid., 140–142.
[29] Ibid., 143.
[30] Ibid., 151, 154, 157.
[31] Ibid., 157.

The second text attributed to Alcuin from this period, the *Explanatio Apocalypsis per Interrogationem et Responses*, is found in one ninth-century manuscript.[32] It, too, is a derivative work, relying heavily on Bede's commentary on Revelation. At the same time, while drawing from the Northumbrian monk's writings, the work also mimics the insular manuals discussed in the previous chapter that were relied upon as educational aids for traveling preachers. As a work heavily reliant upon Bede, the details of content need not concern us. Suffice it to say that, like Bede, Alcuin's questions and answers manual for John's Apocalypse promotes a spiritual understanding of the book while emphasizing the role of preachers in general and, on occasion, for the End Times.[33] Thus, this work repeats and reinforces older English precedent for a continental audience.

Whether or not these works were penned by Alcuin of York, they testify to the presence of preaching as a primary factor surrounding discussion of the apocalypse in the court of Charlemagne or of his close descendants. But, as Alcuin was interested in the spiritual rather than historical truths that could be gleaned from a study of John's vision, it is not surprising that the legacy of both works is reflective of his educational efforts. According to E. Ann. Matter, Alcuin's manual was not a finely crafted theological text picking out important problems a learned student must wrestle with in reading Scripture,

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[32] John Litteral, "Editor's Introduction," ix-x; and Alcuin of York, *Explanatio Apocalypsis per interrogationem et responsionem*, MS: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 13581, fols. 3r–31. It is published in Latin with an English translation as Alcuin, "Questions and Answers Manual," in *Consolamini Commentary Series: Alcuin of York on Revelation, Commentary and the Questions and Answers Manual*, trans. Sarah Van Der Pas (West Monroe, La.: Consolamini Publications, 2016), 163–283.

[33] See, for example, Alcuin, "Questions and Answers Manual," 169, 172, 179–181, 184, 188, 191, 202. As noted by T. W. MacKay, "Apocalypse Comments by Primasius, Bede and Alcuin: Interrelationship, Dependency, and Individuality," *Studia Patristica* 36 (2001): 28–34, chiefly at 31, neither Alcuin's nor Ambrosius Autpertus's apocalyptic works were very widespread after the 9th century, especially compared to Bede's highly influential texts. As will be seen below, however, their works were indicative of more subtle changes than the precise language used in their commentaries.

especially compared to a similar but far more thorough text on Genesis. "The function of this text, instead, is catechetical."[34] It was in a similar light that the Latin version of Pseudo-Methodius's prophecy was originally received in the Carolingian court.

As mentioned before, Alcuin's commentary on Revelation drew from Ambrosius Autpertus, who was critical of attempts to historicize the apocalyptic book. Specifically, when writing his commentary in Italy no later than 767, Ambrosius had come across a Latin redaction of Pseudo-Methodius. The original Syriac version was unknown in western Europe, but it had been translated from Greek into Latin by one Petrus Monachus. The exact timing of the Latin translation is unknown, some placing it before the Arab invasion of Spain in 711, though the oldest known manuscript seems to date to 727.[35] Before Ambrosius, the text circulated in the West. One early manuscript was combined with the *Scarpsum* of Pseudo-Ephraim, an apocalyptic sermon that expected an imminent End Times. As the signs of the End were growing increasingly clear, the sermon author believed the time had come for Christians to prepare themselves to leave this world behind. Like its paired text of Pseudo-Methodius, Pseudo-Ephraim saw the Roman Empire as central to the collapsing future, though it lacked the specificity of the enemies that work held.[36]

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[34] E. Ann Matter, "Alcuin's Questions-and-Answers Text," *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 45, no. 4 (1990): 645–656, at 656.

[35] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 113–114. The history of the redactions from Syriac through Greek into Latin is best told by Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 52–60.

[36] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 121–123; and Pseudo-Ephraim, *Scarpsum*, ed. Daniel Verhelst, in *Pascua Mediaevalia*, ed. R. Lievens, E. van Mingroot, and W. Verbeke, Historica Lovaniensia 155 (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 1983), 518–528. Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 121, writes that the "preacher was not optimistic about the chances of his audience turning things around." This, however, is an example of the assumption my study is attempting to combat, for Pseudo-Ephraim speaks of the approach of the end of the world as being generally caused by infidelity—the widespread devolution of faith—rather than something that could actually be reversed. Infidelity is seen retroactively as causing God's wrath, but humans do not seem capable of reversing what has already been decreed. In this respect, though Pseudo-Ephraim is non-Augustinian, his idea of apocalyptic preparations remains spiritual, inward-focused,

By the mid-8th century, when Ambrosius was objecting to the way Pseudo-Methodius presented Gog and Magog as representing actual peoples in a geographically specific corner of the world rather than unbelievers and the forces of Satan in general, the Syrian had already found a home in Europe. Nevertheless, the Latin version of Pseudo-Methodius does not seem to have struck a particularly vulnerable apocalyptic chord in western Christendom or in the Carolingian court upon its arrival. The text was *not* modified upon its arrival to conform to local threats, exchanging the Arabs for the Saxons or even the Vikings, for example. Even when the Vikings first attacked Lindisfarne in 793, Alcuin's first instinct when writing about the incident was to accept the evil with the patience of Job without invoking prophecy or a greater providential meaning. Later on, following other painful events, he changed his attitude to one of lamentation, after the manner of Jeremiah, concerned with the wrath of God.[37] Still, Pseudo-Methodius's prophecy was not invoked or altered during the 9th century to help explain the Viking assaults. The work remained roughly within its original context, though in a greatly simplified form.[38]

Rather than transforming to reflect regional anxieties, the text instead became part of the same educational milieu that Alcuin had begun to set up in Francia. The extent of Alcuin's knowledge of Pseudo-Methodius is unknown, since his commentary on Revelation, though drawn from Ambrosius, ends well before the latter's disagreement with

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and, as such, traditional. If Pseudo-Ephraim were used for private study (see below), then its apocalyptic message can therefore be seen as less emphatic, since it was meant to be held in the hearts of monks rather than proclaimed to the wider community.

[37] Mary Garrison, "The Bible and Alcuin's Interpretation of Current Events," *Peritia* 16 (2002): 68–84.

[38] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 126.

the Syrian text. It is not unreasonable, however, to assume that it had crossed his path. But it, like Alcuin's own writings on John's Apocalypse, seems to have been used for a purpose other than prophetic prediction. The Petrus translation of Pseudo-Methodius appears in the 8th and 9th centuries alongside other documents for private study and not among preaching aids. James Palmer has concluded that, within the Carolingian court and especial that of Louis the Pious, far from the problems of life along the Byzantine-Abbasid border, copies of Pseudo-Methodius were kept and studied not for their apocalyptic content but for their use in moral catechesis.[39] The same was true of Alcuin's commentary on Revelation and his questions and answers manual. Both were meant as teaching tools at a time when English immigrant scholars believed they were charged with redefining religiosity on the Continent and training Franks and Saxons, clergy and laity, proper forms of the faith. Alcuin's efforts were apocalyptic, broadly considered, but his goal was the salvation of many before the Last Judgment rather than opposition against the Antichrist.[40]

Nevertheless, while neither the English scholars nor the copies of Pseudo-Methodius in Francia pushed for new forms of apocalyptic preparation, they unwittingly conspired together to establish within Charlemagne's newly founded, so-called "Roman," empire the two most important components to the later evolution of apocalyptic theory and

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[39] Ibid., 126–129. The difference between sermons for preaching and sermons for private study are not always clearly seen for Carolingian texts. For positions arguing for either clear or unclear distinctions, see respectively: Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789–895* (London: Lincoln Record Society, 1977), 165–166; and Thomas L. Amos, "Preaching and the Sermon in the Carolingian World," in *De Ore Domini: Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas L. Amos, Eugene A. Greene, and Beverly Mayne Kienzle (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), 41–60. The solution is likely in the middle, as argued by Rob Meens, "Christianization and the Spoken Word: The Sermons Attributed to St. Boniface," in *Zwischen Niederschrift und Wiederschrift*, ed. Richard Corradini, Max Diesenberger, and Meta Niederkorn-Bruck (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2011), 211–222.

[40] Dales, *Alcuin*, 112, 119–122, 146, 169–170.

practice. Within the Latin West, preaching as a potential apocalyptic weapon and the politics of an End Times emperor had come together, at least geographically if not yet intellectually. Though they were hardly seen as subversive to established tradition, their fusion would cause a remarkable change in Christian thought and action.

Maintaining the Carolingian *Castra Dei* in the (Quiet) 9th Century

Apocalyptic sources were used into the 9th century as catechetical tools among Carolingian scholars rather than as instruments for furthering speculation about the End Times or humanity's place in those events. Nevertheless, the apocalypse was still of interest to some, and it held (as it always has) special rhetorical value that could be adapted for many occasions.[41] Moreover, as Charlemagne's kingdom grew in the late 8th century and took on the prestige of empire in the 9th, strategies were increasingly needed to maintain control of expanded Frankish lands while also maintaining and showcasing the appropriate religiosity of a Christian monarch worthy of the name, both for Charles and for his heirs. "Correction" became an important mode by which the Carolingians and their representatives could uphold political stability while also exhibiting signs of true Christian devotion and care for the Church. This emphasis also carried with it hints of apocalyptic preparedness, informed by English influence.

Among the chief concerns within the newly formed Carolingian Empire was its continued existence as a reasonably unified and defensible entity. This was sought and achieved on many fronts: militarily, politically, economically, administratively, culturally,

[41] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 3–14; and McGinn, "Introduction: John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality," 3–19.

and, of course, religiously.[42] Militarily, as early as King Pippin (r. 751–768), the Carolingian realm expanded through conquest but was maintained by establishing or gaining control of permanent fortifications in or near a hostile region. These *castra* served to defend the borders while providing the Carolingian court (lay and ecclesiastic) a useful metaphor for spiritual bulwarks within a proselytizing empire.[43] The importance of religious ceremony, both communally and privately, was an important component in strengthening Carolingian armies' morale, cohesion, and discipline. Those who carried out these ceremonies thus played an important part in military endeavors.[44] At the same time, the clergy witnessed and became part of the military effort, which in turn prompted incorporation of such ideas into a religious and especially monastic context. Connecting spiritual combat and martial combat did not originate in the Carolingian era (such metaphors date back to Anthony the Great and even St. Paul), but the 9th century saw an increase of so-called *milites Christi* among both monks and soldiers.[45] The *castra Dei* developed as part of a political theology in Charlemagne's court that combined these two spheres. This theology made reference to and use of apocalyptic content, holding that the forces of evil would increase in their attacks against the people of God as the End Times

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[42] See Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751–987* (New York: Longman, 1983), especially 77–105, 140–168.

[43] Mary Alberti, "'Like the Army of God's Camp': Political Theology and Apocalyptic Warfare at Charlemagne's Court," *Viator* 4, no. 2 (2010): 1–20, at 2; Matthias Hardt, "Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire," in *The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. Walter Pohl, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 219–232; and Bernard S. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 207–241.

[44] David S. Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War, c. 300–1215* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 62–63.

[45] Katherine Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), 96–97.

approached. Correction of sins, heresies (especially regarding the then-current Spanish Adoptionist controversy,[46] which Alcuin opposed), and other inappropriate behavior repaired and built up the spiritual walls around the *castra Dei* so that it could better face any assault from without by non-Christians. Recourse to apocalyptic threats with the emperor and his ministers protecting the Christian world from armies of the devil, however, was less about prophecy than about correcting contemporary behavior and molding the Carolingian court and society towards one of peaceful unity.[47] This fits well with what has already been said regarding the ninth-century use of continental Apocalypse commentaries. The End Times were rhetorically important for a society founded and maintained by military and religious pressure. From a purely apocalyptic perspective, however, these were conservative mentalities, albeit ones pregnant with future potential. Charlemagne and the office of emperor would later become closely connected to apocalyptic preparations and agency, but in his lifetime and for the rest of the 9th century, the course and timing of the End Times were still a matter for divine rather than human efforts.

That is not to say, of course, that the ninth-century empire was devoid of apocalyptic furor on all fronts. Commentaries on Revelation continued—including one by Haimo of Auxerre focused on moralizing[48] (discussed below in chapter 4)—but the century generally remained rather quiet regarding apocalyptic speculations. One notable though

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[46] So-called because proponents held that the man Jesus was adopted as the Son of God rather than being co-equal with God the Father from all eternity.
[47] Alberti, "Like the Army of God's Camp," 3–5, 12, 17–20.
[48] Haimo of Auxerre, *Expositio in Epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*, trans. Kevin L. Hughes, in *Second Thessalonians: Two Early Medieval Apocalyptic Commentaries*, ed. Steven R. Cartwright and Kevin L. Hughes (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 21–33; and Haimo of Auxerre [misattributed as Haimo of Halberstadt], *In epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*, in PL 117, cols. 777–784. For discussion on this text, see chapter 4.

unfortunately poorly recorded instance of apocalyptic anxiety during the 9th century can be seen in the case of a woman during the reign of Louis the Pious. According to the *Annales Fuldenses*, in the year 847, a "pseudoprophetissa" named Thiota arrived in Mainz where her prophecies caused a great disturbance. Allegedly, she gained popularity by claiming to know the precise date for the end of the world and other things supposedly known to God alone. She predicted that the world of 847 would not survive the year, which caused many to flock to her out of fear, giving her gifts and requesting prayers from her. Even members of the clergy, the annalist records with horror, followed her as if she were a celestial herald. She was eventually brought before an ecclesiastical examination, which ended with her confessing to fraud. All her claims, she said, were the result of a priest instructing her in what to say in order to gain wealth. Thiota received a flogging for her deeds and abandoned her prophetic preaching, thus disappearing from the historical record.[49]

This account leaves much to be desired. We have few details (assuming they are reliable) about Thiota's apocalyptic predictions. Moreover, the conclusion, portraying her as a professed con artist, casts doubt on how authentic or representative such anxieties might have been for ninth-century Europeans. The exceptional nature of this episode in the *Annales Fuldenses* could be a sign of its rarity; alternatively, Thiota might have owed her short-lived success in Mainz (among both the laity and clergy) to a prevalent foreboding of the End Times that was undocumented but nevertheless ubiquitous. Neither can be

[49] *Annales Fuldenses: sive, Annales regni Francorum orientalis*, ed. Friedrich Kurze and G. H. Pertz, *MGH SSRG* 7 (Hanover: 1891), 36–37; and Timothy Reuter, trans., *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth-Century Histories, Volume II* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 26–27. For discussion of Thiota (sometimes known as Theoda or Theuda) as a woman preacher, see Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500–900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 143–148.

definitively proven, though Thiota's case seems surprising more for its historical isolation than for its existence at all. Yet while the records of Fulda do not reliably tell us the degree of apocalyptic fervor in Louis's empire, they do suggest what his people (or at least the monk recording events) expected when apocalyptic anxieties broke out. The event in 847 gives no indication what the End would look like, but in doing so, it remains true to the centuries-old tradition we have become so familiar with. People, laity and clergy, flocked to this heavenly prophetess with gifts, begging for prayers as they anticipate the world coming to a close within the year. While this disordered society, according to the annalist, there is no indication that the citizens of Mainz did anything unusual, save for following the words of a woman that went against a conservative, Augustinian understanding of Judgment Day and giving to her their possessions. In return, she offered them nothing but her prayers, but then, that was all anyone thought to expect when the End finally came.

One might argue, as Jane Schulenburg implicitly does, that Thiota's contribution to apocalyptic speculation is her very presence as a prophetess foretelling the time of the End, thus allotting to herself the role of divine herald and inserting humanity into the apocalyptic drama.[50] While such an interpretation is enticing, the lack of detail in Thiota's story on the one hand and the steadfastness of a tradition against such a conclusion on the other only leaves us with reason to see this woman of Mainz participating in established apocalyptic custom rather than crafting a new one. Though her episode disturbs the apocalyptic silence of the 9th century, Thiota's story is nevertheless an echo of earlier traditions.

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[50] Jane T. Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women, Prophecy, and Millennial Expectations," in *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Responses to the Turning of the First Millennium*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 237–256, at 239–241.

The 9th century is thus less an apocalyptic century than one in which apocalyptic ideas were given time to ferment. As living memory of Charlemagne faded and as the relatively stable reign of Louis the Pious was replaced by a divided empire, there began to rise the legend of a golden age lost too soon. As the 9th century wore on, the Carolingian realm fractured into three parts: West Francia and East Francia (roughly equivalent to modern France and Germany, respectively) with Lotharingian between them. In the early 10th century, starting with Henry the Fowler (r. 919–936), Saxons replaced the Franks as dynastic rulers in the eastern kingdom. Nevertheless, as Charlemagne's past glories became a memory, his status rose higher the more distant he seemed. Religious houses and secular nobles sought to associate themselves with both him and his age. The legend that ensued cast him as a towering presence and one worthy of a place within the apocalyptic drama.[51] But Charlemagne's death in 814 meant he had passed out of the realm of the merely human and entered the realm of divine agent. A legend might have apocalyptic significance, but it could not by itself change the relationship between humans and the divine. Christians had been expecting long-dead prophets to return at the End of Time for nearly a thousand years. A resurrected Charlemagne could easily participate in the apocalyptic drama without increasing human agency in it one bit. A new paradigm would therefore need to emerge, inspired by but not limited to the life and times of Charlemagne, for European Christians to begin seeing themselves as active participants in and influencers of the End Times. The 10th century saw just this development.

[51] Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*, 13–40.

The Queen and the Monk: Changes in the 10th Century

While the 9th century remained relatively calm regarding apocalyptic speculations and calls for preparations and other activities, the century that followed took a different course. As the Carolingian dynasty ended its rule, first in the east and later in the west, the political imagination of rulers and those that served them combined with apocalyptic theories long incubating within their borders. The most important document for the Latin world to come out of these anxieties was a treatise on the Antichrist himself. Though it has long been the topic of scholarly examination, the story of its emergence as part of the gradual increase of human agency in apocalyptic speculation and preparation sheds new light on this work and better connects it to the religious and political life of tenth-century western Europe.

In 919, the Kingdom of East Francia accepted Henry the Fowler as its ruler, despite his Saxon rather than Frankish ancestry. Henry was not the first East Frankish king to lack a claim to the Carolingian dynasty. Conrad I had broken that tradition in 911. The first monarch of the Liudolfing dynasty, Henry would be followed by three successive kings and emperors named Otto and one final Henry. Due to the number of Ottos ruling in the east, the era Henry inaugurated is sometimes known as an "Ottonian" century, running from 919 to 1024, rather than a "Liudolfing" one. Those benefiting from Henry's bloodline, however, were not limited to a narrow line of successions to the crown. In addition to Otto I, called "the Great," who became king of East Francia in 936 and emperor of the so-called Holy Roman Empire in 962, Henry's children included: Bruno, the archbishop of Cologne and duke of Lotharingia; Gerberga, wife to King Louis IV; Hedwig, the mother of Hugh

Capet, first of the Capetians kings; Henry, duke of Bavaria; and Thankmar, who died prior to Otto's coronation.[52] Though Otto I's reign was not without challenges, both internal and external, he was able to suppress revolts, turn back invasions, and pacify East Frankish elites in order to maintain and even expand his authority as king and later emperor. It was in great part Henry the Fowler's well-placed children and relations that allowed the Ottonian line to survive as long as it did, despite the absence of a Carolingian legacy as part of its pedigree.[53] While elites at the time may have been forgiving of a non-Carolingian who held the throne, it must not be forgotten in what follows that the Liudolfings lived in the shadow of Charlemagne's accomplishments, both real and imagined.

One of Henry's children who occupied a unique place between Carolingian and post-Carolingian dynasties was Gerberga (c. 913–969/984). Our knowledge of her stems mostly from her relations to other men: her blood relatives, like Otto; her first husband, Gilbert, Duke of Loraine (c. 890–939); her second husband, Louis IV Outremer of France (920/921–954); her children, including Louis's heir, Lothair (941–986); various charters; and her correspondence with a monk, later abbot, of Montier-en-Der, named Adso. Gerberga, however, not only lived through but participated in several of the chief issues occupying the men around her. For example, in the late 930s, a rebellion broke out against Otto I. Its participants included Gilbert of Lorraine, his brother Henry, and Louis IV. Otto

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[52] See Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, c. 800–1056* (New York: Longman, 1991), 136–175; and John Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936–1075* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3–27. There were also challenges to Otto I's rule from his blood-relatives, but his loyal family members were nevertheless invaluable for his ultimate success. See Henry Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany: The View from Cologne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–2.

[53] A full discussion of the Liudolfings can be found in Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, while the imagined Carolingian shadow over them is explored throughout Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*.

ultimately triumphed, though in the process his brother-in-law Gilbert was killed, making a widow of Gerberga. To solidify the new peace with his western counterpart, Otto arranged for Gerberga to wed Louis in 939. A text from the 1070s holds Gerberga responsible for convincing her first husband to join with her younger brother Henry against Otto, though the reliability of this version of events has been questioned.[54] Nevertheless, as will be seen, it correctly identifies Gerberga as someone concerned with and capable of provoking significant political undertakings. Following her marriage, Gerberga's relationship with Otto seems to have been amicable.

Adso's *De ortu et tempore antichristi* and Gerberga's Queenship

Before continuing with the rest of Gerberga's life as queen, which few scholars interested in apocalyptic matters explore, it is necessary to discuss the letter concerning the Antichrist that was written to her by Adso of Montier-en-Der. Once its intersection of apocalyptic and political matters has been explored (we will discuss its more specifically religious dimensions in chapter 4), we will return once again to Gerberga herself. At that time, the content and context of the apocalyptic treatise will be better understood. Contrary to some scholars, it will be seen that the letter was addressed to a woman who believed in being actively involved in shaping Europeans affairs rather than someone content to amuse herself in hypothetical or alarmist inquires.

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[54] Jocundus, *Translatio sancti Servatii Tungrensis episcopi et miracula*, ed. R. Koepke, *MGH SS* 12 (Hanover, 1856), 123f; and with a dispute from Winfrid Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und ihre Bedeutung in der Politik: Studien zur Familienpolitik und zur Genealogie des sächsischen Kaiserhauses* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), 28–33.

Versions of the text of Adso's prophetic biography of the Antichrist (seen by some as an anti-*vita*) exists in 171 manuscripts dating from as early as the 11th century and found in French, German, English, Austrian, Hungarian, Czech, and Italian collections, testifying to the letter's popularity.[55] This would be the standard version of the Antichrist for centuries, with medieval authors relying upon it, directly or indirectly, when discussing the arch-villain of the apocalypse. Internal clues from the work—apparently originally in the form of a letter to Queen Gerberga in response to an unknown question (or series of questions) she posed to the monk regarding the Antichrist—indicate it was written sometime between 949 (when Louis IV's brother Rorico, mentioned in the text as having ecclesiastical rank, was made a deacon) and 954 (the year Louis, presumed alive in the letter, died).[56] The letter has two main parts: first, an introduction addressed directly to the queen; second, the *vita* proper. The biography starts with the birth of the Antichrist as a member of the Hebrew tribe of Dan and proceeds to discuss his upbringing by sorcerers, his rise to power through deception, his conquests, the persecution of Christians under his authority, and, finally, his downfall. For his description of the life of the Antichrist, Adso relies heavily upon the work of Pseudo-Methodius, which came down to him through the

[55] Daniel Verhelst, ed., *De ortu et tempore Antichristi necnon et tractatus qui ab eo dependent*, CCCM 45 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 3–19. Verhelst's work is the definitive scholarly edition. English translations of the letter exist, such as is in Wright, *The Play of Antichrist*, 100–110 (the translation of the letter itself hereafter Adso, "Essay on Antichrist"); and McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 82–87. Wright's translation of the prologue to Gerberga, however, renders "pro filiorum vestrorum incolumitate" as "for your children's safety," failing to maintain the purposeful reference to her "sons." As will be seen below, the letter was not merely interested in a mother's love for her children but in the queen's concern about her heirs. Meanwhile, McGinn's translation does not include the prologue at all.

[56] Verhelst, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, 3.

Latin redaction, as the text makes explicit use of the Last World Emperor prophecy,[57] complete with the abdication of imperial authority to Christ on the Mount of Olives just before the Antichrist's advent.[58]

All of this is well known to scholars working with Adso and Pseudo-Methodius. But there is another tradition imbedded within Adso's text beside that of the Syrian. Just as the *De ortu* includes Byzantine political prophecies, so, too, does it contain elements of Hiberno-English conceptions of apocalyptic preaching. The Antichrist himself would come to power due, in part, to his ability to preach and to recruit preachers to deceive those susceptible to his lies, sending his ministers and preachers throughout the world. He would corrupt those princes in authority before spreading his will through preachers to the rest of Christendom.[59] Taken by itself, this could be seen as simply a natural expression of the old conception of the Antichrist as a master manipulator. But this is not all, for to Adso, preaching is itself a battlefield upon which evil is fought. Similar to Hesychius but much more clearly and insistently, Adso makes clear that preaching is a weapon for believers. Before the Antichrist arrives, and in order to prevent the faithful from falling prey to his lies, the Two Witnesses, Enoch and Elijah, will arrive to preach, strengthening the people

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[57] Though the Last World Emperor is the common designation for this prophecy, words for king (*rex*) typically appears for the prophetic figure in the Latin (including in Adso's version), divorcing him from an explicit Byzantine connection. Some later authors would eventually reintegrate the more overt imperial language into the prophecy. Arguably, anyone with claims to universal political authority over Christians might best be described as an emperor rather than a king, hence the naming convention that has developed. Therefore, for simplicity and consistency with other scholars, I have kept to the common English title for this figure, but it should not be forgotten that those without imperial regalia could still (in theory) aspire to this prophetic office.

[58] The entirety of Adso's letter can be found in Verhelst, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, 20–30 (hereafter Adso, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi* when citing the Latin letter itself).

[59] Ibid., 24: "Reges autem et principes primum ad se conuertet, deinde per illos ceteros populos.…Deinde per uniuersum orbem nuncios mittet et praedicatores suos."

of God and training them for spiritual war against the forces of evil. Their purpose is specifically to prevent the Antichrist coming upon an unaware and unprepared Christian population who would otherwise be open to the Antichrist's deceptions and threats. They will train the faithful to fight in a war against the Antichrist with divine weapons.[60] Ultimately, however, the Antichrist will have both prophets killed and then proceed to persecute the rest of the Christians until they apostatize or accept martyrdom.[61] As we have seen, the presence of the Two Witnesses to lead the faithful during the End Times is a typical trope, but the idea that they will prepare the faithful who will themselves fight against the Antichrist—whether physically or merely spiritually, however futilely—was a departure from Roman-era speculation. In essence, a correct understanding of the apocalypse, provided by preaching, is presented as a direct counter to the machinations of the Antichrist, who will send out his own wicked servants to spread false information about himself and convince unprepared Christians that he should be worshipped. Indeed, as Adso says, some sinful laymen, clerics, and monks are already the Antichrist's servants and precede his arrival.[62] All of this echoes the Irish and English apocalyptic preachers and commentators who sought to instruct Christians in a "proper" understanding of End Times events. In answering Gerberga's questions about the Antichrist, Adso's letter is itself an attempt to produce a correct understanding of apocalyptic events so that Gerberga may increase in piety and in her performance of deeds for the benefit of Christ's Church, for

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[60] Ibid., 27–28: "Sed ne subito et improuise Antichristus ueniat et totum humanum genus suo errore decipat et perdat, ante eius exordium duo magni prophete mittentur in mundum, Enouch scilicet et Helias, qui contra impetum Antichristi fideles Dei diuinis armis premunient et instrument eos et confortabunt et preparabunt electos ad bellum, docents et predicantes tribus annis et dimidio."
[61] Ibid., 28.
[62] Ibid., 22.

which Adso praises her. As we will see in the next chapter when we discuss this monk of Montier-en-Der in his own context and not simply as an author of a letter to Gerberga, Adso was by no means original or unique in expressing these ideas about preaching and apocalyptic matters on the continent in the 10th century.

Despite the warning he provides about how the Antichrist would wage a propaganda war against Christians, an apostacy—which Adso interprets as a political secession from Roman rule—must first precede his coming. According to the monk, this time had not yet come thanks to the Franks. Here Adso provides his reinterpretation of the Pseudo-Methodius prophecy. While most of Rome's old territories have fallen into ruin, the Frankish kings were still faithful to Rome—indeed, they held Roman authority by right—and thus the Antichrist's advent was impossible. He then shares with Gerberga that he has it on the authority of learned men (*uero doctors*) that a king of the Franks will soon arise who will be the greatest in history, will expand Frankish territory, and will lay down his crown in Jerusalem before the Antichrist will arise.[63] It certainly would have been complimentary for the queen to hear her kingdom and her descendants through Louis would be instrumental in both delaying and ushering in the End Times drama. This also helps explain Adso's prayers for Gerberga's sons in the introduction to his letter. There he prays for the safety of Gerberga's sons, saying that if he had the power, he would increase Gerberga's power as queen ("totum regnum adquirere"). As he cannot do that himself, however, he can only pray for her and her sons' wellbeing.[64] As will be seen below, Adso had reason to believe in the years 949 to 954 that Gerberga would welcome prayers to

[63] Ibid., 25–26.
[64] Ibid., 20.

strengthen her royal authority and for the protection of her and Louis's heirs. As such, there was clearly a political dimension to the apocalypse that Adso imagined and of which he wanted the queen to be aware.

It is often believed that Adso was attempting to calm his queen and to assuage any apocalyptic anxieties she might have felt.[65] Such interpretations, however, fail to properly take into account Gerberga's life and accomplishments, preferring instead to lay the burden of apocalyptic assertiveness on Adso alone while assuming a frightened woman (at least in her late 30s by this time) in need of comfort. While I do not hold that the monk was subject to exorbitant dread about the End Times or was attempting to provoke such in others, from this letter replying to her request for details on the life of the Antichrist, Gerberga would have received ample details upon which to make her own decisions in preparation for an apocalyptic scenario. That is, the letter Adso sent was tailor-made for Gerberg's interests and concerns as queen. She also proved to be a person more than capable of using her hard-won experience to shape the politics of her times according to her policies and for the betterment of her family. Though a rhetorical common-place, Adso had reason to begin his letter by addressing it to "Excellentissime regine" (the most excellent queen).[66]

When the letter was written sometime around 950, Gerberga had already endured a number of difficulties as queen of West Francia. Despite her marriage to Louis at the prompting of Otto in 939, the two kings feuded during the early 940s but eventually came

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[65] Daniel Verhelst, "Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 81–92, at 83–85; and Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women, Prophecy, and Millennial Expectations," 241–243.
[66] Adso, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, 20.

together amicably in 942, though contentions were not entirely erased. Various meetings between the two monarchs or their representatives took place, but tensions remained for some time. These discords were partially enflamed by Louis's other, and for a time perhaps greater foe, the Robertian Hugh the Great, the duke of the Franks and count of Paris.[67] Hugh had been instrumental in securing Louis's ascension to the West Frankish throne in 936. He was also the king's relative several times over (including eventually by marriage to Gerberga's sister Hedwig). Relations between the two soon soured, however, when it became clear Louis would not be as pliable as Hugh had initially hoped.[68]

Gerberga is hardly mentioned by Flodoard of Reims for any reason during this time and never regarding any of the exchanges Louis had with Otto and Hugh. The situation changes, however, in 945. The year before, Geberga's son Henry by her first husband, the late Duke Gislebert of Lotharingia, died.[69] This untimely death left Gerberga without male children from her first marriage and thus potentially more politically invested in her second.[70] If that is so, it was fortuitous timing. In 945, Louis found himself the victim of treachery by Northmen, who captured and imprisoned him. A message was then sent to the queen, promising to free Louis in exchange for his two sons, Lothair (b. 941) and Charles (b. 945). Despite his infancy, Gerberga agreed to deliver the young Charles, but she refused to surrender Louis's heir. Rather than free the king outright, however, the Northmen handed him over to Hugh as part of a deal. Flodoard tells us that, immediately after taking

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[67] Flodoard of Reims, *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919–966*, ed. and trans. Steven Fanning and Bernard S. Bachrach (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 32–41. For the Latin text, see also Flodoardus Canonicus Remensis, *Flodoardi Annales*, in PL 135, cols. 417–490.
[68] McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians*, 313–319.
[69] Widukind of Corvey, *Deeds of the Saxons*, trans. Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 91.
[70] Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen*, 28–33.

custody of the king, Hugh sent messengers to Otto but found him unwilling to speak to representatives of the duke, leading to a rift between them.[71]

During the king's year of imprisonment Gerberga held the royal residence of Laon until Hugh agreed to release Louis. She also sent envoys to her brother, Otto, for military assistance, which he quickly gave. Gerberga was present with Louis and Otto in 946 when they seized Rheims. She remained there while her husband and brother invaded Hugh's lands and took revenge on the Northmen.[72] The next year saw an increase in friendship between the brothers-in-law. Louis (and presumably Gerberga, too), celebrated Easter with Otto at Aachen, and they held a *placitum* together the following August. Meanwhile, Hugh's counterattacks stalled. Otto brokered a truce between his two brothers-in-law (Hugh had married Otto and Gerberga's sister, Hedwig, around 937/938), though with Louis in a stronger position.[73] In the synod that took place in June of 948, convened to settled a number of disputes, including that between Louis and Hugh as well as a contention over the archbishopric of Rheims, the two kings displayed none of the conflict that had existed between them only ten years before. Placing himself under Otto and the synod's judgment, Louis made his case against Hugh's treacheries, which included forcing the king to surrender Laon, despite Gerberga's successful defense of it with soldiers she had gathered. Following other business at the synod—the confirmation of Artoldus as archbishop of Rheims, whom Louis supported against Hugh's candidate—the synod

[71] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 41–43; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 462–464.
[72] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 44–45; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 464–466.
[73] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 45–46; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 466–467.

decided to excommunicate Hugh. Following Hugh's synodal defeat, Louis and Otto joined military forces together that same year to retake Laon.[74]

Gergerba would act as royal envoy for the kings, joining her brother for Easter in 949 at Aachen—where she also met with envoys from across Europe—and returned to Louis with assurances of continued support, which Otto would provide to his brother-in-law through more years of conflict with Hugh.[75] At the same time, Gerberga is mentioned more frequently by Flodoard when discussing Louis's movements, being present at several locations the king felt needed reinforcements and rebuilding.[76] The conclusion of hostilities between Hugh and Louis, which had seen the duke's supremacy reversed by the queen's defense of Laon and her summoning of her brother into the conflict, finally came in 953 when Hugh requested a truce. To negotiate the peace, he asked to meet personally with Gerberga. The queen (pregnant with twins) met with him, received gifts, and subsequently agreed with her husband to end the conflict.[77]

The reconciliation was timely. Just a year later, Louis died while in Rheims after a lengthy illness following a fall from his horse. His death came close on the heels of his six-year-old son, also named Louis. Acting quickly, Gerberga met with Hugh. It seems Gerberga's chief aim was to ensure her son, Lothair, succeeded to the throne of France. In return for supporting the boy (then around thirteen years old), Hugh received lands from the new king in Burgundy and Aquitaine.[78] Both seem to have maintained the alliance.

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[74] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 46–51; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 467–474.
[75] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 52–53; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 474–475.
[76] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 54–57; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 476–479.
[77] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 57–58; and *Flodoardi Annales*,479–480.
[78] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 59–60; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 481.

Hugh hosted the queen mother and her son for Easter in 955. The duke and young king then campaigned together briefly in Aquitaine.[79] If there were fears that Hugh would make a move against Lothair, they were unnecessary. He certainly had opportunities to turn against Gerberga and Lothair, especially when they were his guests or when the two men were far from the king's power base of Laon, but he never did. Perhaps Gerberga's diplomacy had won him over, which very likely included a reminder of who Otto—who had won a decisive victory against the long-feared feared Magyars at the Battle of Lechfeld on August 10, 955—had fiercely supported for the last decade. If Hugh had any intention of turning against the young king (and by contemporary accounts, he does not seem to have had that desire), he did not live long enough to exploit the situation to his advantage. In 956, Hugh the Great died.[80]

After the deaths of Louis and Hugh, the rest of Gerberga's life is not well documented, but a few pieces of information are quite clear. Her familiar-political ties seem to have increased. Not only was she ruling the kingdom closely with her son, but she took part in endeavors with and on behalf of her siblings. For example, in 957, Gerberga accompanied her son and her sister, Hadwig (Hugh's widow) on campaign to assist her brother Bruno, the archbishop of Cologne and duke of Lotharingia, against a rebellious vassal.[81] The three—Gerberga, Lothair, and Bruno—met together often in the years following Hugh's death, usually on the same side of a conflict. Sometimes they quarreled but never with great hostility, always coming to a peaceable resolution in the end according

[79] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 61; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 482.
[80] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 62; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 483.
[81] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 62; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 483.

to our records. During these mostly amicable meetings, Gerberga figuratively held her son's hand as she and Bruno decided secular and episcopal offices in their adjoining lands, oversaw various councils, and coordinated punishment or leniency for rebels.[82] One of the last times we see Queen Gerberga is in 965 accompanying King Lothair to Cologne, Bruno's see, to meet Otto. Otto had recently returned from Italy with the title of emperor and then held a *placitum* with his siblings.[83] It was likely at this point when Gerberga negotiated with Emperor Otto for Lothair to marry Emma, Empress Adelaide's daughter by her first marriage. The next year, 966, the two were wed.[84] Throughout this time, Gerberga attached her name to several charters and gifts to monasteries—often in a bold style, unusual even for queens regent—proving Adso's praise of her generosity to religious orders well founded.[85] The date of her death is unfortunately unknown.[86]

The common view that Adso's letter was meant to comfort an overly fearful queen, while not completely beyond imagining, does not square with the picture of Gerberga that emerges from an examination of her life as Louis's queen and Lothair's regent. In her dealings with her brothers, Otto and Bruno, her brother-in-law, Hugh, Northmen, and various other political, military, and religious issues that arose, the Gerberga we see from our limited sources was a capable co-ruler with a knack for understanding familial networks while advancing her and her blood relations' agendas. As such, the emphasis

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[82] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 62–68; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 483–488.
[83] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 68; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 488.
[84] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 68; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 488.
[85] Simon MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 87–89, especially 86n71. For others charters, see those referencing Gerberga during the reign of Louis IV in *Recueil des Actes de Louis IV Roi de France (936–954)*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Imprimiere Nationale, 1914), 78, 88, 103; and during the regency and kingship of her son in *Recueil des Actes de Lothaire et de Louis V Rois de France (954–987)*, ed. Louis Halpen (Paris: Imprimiere Nationale, 1908), 7, 9–10, 14, 23, 26, 31, 61, 64, and 76.
[86] See Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen*, 272.

Adso places on Gerberga's children in particular as well as the prospect of a future Frankish ruler destined to rise above apostate nobles to become the greatest king in Christian history begins to make more sense as tailored specifically for the queen's personality. Thus "comfort" was not Adso's purpose. Rather, it is more likely that he knew the queen to have great expectations for her children specifically and her family in general and crafted his version of Pseudo-Methodius's text to appeal, in part, to Gerberga's political and familial ambitions. The apocalypse, in other words, was not just something that would happen to the world. It was something that Gerberga and her family would be able to shape and in a way no one previously had imagined.

All in the Family: Gerberga and the Ottonians

Gerberga's life as queen and regent remained closely tied to political and religious interests, both of which were inseparably linked to familiar concerns. It is thus necessary to look briefly at the other members of the Ottonian family who shared Gerberga's interest in a political order to understand how they, too, were informed, though by no means dominated, by an apocalyptic awareness. When we look beyond Gerberga, we see that other children of Henry the Fowler pursued courses that, while not alarmist, encouraged the union of politico-religious attitudes about apocalyptic concerns. At this point, it is important to call to mind how Levi Roach described the argument for an apocalyptic worldview for Gerberga's grand-nephew, Otto III (r.996–1002): that it was one based on an aggregate of individually discardable but cumulatively suggestive elements.[87] The same

[87] Levi Roach, "Emperor Otto III and the End of Time," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, 23 (2003): 75–102, at 78.

may be said for the Ottonians as a whole, though, like Roach, I am convinced the whole provides clarity to the parts. Whether Gerberga was a product of or a guiding influence for the rest of her blood relations on apocalyptic matters is difficult to say to absolute certainly. Nevertheless, she was certainly not alone in her interest, though she might have felt it more keenly than her relatives, as shown in her request to Adso for information on the Antichrist.

Otto I, crowned king in 936 and emperor in 962, spent the early part of his reign dealing with threats to his rule from within and without. These included civil wars involving his own relatives (Gerberga among them) and Magyar invasions. When Adso wrote to Gerberga about the Antichrist, Otto's decisive and celebrated victory at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955 had not yet happened. Instead, while Adso and Gerberga certainly cared more about West Frankish than East Frankish affairs, the Magyars would never have been far from their thoughts and may have colored their assumptions of what the Antichrist's armies would look like. Fortunately for Otto and the other Eastern Franks, this threat was dealt with, and the frontiers of the empire began to see a calming of hostilities. Such a victory was a crucial component in Otto's advancement, providing him the political and psychological resources to promote himself eventually to the imperial title. Further, a decision Otto made in his campaign past the Alps in 951, during which he was crowned king of Italy, not only aided his bid to become emperor but also helped perpetuate apocalyptic concerns within his family: Otto chose a wife.

While campaigning in northern Italy, Otto married Adelaide in 951 after she sought his aid following the death of her husband, Lothair II of Italy. Otto soon brought his new bride home and the two produced a son, Henry, by the next year. Otto's first wife, Edith of

Wessex (d. 946), had born a son, Liuduolf, in 930, but he died in 957. While Henry would not live to take the throne (but his younger brother, Otto, would become emperor), it is possible that the presence of an heir to the East Frankish kingdom was on the mind of Adso (if not Gerberga herself) when he wrote prominently about the health and wellbeing of the West Frankish queen's children in his apocalyptic letter. But if Gerberga may have been anxious about her brother's marriage (and there is no strong evidence she was), it is even more plausible that the two women came to have a noticeable and positive impact on each other.

Scholars have pointed out that Adelaide, who lived long enough to be regent for her grandson, Otto III, died in December of the year 999 while full of anxiety about the apocalyptic significance of the times. Odilo of Cluny, who wrote her *vita* in the early 11th century, says she frequently spoke of wanting to depart her earthly life and be with Christ as the year 1000 approached.[88] Though desire for a heavenly union is a common trope in *vitae*, historians have seen this declaration in the context of apocalyptic anxieties around the first millennium, with possible influence Adelaide might have had on the young emperor, who is known to have toyed with apocalyptic symbols (see below).[89] Within the relevant scholarship, however, I have not found any reference to the fact that Gerberga and Adelaide met during holidays not long after the latter's arrival in Frankish territories, nor

[88] Odilo of Cluny, *Vita Sanctae Adalheidis Imperatricis*, in *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis*, ed. Martinus Marrier and Andreas Quercenatus (Paris: Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1915), 361. An English version can be found in Sean Gilsdorf, trans., *Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 128–143, at 142.
[89] Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women, Prophecy, and Millennial Expectations," 243; and, less explicitly, Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 52–53.

even what their relationship might have been like in any significant way.[90] The first time the two queens met (sometime after Otto returned north of the Alps in 952[91]), Gerberga (b. ca 913) would have been about twice Adelaide's age (b. 931). It is reasonable to imagine the junior queen seeing her elder sister-in-law as a role model—both had been widows, both had remarried as a result of Otto's military successes necessitating relocation, both entered their second marriages with children from their first husbands, and (looking ahead) both would be strong regents of formerly Carolingian lands. There was much that would have connected these women on a psychological rather than a merely political level. And in this context, Gerberga may have been responsible for instilling apocalyptic ideas into Adelaide, or at least encouraging such inclinations the latter already possessed. It is even plausible that Gerberga shared a copy of Adso's letter with Otto's wife. In any case, the addition of Adelaide to the Ottonian family certainly did not dilute apocalyptic interests.

Around the same time Adso wrote his letter, Adelaide was bearing royal children for her new husband, who was enjoying the stability (aside from a rebellion caused by the birth of Otto II in 953) that would lead to his victory at Lechfeld.[92] Meanwhile, Gerberga's younger brother Bruno was playing his part in the family's religio-political activities. By the will of Otto I, Bruno, who was already Duke of Lotharingia, became Cologne's archbishop in 954.[93] The intersection of religion and politics was important for the Ottonian family. Otto needed the archiepiscopal rank to pass to someone he could trust to perpetuate

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[90] See discussion of apocalyptic influence on Otto III below.
[91] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 56–57; and *Flodoardi Annales*, 478–479.
[92] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 57–58, 61, and *Flodoardi Annales*, 479–480, 482.
[93] Heinrich Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century: Mentalities and Social Orders*, trans. Patrick J. Geary (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 204.

the family's interests. While controversial at the time,[94] Bruno's appointment to the dual offices accomplished this well.

For Bruno's part, his place as both duke and archbishop, as portrayed and defended by a *vita* by Ruotger,[95] placed him into an indirect but supporting role in the politico-religious web of interests that encouraged the development of thought regarding apocalyptic preparations and the Last World Emperor legend. To be sure, there is no evidence that Bruno himself was apocalyptically minded, but this marriage of secular and ecclesiastical ranks was typical for the Liudolfings, who were anxious to buttress themselves against military revolts while maintaining close relations with religious authorities.[96] Of course, blurring secular and religious lines to one's own advantage was not unique to tenth-century Ottonians. Nevertheless, Bruno's appointment to rule as both duke and archbishop during a time of apocalyptic interest for Gerberga and military anxiety for Otto I—still a year before the Battle of Lechfeld, in which Otto triumphed while wielding the Spear of Longinus, itself a symbol of combined religious and military authority[97]—helped ensure Lotharingia would continue down a religious path amendable to Ottonian interests. As will be seen in chapter 4, this path would include a substantial

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[94] See the letter William, Archbishop of Mainz, wrote to Pope Agapetus II in Philipp Jaffé, ed., *Bibliotheca Rerum Germanicarum, Monumenta Moguntina*, 3, (Berlin: 1886), 347–350. As Mayr-Harting notes, Ruotger's *Life of Bruno* sought to dispute critics of Bruno's appointment by portraying him as worthy of the office by his own educational and spiritual merits. See Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany*, 27.

[95] Ruotger, *Ruotgeri Vita Brunonis Archiepiscopi Coloniensis*, ed. Irene Ott, *MGH SSRG, Nova Series*, 10 (Cologne: 1958).

[96] Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany*, 2–48.

[97] Widukind, *Deeds of the Saxons*, 127. Other signs and disastrous portents accompany Widukind's account of the Battle of Lechfeld, though one cannot easily attribute to them a specifically apocalyptic significance. For more on Lechfeld (despite a dubious understanding of projectile physics), see Charles R. Bowlus, *Battle of Lechfeld and Its Aftermath, August 955: The End of the Age of Migrations in the West* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2006). Longinus was the name attributed to the Roman soldier who stabbed Jesus on the Cross.

amount of apocalyptic influence. Even if Bruno did not directly encourage such interests, they were ultimately aligned with the politically minded apocalypticism of Gerberga and other Ottonians.

Bruno's elevation meant that an Ottonian firmly controlled Lotharingia both politically and religiously (if one can even wholly separate those two in the 10th century). It also meant that control of northern Europe was consolidated within the hands of three neighboring siblings: Gerberga in the west, Otto in the east, and Bruno between them. Later events show Gerberga, Otto, and Bruno working closely together when dealing with their ecclesiastical and secular subordinates. The council of Cologne at Pentecost in 965, held in part to honor Otto for his recent return from Italy bearing the imperial title, saw the gathering of the entire Ottonian family.[98] According to two biographies of Matilda, the long-lived mother of Gerberga, Otto, and Bruno, this meeting was a happy one.[99] Indeed, as discussed previously, Gerberga and Bruno met often to discuss political matters. For most of these matters, the siblings were on the same side. Even when they occasionally found themselves opposed to each other, cooperation was always achieved in deciding both secular and ecclesiastical matters.

Thus, through her and her family's efforts, to those in ecclesiastical office and those interested in the reform of the Benedictine monasteries (discussed in chapter 4), Gerberga was not merely a layperson whose interest in apocalyptic matters could be seen as the frantic imaginings of the unlearned in need of mild correction. Her devotion to monastic

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[98] Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 68; *Flodoardi Annales*, 488; Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis*, 44–45; and MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 75.
[99] Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, 83, 117–118.

reform, the enlargement of monastic properties throughout her reign as queen (both before and after Louis IV's death), her involvement in synods, and the more-than-generous regard people like Adso had for her show that Gerberga was seen by contemporary religious as worthy to be called the "mother of monks and leader of holy virgins."[100] Moreover, the power she exercised as queen—defending her husband's interests, guiding her son's hand, and even pressing ownership claims of her own[101]—suggests Gerberga was unlikely someone of a fragile disposition, fretfully worried about the End Times and in need of reassurances.[102] Adso's letter about the Antichrist, with its inclusion of the Last World Emperor prophecy and frequent mention of Gerberga's children, was written, in part, as a reflection of the queen's political and religious worldview. As part of a proud royal household, Gerberga believed that she and her family could have an impact on the course of the apocalyptic future. She likely helped impart these same beliefs of agency to her sister-in-law,[103] Adelaide. In any case, Gerberga and her family helped set the stage for a new view of apocalyptic preparation, one that would evolve overtime far beyond the relatively isolated Frankish context in which Adso first wrote to his queen.

Later Ottonians and the Legend of Charlemagne

With the imperial title came additional political ambitions for Otto I as well as apocalyptic awareness at the Ottonian court. Among the former was the desire for a more

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[100] MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 64–65; and Adso, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, 20.
[101] MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 74–94.
[102] Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women, Prophecy, and Millennial Expectations," 241–243.
[103] Notably, Adelaide was also Lothair's mother-in-law. Her daughter, Emma, from her first marriage was Lothair's queen. Thus, Gerberga and Adelaide were sisters-in-law twice over: once through Otto I and again through their children.

even standing with the Byzantine East. Thus, in 968, Bishop Liudprand of Cremona (c. 920–972), acting as emissary for Otto I, arrived in Constantinople in an effort to secure a bride for Otto I's son and namesake.[104] The future Otto II would eventually marry Theophanu (c. 955–991), the niece of Emperor John I Tsimiskes (r. 969–976), in 972. Liudprand's 968 mission, however, would initially prove fruitless. Nevertheless, the account of his trip that Liudprand wrote for both Ottos and Empress Adelaide provided details of the Byzantine court and culture that he thought of interest to his patrons. This included a retelling of political prophecies Liudprand had encountered in Constantinople.

In remarking on a Byzantine campaign into Syria, Liudprand wanted to explain to the imperial family back in East Francia what the Greek motivations were. He explains that the Greeks have books of visions attributed to the prophet Daniel but which the bishop would rather call Sibylline, after the ancient Greek and Roman female oracles. These works purport to predict the sequence, length of years, and notable circumstances for Eastern Roman emperors. Because these books predict that the current emperor, Nicephoros II Phocas (r. 963–969), will be victorious in battle against the Muslims, Liudprand says, the Byzantines have chosen to go to war. The Saracens, however, have access to the same books, and will bide their time until the prophecy shifts in their favor.[105]

Liudprand follows up this general observation about prophecy guiding Byzantine politics by relating another, more specific prediction that, he believes, might well apply to the present. According to a Sicilian bishop named Hippolytus, the Greeks believe that a

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[104] See Paolo Squatriti, "Introduction," in *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, trans. Paolo Squatriti (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 3–8, 29–37.
[105] Liudprand of Cremona, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, trans. Paolo Squatriti (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 262.

prophecy that "The lion and the cub together shall exterminate the wild donkey" refers to the Byzantine emperor (the lion) and the king of the Franks (the cub) defeating the Saracens (the wild donkey). Liudprand takes offense for this on Otto's behalf. That is, an adult lion and a cub are essentially the same beast and share the same qualities, with age being the only difference. The Greeks, however, are qualitatively different than the Franks, according to Liudprand, with the former morally inferior to the latter. An alliance between Nicephoros and Otto that validated such shameful disparity would be unthinkable.[106]

Liudprand ventures his own interpretation of the prophecy for his patrons. Since the lion and the cub are both ferocious but differ only in age, those should refer to father and son, to Otto I and the future Otto II. The wild donkey, in turn, is Nicephoros himself, of whom Liudprand has few kind things to say. If this prophecy is of any validity to the present, it means that the Ottos will cause Nicephoros's downfall.[107] Liudprand adds that Hippolytus also predicted that the Franks rather than the Greeks would ultimately defeat the Saracens. Then recent victories of Muslims against Greek forces in Sicily seemed to testify to the impossibility of Byzantine supremacy without Frankish intervention.[108] The decisive victory over the Hungarians at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955, which ended decades of conflict and was seen a kind of holy war, must have further convinced Liudprand that Otto I was a divinely blessed warrior-king fighting against ungodly armies.[109]

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[106] Ibid., 262–264.
[107] Ibid., 264.
[108] Ibid., 265.
[109] Antoni Grabowski, *The Construction of Ottonian Kingship: Narratives and Myth in Tenth-Century Germany* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 197–221.

The prophecy Liudprand relates descended in part from the political prophecies of Pseudo-Methodius that, in the 7th century, predicted the rise of a victorious king who would push back seemingly irresistible forces to the east before the onset of the End Times. Lists of rulers were being updated to keep the vision up-to-date and relevant. And even if it was not a primary concern for Emperor Nicephoros's campaign in Syria, people continued to wonder whether the prophecy were nearing fulfillment and what the ruler might do about it.[110] Of course, defeating the Saracens was not the same as inaugurating the apocalypse. But as scholars have suggested, Liudprand nevertheless could have had the apocalypse on his mind as he wrote about the lions, since he was likely involved in a discussion in 944 (on another trip to Constantinople) over the timing of the millennium and the imminent approach of the End Times.[111] Similar prophecies cropped up in Ottonian Italy. The Tiburtine Sibyl, an apocalyptic text with origins in Late Antiquity, is known to us because of a manuscript from c. 1000. While parts of it have an early origin, the earliest extant version incorporated the Last World Emperor legend while inserting king lists. Most notably, this included a series of three "O" rulers, that is, Otto the Great, his son, Otto II, and his grandson, Otto III.[112] Like the Byzantines, editors in the Ottonian empire periodically updated old legends to keep up with the times. Thus, prophecies centering on the Ottos and their role as providential rulers and military leaders were circulated both within court by men like Liudprand (though not only by men) and in more distant parts of

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[110] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 198–199.
[111] Ibid., 199–200.
[112] Ibid., 200–201; and McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 43–44, 49–50. See also Ernst Sackur, ed., *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen: Pseudomethodius, Adso und Die Tiburtinische Sibylle* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1898), 177–187.

the empire. Certainly, powerful figures attract superlative rhetoric, but the prophetic language and imagery around the Ottonian court was unique in its assurance that an emperor in the West would have some control over and responsibility towards the start of apocalyptic events.

Though Emperor Nicephoros died in 969, paving the way for better East-West relations and the marriage between Otto II and Theophanu, Otto I never became the conquering lion of the Saracens that Liudprand had hoped.[113] Nevertheless, the successes Otto I had throughout his life meant that his son and grandson would enjoy the imperial title after him. These successes overcame the sudden death of Otto II (d. 983) and the difficulties of his leaving his heir, Otto III, a child emperor until 996. But the original Otto did not control events from beyond the grave, and his past victories could not dissuade living opponents from seeking his grandson's power. Instead, the relative stability of the later Ottonians rests in large part on the women of the court, including Otto II's Byzantine bride, Theophanu, and his mother, Adelaide. Neither empress felt much kindness toward the other while Otto II lived. Fortunately, their relative cooperation after his death to ensure a stable throne for his heir kept the two women on a shared endeavor, and the era was quite good for women with connections to the imperial court in general.[114] Theophanu thus held the regency for Otto III until her death in 990. It was then taken up by Otto I's still living second wife, the grandmother empress Adelaide. Her exercise of the imperial power and

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[113] Squatriti, "Introduction," 30–31.

[114] Karl Leyser, "*Theophanu divina gratia imperatrix augusta*: western and eastern emperorship in the later tenth century," in *The Empress Theophanu: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. Adelbert Davids (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–27, at 21. See also Althoff, *Otto III*, 40–51; and Rosamond McKitterick, "Ottonian intellectual culture in the tenth century and the role of Theaphanu," in *The Empress Theophanu: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. Adelbert Davids (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 169–193, especially 183–189.

influence upon her grandson demonstrate the lasting impact of apocalyptic ideas circulating among the Ottonians half a century earlier.

As previously noted, historians are unsure when Queen Gerberga died. She fades from the records around 968 or 969, though she might have lived for another few decades.[115] But if she was responsible for infusing Empress Adelaide with apocalyptic enthusiasm, the latter in turn passed the same onto her grandson. Matthew Gabriele has written in detail on the uses imperial rulers like Otto III made of the Last World Emperor prophecy, the remembered legacy of Charlemagne, and the political importance of symbols—visual, literary, and prophetic.[116] He omits mention, however, of the women closest to Otto III and their potential influence on imperial propaganda and expression. For example, while Gabriele refers to Queen Gerberga as the recipient of Adso's letter on the Antichrist, Adso and his monastic community are looked to in order to understand its contents rather than the Ottonian queen and her networks of communication through which apocalyptic concerns were shared.[117] Gabriele is not unique in neglecting Gerberga in his otherwise superb study. Most historians who write about Adso do little more than mention Gerberga as his addressee. Even Jane Schulenburg, who devotes an essay to the role of women in early medieval apocalyptic thought, hardly goes beyond the bare minimum of information about the queen. When Schulenburg discusses Empress Adelaide's apocalyptic interests, Adso is used as a narrative transition between the middle and late 10th century, but Gerberga herself is forgotten.[118] Likewise, James Palmer theorizes that

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[115] See Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen*, 272.
[116] See Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*, 97–128.
[117] Ibid., 110.
[118] Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women, Prophecy, and Millennial Expectations," 241–243.

Otto III's mother might have shared the Greek version of the prophecy or that Heribert, archbishop of Cologne, might have told him of Adso's letter. Adelaide's direct connection to Gerberga, however, is not mentioned as a possible vector.[119] Levi Roach comes perhaps closest to acknowledging the importance of Ottonian women's relationships in Otto III's apocalyptic worldview, but he, too, fails to fully explore the connections. He points out that Gerberga was Otto III's great-aunt through his grandfather Otto I. Roach thinks this extended, indirect familial connection might best explain Otto III's exposure to the Last World Emperor legend, and I agree. But—frustratingly—he does not mention the fact that she was also the twice-over sister-in-law of his grandmother and regent.[120] Indeed, the omission is made worse by the lack of reference to Adelaide anywhere in the same essay. This failure by historians to acknowledge the many connections between Gerberga and Adelaide—familial, political, psychological, and apocalyptic—must not be repeated in future work on tenth-century continental apocalyptic thought.

Nevertheless, Gabriele's discussion demonstrates the importance apocalyptic and universalizing language and symbols had among the later Ottonians, particularly when such could be turned to political ends by portraying the emperor as not only *a* but *the* Christian monarch. For example, when Otto III was crowned in 996, he wore a robe embroidered with images drawn from John's Apocalypse and another garment suggesting connections to the temple office of High Priest in Jerusalem.[121] This almost certainly made Adelaide happy. Otto, by the pen of Gerbert of Aurillac (c. 946–1003), soon wrote to his

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[119] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 202.
[120] Levi Roach, "Emperor Otto III and the End of Time," 94.
[121] Ibid., 78; and Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, New York: 1992), 163; and Gabriele, *Empire of Memory*, 105.

grandmother about being crown emperor, hoping that it brought her joy.[122] As the year 1000 approached, Adelaide's apocalyptic enthusiasm would increase, right up until her death on December 16, 999, just a few weeks from the start of the year she believed held prophetic significance.[123]

While historians have wrestled over how to interpret the year 1000—was it a time of fear, of hope, or of no real apocalyptic significance to contemporaries?—Adelaide's interest in the date was a continuation of older apocalyptic concerns inherited through her husband's family and passed on to her grandson, the heir of both a western and eastern imperial house and perhaps best suited to fulfill the political apocalyptic prophecies written for her twice-over sister-in-law, Gerberga. Though he died young at age twenty-one in 1002, the apocalyptic symbols and language surrounding his short reign[124] would have found their way to his court in part through his grandmother. Indeed, it would have been hard to avoid thinking of them. For example, after Otto III invited Gerbert of Aurillac to court to tutor him in 997, Gerbert noted how the young man combined Greek birth (through his mother) with Roman imperial rule (through his father).[125] Certainly, this flattering assessment would hardly have been news for Otto. Nevertheless, these paired lineages of authority would have added to the subtle interest of anyone familiar with apocalyptic theory from either the East or the West.[126] Otto's reported desire to travel to Jerusalem to become

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[122] Gerbert of Aurillac (Pope Sylvester II), *The Letters of Gerbert of Aurillac: with His Papal Privileges as Sylvester II*, trans. Harriet Pratt Lattin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 271. Gerbert became Pope Sylvester II in 999.
[123] Odilo of Cluny, *Vita Sanctae Adalheidis Imperatricis*, 361.
[124] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 201–208.
[125] See Gerbert, *Letters of Gerbert of Aurillac*, 296–298.
[126] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 201–202; and Roach, "Emperor Otto III and the End of Time," 94.

a monk (that is, divesting himself of imperial authority) further echoes elements of the Last World Emperor legend.[127] Thus, Otto's interest in powerful symbols of imperial authority—such as those on his coronation clothes—outlived Adelaide. Gabriele interprets Otto's opening of Charlemagne's tomb at Aachen on Pentecost in 1000 to find him "in a state resembling suspended animation" as an indication that contemporaries expected the old emperor would fulfill the Last World Emperor prophecy, with past and future merging together as history approached its culmination. It was but one episode in a long history of mythologizing the first Roman Emperor the West had seen in 300 years—one that placed special importance on the Franks and their growing importance in prophetic history.[128] But regardless of Charlemagne's long and varied history as a literary and prophetic focal point, Otto III had received from his family the legacy that the Last World Emperor was indeed a certain reality, and his actions were to be of great impact on the whole of Christian society. Though the Ottonian dynasty ended in 1024 with the death of Henry II, the political prophecy its members developed and shared (particularly among the women) would remain in European culture and continue to evolve as the years passed.

Conclusion

Throughout the 8th, 9th, and 10th centuries, the form and use of apocalyptic speculation changed within Frankish controlled lands. This was due to two strands of thought entering what would become the Carolingian Empire: insular peripatetic piety and Byzantine political prophecy. Both had unique views on apocalyptic concerns and what

[127] Roach, "Emperor Otto III and the End of Time," 98–99.
[128] Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*, 120–128.

humanity could do as the End Times approached. Through the educational work of Carolingian theologians, these views were preserved (if not expanded upon) until the 10th century when the Ottonian dynasty took up an interest in political apocalyptic matters. The resultant and highly influential work of Adso of Montier-en-Der relied heavily on Pseudo-Methodius while also incorporating insular thought on preaching as he explained to Queen Gerberga the meager (but not immaterial) actions Christians could take to prepare for and help instigate the apocalyptic drama. The legend of the Last World Emperor (who might originally be a king rather than an emperor) held that a mortal Christian, possibly not yet born, would be an instrument of divine will by taking concrete actions visible to and affecting other Christians. Though written by a French monk to his queen, the prediction was precisely what the Saxon Ottonians would have wanted, as it played into apocalyptic interests within the family, reinforced Ottonian importance vis-à-vis local religious institutions, and provided the kingly (and later imperial) rank with increased significance within Christian history as a whole.

The developments this chapter has witnessed, while undertaken or overseen at every step by those under religious orders, were primarily of benefit to the ruling political figures of the Frankish realms. There were, however, concurrent evolutions within Latin Christianity regarding apocalyptic preparations that were more religious than secularly political. These two aspects of European society—religion and politics—were never clearly demarcated at this time and frequently worked in tandem with each other. Nevertheless, it has been expedient to make this separation so as to follow how Pseudo-Methodius, with insular help, came to affect the Latin West's views of the apocalypse. In

the next chapter, we will change perspectives and see how insular ideas of preaching apocalyptic concerns affected society. This is more clearly seen within the religious orders rather than the nobility. Therefore, having established the changes that directly affected the Frankish and Saxon royalty in this chapter, we will now look at the evolution of apocalyptic preparation as it affected those with a specifically religious perspective during the same era and its impact on preaching in a society gradually becoming more self-consciously Christian.

Chapter 4: Rhetoric, Reform, and Resistance: Apocalyptic Preaching in the 10th Century

> For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Lo, I have told you beforehand.[1]

In the previous chapter, secular authorities and the networks they created around potential apocalyptic activities, especially that of kings and emperors, were of primary interest. We now turn to focus on the lives, deeds, words, and connections of avowed religious persons. Their approaches to apocalyptic preparations were different from those of the secular authorities. While the Last World Emperor, in inaugurating the End Times, served to fulfill a religious function (as did non-prophetic royalty in the 10th century), his work remained that of a noble layman: rulership, violence, conquest, and (ultimately) designating a successor. When he was to lay down his crown to Christ in Jerusalem, he would be surrendering the trappings and responsibilities of a secular lord to a heavenly king. The responsibilities of neither priest nor monk were abdicated in this act, for they were not the Last World Emperor's to give.

But what were these responsibilities for religious in the 10th century? As has been discussed so far, the centuries-old traditional model of apocalyptic preparation (described by and generally for other religious) was little different than non-apocalyptic admonitions to live an upstanding Christian life of self-reflection, prayer, contrition, and general good deeds. But just as the 10th century witnessed a revolution in the ways secular authorities were seen to have the potential to affect (and effect) the apocalyptic drama, so, too, did

[1] Matthew 24:24–25.

religious begin a radical process of self-reinvention and redefinition in their responsibilities as the End Times approached. Certainly, this newly evolved sense was far from universal. But unlike the Last World Emperor prophecy—which would apply only to a single, highly placed man—it had far more potential participants. What these transformations were, who took interest in them, and how they spread, are the subjects of this chapter. But whatever the specific beliefs of apocalyptic commentators, whether they wrote according to Augustinian orthodoxy or out of concerns for an imminent apocalypse, their minds invariably revolved around one action, one way to prepare Christians for the Antichrist (or the lack thereof). And that was preaching.

Adso of Montier-en-Der Reconsidered

When this examination first discussed Adso's treatise on the Antichrist in the previous chapter, it was in the context of a letter written to and at the request of Queen Gerberga. Then, what was at issue was the political dimension of the apocalyptic text and how Gerberga—as wife of Louis IV of France, sister to Otto I of Germany, and, she hoped, mother to a future king—might have seen herself and her family in prophetic terms. The legend of the Last World Emperor became popular in the Latin West as a direct result of Adso obeying Gerberga's request for information about the Antichrist's life. Whatever the interest others may have had in the topic, Gerberga herself seems to have influenced those around her to think in prophetic terms, especially her sister-in-law Adelaide, Otto I's second wife, who in turn encouraged her grandson, Otto III, to also think apocalyptically around the year 1000.

But while the Last World Emperor legend encouraged people to take a more active part in apocalyptic events—since contemporary humans rather than an angel or returned saint or prophet would be necessary to fulfill the prophecy—Adso's treatise held more significance for the evolution of apocalyptic preparations beyond imperial political ambitions. Preaching also holds an important place in Adso's work, but unlike in previous centuries, he saw preaching not simply as universally important to salvation but of special significance for the apocalyptic drama. Only from the British Isles do we see precedent for this view, though the influence of immigrants to the Continent like Boniface and Alcuin would have carried with them some latent threads of this other tradition. But in the 10th century, what had only been an incipient tradition became a robust, widespread belief among clerics in the Frankish, Ottonian, and English realms. As will be seen throughout this chapter, Adso's interest in preaching in the context of the end of the world was not unique to him. ***The role for humans to take special actions regarding preaching specifically for apocalyptic motives did not begin with him. Rather, it was a belief exhibited in many parts of Europe in the 10th century. Because Adso has already been introduced in the previous chapter, we start with his thoughts on preaching and the apocalypse, using his ideas and the monastic context as a springboard to explore the wider area of this newly emerging sense of human agency in apocalyptic matters.

Adso's treatise speaks about preaching at two separate points: once after discussing the Antichrist's birth and again toward the end of the text. The difference in placement mirrors the difference in significance for both instances of preaching. In the first, Adso

writes that the Antichrist, after corrupting the chief secular rulers[2] to his side, "will then send his messengers and preachers throughout the whole world. His message and his might will prevail from sea to sea, from east to west, from north to south."[3] Linking the Antichrist to false preachers (especially heretics) is not original, with Bede and Alcuin's commentaries on Revelation being significant examples. Nevertheless, Adso's text places particular emphasis on preachers working directly on behalf of the Antichrist—rather than the implicit spread of heretical and thus unchristian ideas—as an explicit strategy to win over the majority of the Christian population. Combined with the previously converted secular powers, Adso suggests this will create a strategic pincer move that will trap all Christians between the carrot and the stick, between the lies of the Antichrist's preachers and the violence of persecution.

Despite the dismal picture Adso paints, he does offer hope. After discussing the career of the Antichrist at length, he transitions to speak about the great enemy's only weak point, followed by how he will be killed by Christ.

> But lest Antichrist come suddenly and without warning and deceive and destroy the whole human race at once by his error, before his arrival, two great prophets, Enoch and Elijah, will be sent into the world, to defend the faithful of God by divine weapons against the attack of Antichrist and to train and strengthen and prepare the elect for war, teaching and preaching for three and a half years; moreover, whatever sons of Israel are found in that time, these two greatest prophets and teachers will convert to the grace

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[2] The text makes no direct comment on the matter aside from saying the Last World Empire would be a Frankish king, but it is tempting to imagine Adso's intention (or Gerberga's interpretation) was that such corruption as infects the secular powers would befall any ruler *except* for the queen's family.

[3] Adso, "Essay on Antichrist," 104; and *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, 24: "*Deinde per uniuersum orbem nuncios mittet et praedicatores suos. Predicatio autem eius et potestas tenebit* a mari usque ad mare, ab oriente usque ad occidentem, *ab aquiline usque ad septentrionem*."

> of faith, and from the pressure of so great a storm they will render their faith unconquerable among the elect.[4]

At first glance, this passage is highly reminiscent of and in keeping with the earlier tradition of passivity that expected the divinely appointed prophets Enoch and Elijah to be the sole adversaries of the Antichrist and his forces. For Adso, however, the difference lies in the purpose and manner of these two men's preaching. In previous apocalyptic commentaries, Enoch and Elijah were either direct foes of the Antichrist, speaking specifically to him, or they were comforters for the faithful once the persecutions had begun. Adso's qualification at the start of this passage (*Sed ne subito et improuise Antichrist ueniat et totum humanum genus suo errore decipiat et perdat*), however, has the two prophets appear before the Antichrist comes into his power on the world stage (*ante eius exordium*).[5] Thus, even though the two prophets are the primary influencers of human activity, Adso provides an explicit example of pre-apocalyptic preparations that will take place. While this is preaching, it is not merely the repetition of Christian doctrine and morals contained in earlier commentaries. Instead, Christians are taught what they need to know in order to resist the specific lies of the Antichrist when he comes in all his power and craftiness. Through their instructions, the two prophets will prepare the elect for war (*preparabunt electos ad bellum*).[6] This is not the physical conflict that will open Jerusalem to the Last

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[4] Adso, "Essay on Antichrist," 107–108; and *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, 27–28: "Sed ne subito et improuise Antichristus ueniat et totum humanum genus suo errore decipiat et perdat, ante eius exordium duo magni prophete mittentur in mundum, Enoch scilicet et Helias, qui contra impetum Antichristi fideles Dei diuinis armis premunient et instruent eos et confortabunt et preparabunt electos ad bellum, docents et predicantes tribus annis et dimidio. Filios autem Israel, quicumque eo tempore fuerint inuenti, hi duo maximi prophete et doctores ad fidei gratiam conuertent et a pressure tanti turbinis in parte electorum insuperabilem reddent."

[5] Adso, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, 27–28.

[6] Ibid., 28.

World Emperor but a spiritual war that will crown Christians with life eternal. Though ultimately the two prophets and those Christians they teach to remain faithful and who do not side with the Antichrist will be martyred, their struggle will not be in vain as Christ has the final victory over the Antichrist.

While Adso made famous the political prophecy of the Last World Emperor to Gerberga and the Latin West, he also included a subtle but important additional example of apocalyptic preparation. As discussed last chapter, historians have been very interested in how Adso imagined a future emperor would initiate the apocalyptic drama. For rank and file Christians who must endure the rise of the Antichrist, however, Adso gives only one (which is still more than most of his apocalyptically minded predecessors) explicit preview of how they will accomplish this: through preaching. The implication that Adso leaves unsaid (but which other tenth-century apocalyptic commentators made more explicit, as we will see below) is that, in order to oppose the Antichrist, popular preaching that directly calls to mind the apocalyptic will be a necessary defense for future generations. Perhaps he even has the present in mind.

But before we turn to examine those who shared and expanded upon Adso's views, it is first necessary to see in what context Adso was writing and what traits he shared with his fellow apocalyptic commentators who would speak so favorably about preaching as an increasingly important matter in apocalyptic preparations. Ultimately, the common denominator was a desire for monastic (and subsequently societal) reform emerging out of the Gorze monastery southwest of Metz. The reforming tradition that began here found both ecclesiastical and secular support, especially from the Ottonian family. As the reform

movement spread, so too did an interest in the apocalypse as well as preaching as a necessary preparation for apocalyptic confrontations.

The Gorze Monastic Reform

While the monastic reforming movement as embodied in and exported by Cluny in Burgundy is more frequently discussed in English scholarship, it was but one of several centers that aimed at revitalizing the Benedictine Rule and, through it, European Christianity. Starting in the early 10th century, the Lotharingian monastery of Gorze served as the focal point for monastic reform, especially among the Eastern Franks, though it was not limited to them in geographical influence.[7] To compare Cluny and Gorze too closely would be a mistake, while setting them up as rivals with opposing ideologies—one based in France, the other primarily in Germany—would be to place too much emphasis on the concerns of nationalist historians a millennium removed.[8] In general, Gorze kept close ties to the imperial court and had affiliated monasteries in the east. While Cluny's network emphasized the subordinate nature of its daughter monasteries, the connections among monasteries in the extended Gorze system operated more as sisters, sharing personnel and goals but without clearly defined institutional hierarchies. The eastern leanings of Gorze and its monasteries, however, did not mean a complete detachment from western Frankish affairs, as will be discussed below. Though no institution gained quite the notoriety of

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[7] John Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform: Lotharingia c.850–1000* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 1–21.

[8] Kassius Hallinger's mounmental *Gorze-Kluny: Studien zu den monastischen lebensformen und gegensätzen im hochmittelalter* (Rome: Herder, 1950), does just that. Though its thesis that Cluny and Gorze represent two entirely separate and competing approaches to reform is either greatly qualified or completely rejected by current scholarship, the work done by Hallinger remains invaluable as a starting point for Gorze historians.

Cluny, Gorzian monasteries held a favored place in the empire, with both working to promote Benedictine reform. Moreover, as a consequence of their shared interests in such matters, together they also encouraged a type of apocalyptic speculation that sought ways humans could participate in the final drama.

The monastery of Gorze was originally founded in the late 740s by Chrodegang, the bishop of nearby Metz.[9] Chrodegang came from a well-positioned family whose fortunes rose with the early Carolingians. Gorze—"the house which was most dear to him"—rose along with Chrodegang's family, being the recipient of dozens of documented donations in the subsequent decades.[10] When it was founded, Chrodegang specified that Gorze be held to strict Benedictine standards, granting its monks privileges that separated them from local affairs and even direct episcopal governance (though in choosing their own abbot, the monks were still supposed to pick someone amenable to the bishop).[11] He wanted the monks of Gorze to lead lives of holy poverty as separated from the world as possible.[12] It was a break from Merovingian practice, but it was not an outlier in the life of the bishop of Metz.

Chrodegang likewise believed that priests, not just monks, should comport themselves according to a strict rule. Around 755, being directly inspired by the *Rule* of St. Benedict, Chrodegang composed one for the canons of Metz, the *Regula canonicorum*, in

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[9] A. d'Herbomez, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Gorze: MS. 826 de la Bibliothèque de Metz* (Paris: C. Klincksieck: 1898), 1–4, no. 1. The cartulary gives the date of 745, but this has been questioned by historians, with 748 proposed as the more accurate foundation year. See M. A. Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church: Chrodegang of Metz and the* Regula canonicorum *in the Eighth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 26n47, 28–29n60.
[10] Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, 22, 29.
[11] Ibid., 29.
[12] Ibid., 29.

order to emphasize, according to M. A. Claussen, "community, hierarchy, and eschatology."[13] The third point, Claussen states, is indeed a thread that weaves itself throughout the *Regula*. The bishop's prologue, for example, ends with an admonition to priests to perform their duties well in light of the Last Judgment when Christ, the *pastor pastorum*, will determine who faithfully used and who squandered their gifts. Effort to reform must be made now. If penance is not endured now, however bitter it might be, later will come divine punishment, which has already been prepared and is far worse.[14] Claussen's understanding of this passage, however, that "Chrodegang implies that the end of time is near," is a bit exaggerated.[15] Moreover, his interpretation of Chrodegang's chapter listing feast days as reinforcing the same apocalyptic concerns presented in the prologue, because "Christian feasts are by nature eschatological," is likewise rather hasty.[16] With such a broad criterion, what in Christian traditions cannot be linked to eschatological hopes and apocalyptic concerns? Seen most generously, such a link simply reinforces Chrodegang's traditionalism. As previously discussed, there is a difference between general apocalyptic concerns as motivation or encouragement for renewed religious activity and apocalyptic speculation that assumes specific human action is called for as a necessary part of the End Times drama. Chrodegang's prologue and subsequent oblique references to eschatological issues in his *Regula* are examples of the former. As Claussen rightly points out, this makes Chrodegang part of a tradition dating back to Late Antiquity

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[13] Brigitte Langefeld, *The Old English Version of the Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang, edited together with the Latin Text and an English Translation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 8 (hereafter *Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang*); and Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, 58–59.
[14] Chrodegang, *S. Chrodegangi Metensis episcopi (742–66) Regula canonicorum: aus dem Leidener Codex Vossianus Latinus 94 mit Umschrift der tironischen Noten*, ed. Wilhelm Schmitz (Hanover, 1889), 1–2.
[15] Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, 65.
[16] Ibid., 92; and Chrodegang, *Regula canonicorum*, 20.

(with heavy reliance on Gregory the Great), but he does not break new ground in the 8th century regarding apocalyptic preparations.[17]

Nevertheless, his eschatologically (but not apocalyptically) infused *Regula* proved immensely popular. His efforts to improve the clergy of Metz went on to aid in the reform of Frankish clergy more generally.[18] By the early 9th century, his *Regula* had been expanded upon, though by then it was competing with the imperially sponsored *Institutio canonicorum* of 816/817.[19] Due to the connections between Continental and English religious (such as established by Boniface, Chrodegang's predecessor), the original *Regula* reached England by the end of the 8th century. It was followed later by an expanded rule, which was used and translated into Old English in the 10th century.[20] This would have informed the reforming goals of Abbot Ælfric of Eynsham and Archbishop Wulfstan of York (both discussed further below).[21]

The life of Chrodegang's *Regula* was a lively one, continuing as late as the 12th century, when it was fully eclipsed by more agreeable rules for governing canons.[22] The specifics of that work do not concern the present discussion of apocalyptic preparations, as it contained traditional eschatological expectations. Nevertheless, while his *Regula* was for canons rather than the monks at Gorze, it provides a helpful window into the mind of the monastery's founder. In both the *Regula* and the privileges for Gorze, Chrodegang stressed

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[17] Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, 65, 169–177, but especially 174–175.
[18] Langefeld, *Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang*, 3.
[19] Ibid., 8, 11–14. Langefeld points out that the *Institutio canonicorum* used significant parts of Chrodegang's original *Regula* while the *Institutio*, in turn, made up large parts of the expanded *Regula*.
[20] Langefeld, *Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang*, 2–3, 15–20. Langefeld's work contains an Old English version of the later expanded *Regula*. Direct evidence of Chrodegang's original across the Channel is sparse, but Langefeld argues (p. 16) for its existence and use in England.
[21] Langefeld, *Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang*, 17–18.
[22] Ibid., 19.

a return to Benedictine standards with implied eschatological concerns. As final evidence of his love for both the regular life and for the institution he had established, Gorze, his favorite monastery, became custodian of Chrodegang's body after his death in 766.[23] Two centuries later, after the monastery had strayed from its original mission, John of Gorze, a man who hoped to renew Chrodegang's Benedictine dreams at the place he had so cherished, would honor him with a *vita*.[24]

Despite its early pedigree, however, by the start of the 10th century Gorze was not what it once was. As later reformers would claim, the community had become too secularized, leaving the path of holy poverty for worldly concerns at the cost of a ruined monastery. In 933, Bishop Adalbero of Metz agreed with two men—John of Gorze and Einald of Toul—that the monastery was in need of reform along more strict Benedictine lines.[25] As historians have increasingly noted, however, the accusation that Gorze prior to 933 lay in spiritual and physical shambles cannot be taken at face value, as later reformers had good reason to cast themselves and their forebears as rescuing European monasticism from sin and ruin.[26] Such narratives of decline and restoration served polemical purposes. Reformers at Gorze were especially interested in casting their efforts as a return to a superior past that subsequent generations had squandered. The *vita* of Bishop Chrodegang that John of Gorze himself wrote thus linked new reformers to old ones,[27] with the implicit

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[23] Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, 30.
[24] John of Gorze, *Vita Chrodegangi episcopi Mettensis*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 10 (Hanover, 1852), 552–572.
[25] *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Gorze*, 169–173, no. 92.
[26] Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform*, 59–70.
[27] There is some scholarly debate about whether John really wrote it, as the text itself indicates. Even assuming it was written before, contemporary with, or after John by another author, someone in the 10th century believed Chrodegang of Metz and John of Gorze ought to be a matched pair. See Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, 19.

argument that those between had not lived up to the original (and now restored) mandate. But whatever the actual state of Gorze before 933, Bishop Adalbero agreed to allow John and Einald to reform the monastery in accordance with their spiritual ideologies. Their efforts were successful. Before long, Gorze would have affiliation with many important monasteries, including Montier-en-Der, Einsiedeln, Regensburg, Trier, Toul, St. Maximin, Fulda, St. Emmeram, and St. Evre, to name a few.

Fortunately, we have an extant *vita* of John of Gorze (c. 900–974), one of the two leading men (the other being Einald, archdeacon of Toul) responsible for that monastery's refounding in 933 and its second post-reform abbot. It appears to have been written by another contemporary John, abbot of St. Arnulf (or Arnoul) in Metz, not long after its subject's death.[28] John of Gorze was a remarkable man—reformer, skilled administrator, abbot, imperial diplomat, and hagiographer—and his *vita* attempts to portray what its author saw as an admirable Christian life. But in a sense, though John is certainly the principal character, the work is nearly as much a *vita* of the reformed Gorze monastery as it is for John, with the monastery, its monks, and its patron, Saint Gorgonius taking central roles throughout most of the text. Sadly, the text we have is incomplete, breaking off in the middle of John's diplomatic mission to Spain to the caliph's court in Cordoba, which lasted from 953 to 956.[29] This journey was at the request of Archbishop Bruno on behalf of his brother, Otto I, thus making John an official representative of the Saxon king and future

[28] Michel Parisse, "Jean, moine et abbé de Gorze (v.900–974) d'après la *Vita Iohannis abbatis Gorziensis* (BHL 4396)," in *La Vie de Jean, Abbé de Gorze*, ed. and trans. Michel Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1999), 20–22.
[29] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean, Abbé de Gorze*, ed. and trans. Michel Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1999), 160–161 (this edition provides the Latin and a French translation); and Anne Wagner, *Gorze au XIe Siècle: Contribution á l'histoire du monachisme bénédictin dans l'Empire* (Turnhout: Artem-Brepols, 1996), 36–37.

emperor as well as of Gorze itself.[30] Despite the limitations of the *vita*, we know that John returned from Al-Andalus and eventually became abbot of his beloved Gorze in 967 following Einald's death. John led Gorze until his own death in 974.[31]

According to the *vita*, after an early life spent in search of how best to serve God and meeting important colleagues, including Einald, John and his friend came to the attention of Adalbero, Bishop of Metz. Adalbero, a successor to Chrodegang, was also interested in reform. After some discussion, the nearby monastery of Gorze was proposed as a site for John, Einald, and their followers to form a community according to their religious standards.[32] Having been the lay abbot years earlier, Adalbero would have known well the state of Gorze and its value for John and his reformers.[33] The monastery, according to John's *vita*, was in a miserable state, with the very steps of the altar filthy with animal excrement.[34] Despite this, however, the *vita* states that Adalbaro held Gorze in deep affection and gave it to John and Einald because he knew he could trust them, as he would countless times later in both secular and spiritual matters.[35] As events would show, his trust was well placed, and John, Einald, and their followers quickly changed Gorze's fortunes, returning it to a state worthy of Bishop Chrodegang and St. Gorgonius.

Of course, as previously stated, such narratives of foundation, decay, and rejuvenation cannot be taken at face value. As scholars have noted about Gorze in particular

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[30] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean*, 142–145.
[31] Ibid., 18–19. For discussion of proposed date of 974 for John of Gorze's death, see Parisse, "Jean, moine et abbé de Gorze," 14.
[32] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean*, 70–75. The charter for Gorze's reform lays out its privileges as well as its declaration to be strictly Benedictine: *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Gorze*, 169–173, no. 92.
[33] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean*, 75n45.
[34] Ibid., 74–77. There is no mention of animal excrement or similar disorder in the refounding charter.
[35] Ibid., 78–79.

and reformed monasteries in general, it was in the interest of reformers to present pre-reformed institutions as physically and morally impure, providing reformers rhetorical strength for their religious projects. Pre-933 Gorze was probably much better off physically than the *vita* describes, and its morality could not have been too tainted if it produced a reformer like Bishop Adalbaro (who is highly praised in the *vita*).[36] Moreover, scholars are beginning to see more continuity between ninth- and tenth-century reform movements that "acknowledges the rainbow of variants that coexisted within a Benedictine framework."[37] Nevertheless, contemporary monks wanted to believe something new and revolutionary was occurring,[38] and the connections made among the various reformed monasteries in the 10th century were real.

In any case, Gorze quickly bloomed under its reformed Benedictine rule. Otto I confirmed its possessions in 936 and again in 943.[39] Pope Leo VII likewise confirmed the donations made by the see of Metz to the monastery in 938.[40] Many other donations followed as the years passed, and Gorze became a recognized favorite of the Ottonians. Its influence likewise grew as monasteries, both old and new, adopted its structure. These included: St. Maximin in Trier and St. Evre in Toul (934), Einsiedeln (935), Gembloux (945), St. Gall (c. 963), and (further east) St. Emmeram (974) after Wolfgang left Einsiedeln to become the bishop of Regensburg in 972, and St. Boniface's monastery of

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[36] Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform*, 59–86; and Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean*, 76–79.
[37] Phyllis Jestice, *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Eleventh Century* (New York: Brill, 1997), 17–18; and Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform*, 114–147.
[38] Adso of Montier-end-Der, after writing his letter to Gerberga and then becoming abbot of his monastery, wrote *vitae* that stressed this exact idea. See Adson Dervensis, *Opera Hagiographica*, CCCM 198, ed. Monique Goullet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), especially his *Vita Sancti Bercharii*, 305–332.
[39] *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Gorze*, 174–176, 182–185, nos. 94, 99.
[40] Ibid., 180–181, no. 97.

Fulda (1013), to name only a few. In total, after only a few decades, at least 169 monasteries in and around the empire (many but not all located in Lotharingia) were part of the Gorze reform.[41] Montier-en-Der was also among the first Gorzian communities. In 935, Alberic of St. Evre (itself modeled after Gorze the year before) became abbot of Montier-en-Der. When he relocated, Alberic took a young but promising monk with him named Adso.[42] Montier-en-Der was thus an early adopter of Gorze's reform ideology, though it would be joined by many more during the 10th century.

Gorze, however, did not exercise direct control over those in its orbit. The Burgundian monastery of Cluny, on the other hand, famously expanded not only its reforming influence but also its control over daughter monasteries at the same time its Lotharingian counterpart was establishing sister communities.[43] Nevertheless, while not as centralized as Cluny's network, those monasteries fashioned along the Gorzian model

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[41] Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*, 43–416; Anne Wagner, *Gorze au XIe Siècle*, 27–28, 30–35; and Phyllis Jestice, *Wayward Monks*, 1–2.

[42] Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*, 62; Anne Wagner, *Gorze au XIe Siècle*, 31; Verhelst, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, v-vi; and Constance Bouchard, ed., *The Cartulary of Montier-en-Der, 666–1129* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 129–130, no. 39. There is some disagreement among recent scholars whether the figure commonly known as Adso of Montier-en-Der has been confused with others of the same name. See Monique Goullet's introduction in Adso Dervenensis, *Opera Hagiographica*, CCCM 198, ed. Monique Goullet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), vii-xxvi; and Simon MacLean, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World in Tenth-Century France: Adso's "*Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist*" Reconsidered," *Revue belge de philology et d'histoire* 86, no. 3–4 (2008): 645–675, especially at 669–673. Since these (as of yet unconfirmed) doubts about the identity and life of Adso do not inherently question that the author of the letter to Gerberga was from Montier-en-Der, a Gorzian monastery, I have chosen to follow the older scholarship, which is also followed by Matthew Gabriele in "This Time. Maybe This Time. Biblical commentary, monastic historiography, and Lost Cause-ism at the turn of the first millennium," in *Apocalypse and Reform from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. Matthew Gabriele and James T. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 2019), 187, and assume, at my own risk, that Adso lived a respectably (but not outrageously) long life, being born about 910 and living until 992.

[43] Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*, 1–43. Though Hallinger is a foundational work for the study of Gorze, his strict division between Gorze and Cluny has been challenged, leading to a much more nuanced understanding of parallel but not necessarily competing reform movements. See Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform*, 1–25.

shared quite a bit of intellectual cohesion as its personnel circulated among the various centers.[44]

Phyllis Jestice in particular has shown this intellectual cohesion through an analysis of a shared understanding of spiritual light, based on the text of Matthew 5:14–16, among various tenth-century authors in the Gorze circle of reform.[45] According to Jestice, this passage, which calls Jesus's followers the "light of the world" who should "let [their] light so shine before men," was interpreted by Gorzian monks in the 10th and early 11th century much differently than their predecessors and contemporaries outside of their intellectual milieu. While commentators consistently believed these words were addressed exclusively to Jesus's first-century disciples, authors in the Gorze network interpreted this passage to mean themselves. Rather than a testament in praise of the early apostles, this was a call to arms for reforming monks. Reformers used these verses to praise monks and clerics who did not hide their holy lives under a monastic bushel but used it as inspiration for others to follow Christian teachings. This was especially the case in hagiographies that extolled the virtues of past holy men particularly dear within the Gorze network. Furthermore, Gorzian monks throughout the empire, Jestice argues, were more inclined to use this passage as a call to holy *action* while contemporaries used it simply to express one's *being* holy. That is, Gorze said monks had a responsibility to share their light with the world, while other communities were content to praise a recluse for his own, unshared light. Praise for teachers who would go out into the world in order to bring the light of true Christian

[44] Regarding liturgical similarities, for example, see Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*, 870–983.
[45] The following paragraph is based on the argument put forward in Phyllis Jestice, "The Gorzian Reform and the Light under the Bushel," *Viator* 24 (1993): 51–78.

sanctity to others, she said, was thus a hallmark of Gorzian monasticism, well before such ideas took hold in the reforms of the 11th century. It was therefore an early example of evangelical preaching.*"what-one-might-call"?*

In highlighting the use made of this one passage, Jestice's work provides us with two important ideas for the spread of new apocalyptic preparations in the 10th century: the intellectual connection among Gorzian monasteries and their emphasis on preaching and teaching. While Gorze was not the mother hen that Cluny was for her daughter monasteries, it clearly had a unique worldview and sense of purpose that circulated throughout its branches. This is, of course, is in addition to the numerous apocalyptic texts and commentaries (both ancient and medieval) contained in Gorze's library, which no doubt traveled on occasion with its personnel. The influence of Irish pilgrims traveling to and around Gorzian monasteries at this time would have also helped these movements and may have also encouraged an increase in involvement in "worldly" affairs.[46] It can therefore be said that members of the Gorze network had shared ideologies beyond but complementary to the implementation of a strict Benedictine rule.[47] This included—but Jestice emphasizes was not limited to—their emphasis on preaching and teaching outside the monastic setting as a way to carry their light to the world. Preaching thus went hand-in-hand with other reform ideas. This begins to explain why Adso of Montier-en-Der, firmly in the Gorzian tradition, pointedly spoke of the preachers the Antichrist would employ as well as how Enoch and Elijah would use preaching to prepare Christians "lest Antichrist come suddenly

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[46] Anne Wagner, *Gorze au XIe Siècle*, 120–122, 193–195.
[47] Gorze's investment in apocalyptic materials went beyond its collection of texts, and in the 11th century, anyone who visited the monastery would have been confronted with its enduring interest in apocalypticism. See the Addendum to this chapter.

and without warning and deceive and destroy the whole human race at once by his error." For monks like him, preaching was rising in importance. Those who spread the Gorze reforms also circulated this idea, which in turn informed those like Adso who thought about the Antichrist's rise to power. If his letter to Gerberga was a kind of anti-hagiography,[48] it becomes obvious that Adso would consider preaching both a necessary part of the Antichrist's schemes as well as the only hope left for Christians. In this way, preaching slipped in quietly but naturally as part of the 10th century's evolving understanding of apocalyptic preparations.

Of course, rooted in this larger Gorzian sphere of influence, Adso was not alone in linking apocalyptic preparations with preaching. While continental apocalyptic commentary is not as robust in the 10th century as scholars would like or expect, those parts that are particularly well-studied by historians are connected to this very network. An examination of the two most important examples of tenth-century continental apocalyptic expression besides Adso—provided by Thietland of Einsiedeln and Abbo of Fleury—will demonstrate that belief in the centrality of preaching as part of the apocalyptic drama reached well beyond Montier-en-Der.

Einsiedeln and Thietland's Millennial Busybodies

One of the first monasteries that became part of Gorze's orbit (while simultaneously promoted by the imperial court) was the abbey of Einsiedeln in present-day Switzerland. Since the mid-9th century, Einsiedeln had been a hermitage, following the example of the

[48] See Richard K. Emmerson, "Antichrist as Anti-Saint: The Significance of Abbot Adso's *Libellus de Antichristo*," *American Benedictine Review* 30 (1979): 175–190.

martyred Saint Meinrad (d. 861). Scattered hermits were gathered into a newly formed monastery in 934 by co-founders Eberhard of Strasbourg and Benno of Einsiedeln. Benno had previously been the bishop of Metz (Adalbero's immediate predecessor) but had left his see in 929. He had been blinded in an attack on his person, leaving him canonically unable to function as a priest. Nevertheless, Benno used the new Gorzian model for Einsiedeln, and personnel from Gorze soon followed him, thus establishing an early connection between the Swabian and the Lotharingian monasteries.[49] Einsiedeln quickly became a highly successful monastery with the favor of Otto I. It would continue to have imperial sponsorship for centuries to come, with its current architecture reflecting baroque extravagance and its libraries holding a wealth of manuscripts. Among its learned residents in the first few decades after its founding was a man named Thietland. Not much is known about his life. He joined the Einsiedeln community between 943 and 945. The *Annales Einsidlenses* entry for 945 states simply, "Tietlant pater venit," but no more concerning him.[50] As the monastery gained imperial favor, Thietland likewise rose in prominence and responsibilities, becoming abbot around 958. He served in that office only a few years before resigning around 964. He passed away the following year. While at Einsiedeln, Thietland is known to have written several commentaries on Paul's letters, which included one on 2 Thessalonians, a text often used in apocalyptic speculation.[51]

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[49] Hagen Keller, *Kloster Einsiedeln im Ottonischen Schwaben* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Eberhard Albert Verlag, 1964), 26–27, 113–117; Flodoard, *Annals of Flodoard*, 18; *Flodoardi Annales*, 440; and Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean*, 76–77.

[50] *Annales Einsidlenses (Die Annalen des Klosters Einsiedeln: Edition und Kommentar)*, ed. Conradin von Planta, *MGH SSRG* 78 (Hanover: Hahnsche, 2007), 279.

[51] Steven R. Cartwright, "Thietland of Einsiedeln and Apocalyptic Expectation in the Tenth Century," in *Second Thessalonians: Two Early Medieval Apocalyptic Commentaries*, trans. Steven R. Cartwright and Kevin L. Hughes (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 36–37.

Like Adso, Thietland had an interest in contemporary apocalyptic theories. Modern historians have fought over his significance, using him to argue for both intense apocalyptic anxieties throughout Europe preceding the year 1000 as well as cool, conservative, and near universal detachment as the millennium approached.[52] As in previous chapters, my concern here is not to confirm or refute the quantitative level of belief in the imminent end of the world among contemporaries but to explore the changes in belief regarding human agency contained in apocalyptic works (whether "orthodox" Augustinian or not). Thietland's commentary provides evidence of just such an evolution.

At the start of his work on 2 Thessalonians,[53] Thietland helpfully provides a short prologue summarizing the most important points he tells his readers Paul hoped to achieve in his epistle. He writes that Paul's goal when composing his second letter to the Thessalonians was to expound upon three key ideas, "namely, first, concerning the destruction of the kingdom of the Romans; second, concerning the coming of the Antichrist and the killing of the same; and third, concerning the rebuke and correction of those who dash around restlessly through peoples' homes"[54] While all three topics are apocalyptic, historians have largely focused on the first two points, as the commentary makes particular

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[52] Steven R. Cartwright, "Thietland's Commentary on Second Thessalonians: Digressions on the Antichrist and the End of the Millennium," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 93–108; and "Thietland of Einsiedeln and Apocalyptic Expectation in the Tenth Century," 37–38.
[53] I have relied upon the translation provided by Steven Cartwright for Thietland of Einsiedeln, *In Epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*, in *Second Thessalonians: Two Early Medieval Apocalyptic Commentaries*, trans. Steven R. Cartwright and Kevin L. Hughes (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 41–76. Cartwright refers to two manuscripts: Einsiedeln Ms. 38, 183v-189r; and Bamburg Msc. Bibl. 89. A digitized version of the former, listed as Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 38(366), ff. 183v–189r [Anonymus], *Expositio octo priorum Epistolarum S. Pauli*, can be found at: https://www.e-codices.ch/en/list/one/sbe/0038, accessed October 22, 2019.
[54] Thietland, *In Epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*, 41.

reference to the coming millennium and the dating for Antichrist's arrival (more on that below).[55] In his prologue, however, Thietland places emphasis not on these two issues but rather his final point about busybodies, which are discussed in Paul's third chapter. Thietland explains Paul's interest in these annoying people, saying:

> For he [Paul] foresaw, the grace of the Holy Spirit revealing it, that there would be some heretics who would say that the Day of the Lord is approaching. Seeing that they had been disturbed by this narration and were being drawn to a certain error, he dictated this letter to them and gave them a candid disclosure of the coming of Antichrist.[56]

What Thietland said about the first two issues is of special apocalyptic concern, but once those have been explained, it is necessary to discuss his third point, the one he saw as of greatest concern for St. Paul and thus for his own time: informed preaching as apocalyptic preparation.

Thietland's commentary explicates all three chapters of 2 Thessalonians, proceeding sequentially through the text, drawing from past authorities (especially Augustine of Hippo's *City of God*) while providing his own special interpretation at times. While he refers to the Day of the Lord and eschatological judgment when explicating Paul's first chapter, he does not seriously treat apocalyptic topics until he comes to the second chapter (a favorite among apocalyptic commentators), where he addresses points one and two of his prologue. Historians have likewise been quite interested in Thietland's interpretation of this chapter. According to Thietland, Paul expected heretics to claim to

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[55] Cartwright, "Thietland's Commentary on Second Thessalonians," 95–102. Cartwright loses interest in Thietland's commentary as an expression of apocalyptic speculation by the end of chapter 2, after which the Antichrist is no longer explicitly mentioned. As will be seen, however, this conflicts with Thietland's own understanding of Paul's text.

[56] Thietland, *In Epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*, 41.

know the timing of Antichrist's arrival. Thietland writes, "On account of this they [the Thessalonians] were troubled, and they would be led into some awful error. Therefore, he gave a clear proof of the coming of Antichrist."[57] Paul's intention for writing, he says, was to remove any fear caused by false prophets and heretics.[58] The proof, as believed even before Constantine's conversion, is the division of the Roman Empire.[59] Thietland gives no indication that he believed the empire had fallen (though he also omits reference to any contemporary empire). Instead, he quotes (and thus agrees with) Augustine that whoever currently holds power over Rome should do so until it is divinely removed from him,[60] thus implying to his readers that there is still a Roman authority that resists the coming of the Antichrist.

Thietland veers from Augustine, however, in his discussion of 2 Thessalonians 2:8, which mentions how the wicked one (understood in the Middle Ages as the Antichrist) would be revealed. Despite his reliance on the bishop of Hippo, Thietland wrote that the thousand years of respite from the devil, spoken of in Revelation 20, referred specifically to the thousand years between Christ's crucifixion and the rise of the Antichrist and his subsequent world dominance.[61] This purposeful, even flagrant, disregard for Augustinian agnosticism regarding apocalyptic predictions has been seen as the most important aspect of Thietland's commentary. Steven Cartwright notes, "It is clear from the beginning of the commentary on 2 Thessalonians that Thietland wants to get straight into a discussion of

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[57] Ibid., 50.
[58] Ibid., 50–51.
[59] Ibid., 51.
[60] Ibid., 53–54; and Augustine, *City of God*, 931–935 (Books 20, Chapter 19).
[61] Thietland *In Epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*, 56.

the Antichrist."[62] Since discussion of the Antichrist means, for most scholars, discussing the timing of his arrival, Cartwright dwells on Thietland's analysis of this second chapter above all else.

As significant as Thietland's opposition to Augustinian apocalyptic agnosticism may be, it is important not to forget Thietland's own opinion on the Pauline letter as a whole. While the Antichrist was an important matter to discuss, as noted in his prologue and exemplified throughout his commentary on the second chapter, to Thietland, discussion of that wicked person was only preliminary to the most important part of the epistle. This he finds in the third chapter, starting with verse 6, which reads: "But we admonish you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks in a disorderly way, and not according to the tradition which they received from us."[63] Thietland begins his exposition of this verse by saying, "For this is the *special purpose* of this epistle" as Paul "denounces those who restlessly ran about though peoples' homes and sought from the unfaithful those things which were not consistent with their faith."[64] This "special purpose" is directed not at the specific knowledge of the Antichrist or the timing of his arrival (though those are implicitly present in the background) but at those who may circulate information, especially apocalyptic speculations, irresponsibly or for selfish motives. He continues this point when explaining 3:11, when Paul writes, "For we have heard that certain among you walk restlessly, doing

[62] Cartwright, "Thietland's Commentary on Second Thessalonians," 95.
[63] Thietland, *In Epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*, 67.
[64] Ibid., 67–68. Emphasis mine.

nothing but being busybodies."[65] According to Thietland, this refers to what Paul spoke of earlier in verse 6. In doing so, Paul

> denounces the false apostles, who represented themselves as preachers, in order to eat the bread of someone slain. But we should note that when he said 'restlessly,' he rightly added 'being busybodies,' because they skillfully take note of those things which may be done in this or that region, city, or village, and they diligently consider that they might proclaim those things to their hearers which are pleasing to them, in order that they might be received and fed more willingly. And if they do not devise true things, then by all means they conceive false things.[66]

While his commentary of chapter 3 does not mention either the Antichrist or other explicitly apocalyptic matters, Thietland's designation of these "busybodies" as the "special purpose" of the epistle refers back to his statement in the prologue that Paul, through the Holy Spirit, had foreseen "some heretics who would say that the Day of the Lord is approaching." Thietland's own special purpose in explicating Paul's letter, therefore, was to establish what he considered a proper (though not necessarily orthodox) understanding of the rise of the Antichrist. In doing so, his readers would have a "true" understanding of apocalyptic matters and could refute any self-serving busybody preachers they encountered. Opposing heresy and false teachings were of great importance to Thietland, and a proper order needed to be maintained to keep the wicked from perverting the faith of the righteous.

> Indeed, it is necessary that in each community and church there should be the greater and the lesser, the strong and the weak, the quiet and the restless. On this account this apostolic exhortation is appropriate not only for them but also for us and for all Christians, since it is necessary that they who desire to obey evangelical or apostolic teachings be separated from those who are hostile to them.[67]

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[65] Ibid., 69.
[66] Ibid., 69–70.
[67] Ibid., 77.

But it was first necessary to be able to identify who was preaching false information about something so critical as the timing of the apocalypse. Once that was accomplished, responsible Christian authorities could take the appropriate steps to segregate apocalyptic busybodies from their marks, who could then be taught whatever was proper for them to hear concerning eschatological matters.

Thietland's interpretation of 2 Thessalonians comes in stark contrast to another important commentator from the previous century, Haimo of Auxerre (d. ca. 875). In their edited translations of both monks' treatment of the Pauline letter, Hughes and Cartwright placed these two texts in direct juxtaposition, encouraging historians to consider the ninth- and tenth-century works both in terms of larger early medieval hermeneutical trends as well as in how they diverged from one another in their interpretation of prophetic scripture. Though neither scholar speaks directly to the issue of apocalyptic preparedness, following their lead, it seems instructive to compare Thietland's "Ottonian" commentary to his Carolingian predecessor's.

While 2 Thessalonians is a short text, Thietland had far more to say about it than Haimo.[68] Moreover, Thietland's introduction clearly lays out for the reader his three major arguments. Haimo, by contrast, prefaces his work by explaining Paul's intention for his original audience was to convince the first-century Thessalonians that they should not fear the Day of Judgment, which they had expected would arrive in their own lifetimes.[69] Haimo's commentary on the Pauline text, which Hughes says "preserves a great deal of

[68] Thietland's commentary is roughly three times the length of Haimo's, and the latter spends almost no time on chapter three, which, according to Thietland, contains Paul "special purpose."
[69] Haimo of Auxerre, *Expositio in Epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*, 121.

patristic inheritance and is perhaps the most influential of all upon the later medieval world," is thoroughly Augustinian without a hint of the apocalyptic imminence contained in Thietland's work.[70] While Haimo notes, like Augustine before and Thietland after him, that Paul believed the Antichrist would not appear until after the Roman Empire had fallen—"which we already see completed"[71]—he pointedly qualifies this. Haimo writes, "We should not think that he [Paul] said that he [Antichrist] will come immediately, but that first the empire will be destroyed, and afterwards Antichrist will come at a time set by God.…Indeed, it is completely unknown how long the span of time may be before the Lord comes."[72] Haimo's discussion of the Antichrist and his exhortation in Paul's third chapter to "be patient among the adversaries of this world"[73] thoroughly conforms to "traditional" apocalyptic advice discussed above. Though Haimo writes as if to highlight a false apocalyptic narrative, his corrections are not framed as part of a looming apocalyptic drama the same way Thietland's are. To underscore this, the busybodies of chapter three, which Thietland infused with apocalyptic significance, are not even mentioned in Haimo's commentary. Thus, while Haimo's work sought to dutifully point out Paul's reassurances to the Thessalonians regarding the Day of Judgment and the Antichrist, a century later, Thietland believed the spread of false apocalyptic stories would themselves precede the rise of Antichrist.

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[70] Kevin L. Hughes, "Haimo of Auxerre and the Fruition of Carolingian Hermeneutics," in *Second Thessalonians: Two Early Medieval Apocalyptic Commentaries*, trans. Steven R. Cartwright and Kevin L. Hughes (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 13, quote at 17.
[71] Haimo of Auxerre, *Expositio in Epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*, 26.
[72] Ibid., 28–29.
[73] Ibid., 31.

Of course, it is difficult to say if Thietland had real contemporary pseudo-prophet busybodies in mind when he wrote his commentary in the middle of the 10th century. Complaints about heretics and false prophets are themselves apocalyptic tropes. They also make useful rhetorical enemies.[74] This is especially true among reform movements, of which Einsiedeln was a part. It is worth noting once more, however, the role of preachers within Thietland's commentary. Though the most prominent are those busybodies who spread false apocalyptic information (and at the worst possible time, mere decades before the millennium), Thietland implies that he believed counter-preachers, in one form or another, were necessary first to separate the wicked from the good and then to correct the misinformation that had grown up among the faithful. Thus, as the millennium approached, there was certainly work for the well-informed, apocalyptically mindful Christian to achieve. The timing of the appearance of Thietalnd's busybodies, moreover, is suggestive of real (albeit perhaps marginal) apocalyptic preachers, being contemporary not only with Adso's letter to Gerberga but also with the experiences of the controversial and energetic abbot, Abbo of Fleury.

Abbo of Fleury and Anti-Apocalyptic Preaching

The importance of preaching in tenth-century apocalyptic discourse was not confined only to those, like Thietland, who believed the End Times were rapidly approaching. As Lotharingia began to display an unusual amount of apocalyptic expectations, even those who opposed such ideas were transformed by them. The scholar

[74] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Dissent and Order in the Middle Ages: The Search for Legitimate Authority* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 2–3.

and reforming abbot, Abbo of Fleury (c. 945–1004), who remained rigorously circumspect in abiding by Augustinian orthodoxy, testifies to and even exhibits the same tendency of contemporary apocalyptic commentators to combine their expectations with increased preaching efforts, highlighting how the two were not separate but united ideas. His own (albeit anecdotal) testimony attacking non-Augustinian interpretations shows that, even in disagreeing with men connected to Gorzian apocalypticism, to think of the End Times in the 10th century meant to think about preaching.

Abbo of Fleury (within the archiepiscopal see of Orléans) was not directly affiliated with either the movements of Gorze or Cluny.[75] He and his monastery, however, maintained and promoted its own version of Benedictine reform, which also stressed immunity from episcopal control (save that of the bishop of Rome) in northern France. Abbo became a monk of Fleury in the Loire valley sometime between 948 and 963. In addition to a spiritual education steeped in the Rule of St. Benedict, Abbo gained a reputation as a scholar, though he had to leave Fleury for Paris and Reims in order to complete his education in the liberal arts. Interestingly, a poem by Adso of Montier-en-Der from the 960s mentions a teacher named Abbo. There is reason to theorize that this was indeed Abbo of Fleury and that both men had met while the latter was traveling to complete his education. Unfortunately, this cannot be confirmed.[76] What is known, however, is that when a request came from Archbishop Oswald of York (himself a former monk of Fleury)

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[75] This paragraph is indebted to the thorough treatment of Abbo in the context of his age, with critical evaluation of the sources for his life, in Elizabeth Dachowski, *First among Abbots: The Career of Abbo of Fleury* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

[76] Ibid., 45; and Jason Glenn, *Politics and History in the Tenth Century: The World and Works of Richer of Reims* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 274–275.

for a learned monk to teach at Ramsey Abbey in England, Abbo went. From 985 to 987, he taught students there *computus* (that is, how to determine the dates of moveable feasts, a science that long fascinated Abbo) before returning to Fleury. In all this time, as a well-traveled and well-esteemed member of an important and wealthy monastery, he was either present for or had knowledge of important political affairs and disputes both within and outside of France. At last, he became abbot in 987 or 988, despite a tendency toward disagreement with his fellow monks. As abbot, Abbo continued to engage with significant political and spiritual affairs, which included the transition from a Carolingian to a Capetian dynasty, disputes over the archdiocese of Reims (with none other than Gerbert of Aurillac, the future Pope Sylvester II and fellow scholar), and the spread of reform throughout both northern and southern France. It was during a mission to reform La Réole in Gascony that Abbo was killed during a riot in 1004. His friend and biographer, Aimonius of Fleury, treated him as a martyr in his *Vita sancti Abbonis*, effectively portraying Abbo as a great teacher and strong advocate for his monastic community and their reform ideals.[77]

Setting aside the tragic events that led to his death, in life Abbo was not always successful when it came to spiritual and political matters. The riot at La Réole was not the first that troubled his career as abbot of Fleury. In 993, a council was held at Saint-Denis outside of Paris to discuss matters of monastic and episcopal control, authority, and tithes.[78] The precise reason for this council and the items under discussion are not clear. What is

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[77] See Aimoinus of Fleury, *Vita sancti Abbonis*, ed. and trans. Robert-Henri Bautier and Gillette Labory, in *L'abbaye de Fleury en l'an mil*, Sources d'histoire médiévale (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 2004).
[78] For discussion of this council and riot, see Dachowski, *First among Abbots*, 129–150.

known, however, is that rumors began to spread that the bishops would cheat both monks and secular rulers out of any tithes collected. A riot broke out wherein monks and laity attacked the bishops and their party, bringing the council to an abrupt and disastrous end. Accusations of responsibility for the disturbance went both ways. Abbo, an important participant of the council, threw himself into the rhetorical fray, defending himself and attacking his enemies in his *Apologeticus*.[79] The work, however, does not only discuss the council and the riot. It treats on a variety of topics, including Abbo's political philosophy, theology, references to Scripture and Church Fathers, and personal recollections. Three of these recollections have to do with specific incidents of apocalyptic excitement with which Abbo had personal experience or close-hand knowledge.

The first of these happened decades earlier, presumably when Abbo was traveling to complete his liberal arts education. He heard a preacher in Paris publicly claim that the Antichrist would come after a thousand years, followed immediately by the Last Judgment. Abbo confronted this would-be prophet and used passages from the Gospels, John's Apocalypse, and the book of Daniel to refute him. The second case Abbo recounts involved his former master, one Richard "of blessed memory" (*beatæ memoriæ*). Sometime during his tenure as abbot of Fleury from 963 to 978, Richard used his quick mind (*sagaci animo*) to defeat an unspecified error regarding the end of the world. Finally, Abbo mentions a third encounter with apocalyptic beliefs. Abbot Richard had received a letter from Lotharingia. In it he had learned of a rumor that reportedly had spread throughout the region. The Lotharingians believed, as Abbo states, that the world would end when the

[79] Abbo Floriacensis, *Apologeticus*, in PL 139, cols. 461–472.

Annunciation (March 25) and Good Friday fell on the same day. This was by no means a new speculation. As early as 865, Christian of Stavelot had proposed that such a conjunction of holy days might signal the apocalypse. In the 10th century, Good Friday fell on March 25 in 908 (long before Abbo was even born) but then three more times in the last three decades of the millennium: 970, 981, and 992. Abbot Richard would have been alive for only the 970 conjunction, though it is unclear if the Lotharingians had that or one of the other two dates in mind. Richard was obviously opposed to unorthodox opinions on the apocalypse and no doubt knew of Abbo's opposition to the Paris preacher. He therefore asked Abbo to respond to the letter in order to quell these rumors.[80] We know that Abbo did indeed come up with proofs against such apocalyptic calculations, though his reply to the Lotharingians on this occasion is lost. Nevertheless, in 982 he used his skills in *computus* to (incorrectly, it turns out) rework the presumed date of Christ's birth. By his calculations, the thousand-year anniversary of the Incarnation would not be in 1000 but had instead already passed in the year 979. This meant that fears associated with the millennium were moot. At the time of his writing, he argued that it was already the year 1003 and that the year 1000 had already passed without incident![81] Notably, one of Abbo's students, Byrhtferth of Ramsey, would later follow in Abbo's mathematical footsteps. In 1011, Byrhtferth's *Manual* (written in Old English) argued against setting dates for the apocalypse. His purpose, like his master Abbo's (whom he praised in the work), was to

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[80] Ibid., 471–472. See also Dachowski *First among Abbots*, 52–56; and David C. Van Meter, "Christian of Stavelot on Matthew 24:42 and the Tradition that the World Will End on March 25th," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 63 (1996): 68–92, especially at 68–70.

[81] Richard Landes, "The Fear of the Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 243–270, especially at 252–254.

quell false beliefs regarding the apocalypse that had cropped up, particularly among the clergy.[82] In any case, the presence of apocalyptic worries coming from Lotharingia in the second half of the 10th century recalls the influence of Gorze and Adso's letter to Gerberga (though it says nothing about the Annunciation and Good Friday as indicators of the arrival of the Antichrist). How widespread these rumors were is impossible to say. Nevertheless, Abbo's account of activities in Lotharingia from an outside (though by no means unbiased) perspective reinforces the unique interest in apocalyptic matters present throughout the network of reformed monasteries connected with Gorze.

When we look at Abbo's account of apocalyptic concerns in the latter half of the 10th century, we see multiple examples of apocalyptic speculation and instruction leaping off manuscripts to impact Abbo's world. Certainly, it is impossible to say how unique or representative the Paris preacher, the error Richard disputed, or the Lothringian belief were. What they share, however, is Abbo's implication that apocalyptic beliefs were being voiced abroad. When Thiota of Mainz preached in 847 that the end of the world was less than a year away, she came before an ecclesiastical court, was questioned, recanted, and received punishment.[83] These tenth-century examples, however, were not combatted through legal processes and ecclesiastical examination but through counter-messaging campaigns. In fact, counter-messaging is likely why Abbo brings up these examples in the first place.

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[82] Byrhtferth used the opportunity of discussing the mathematical and religious glories of the number one thousand to address the ages of the world and the follies he saw in speculating about Doomsday. See Byhtferth of Ramsey, *Byrhtferth's Manual*, ed. and trans. S. J. Crawford (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), 232–243; and William Prideaux-Collins, "'Satan's Bonds are Extremely Loose': Apocalyptic Expectation in Anglo-Saxon England during the Millennial Era," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 289–310, especially 302–303.
[83] *Annales Fuldenses*, 36–37.

Immediately after discussing these three apocalyptic errors, Abbo mentions another disagreement regarding the start of Advent. While a simple matter of dating (a subject he had long studied), for the good of the Christian community, this error and the others he has noted should not be ignored. Thus, Abbo's purpose as he ends his *Apologeticus* is to highlight how disagreement has been dividing the Church. Abbo concludes by calling for another council so that unity can be found amidst these many errors and conflicts so that the Church may speak in one voice.[84] Particular issues notwithstanding, fostering a harmonious unity of mind had been, of course, the goal of the doomed council. In essence, Abbo is arguing that his past attempts to defeat unorthodox apocalyptic beliefs are evidence that he and his associates should not be blamed for the council's failure since they strive for oneness and harmony. Looked at another way, Abbo is saying that an important way to bring unity to the Church is by removing false beliefs regarding the End Times. In this, he mirrors Thietland. Though he held none of the millennial beliefs that his Swabian counterpart did, Abbo agreed that there were people in society spreading bad information about the apocalypse. While Thietland wrote against such "busybodies," Abbo disputed them face-to-face (at least in Paris). Preaching "correct" ideas about the End Times was a service to the people that furthered the unity of the Church.

Thus, even when we hear of tenth-century apocalyptic beliefs from the perspective of a committed Augustinian, preaching remains central. It is both the tool used by prophets and the means by which cooler heads instruct the people in orthodox belief. By doing so,

[84] Abbo, *Apologeticus*, 472.

such teachers foster a more unified Church and thus a better society already beginning to receive the blessings of monastic reform.

English Parallels and Adaptations

Of course, apocalyptic speculation was not limited to Lotharingia, nor did Adso's description of the Antichrist remain confined to the Continent. His *vita* on the End Times villain had reached England by the start of the 11th century, where manuscripts of his text exist not only in Latin but also in an Old English edition. This vernacular work, however, is not a mere translation. Rather than being in the form of a treatise, the future history of the Antichrist is presented as a sermon. As such, there are numerous changes made to Adso's original (though much of the content and structure is preserved faithfully). As Emmerson notes, the most significant changes—removal of the prologue to Gerberga (which is typical of many later copies of the treatise), addition of more scandalous details about the Antichrist (he would be the result of incest), deletion of the Last World Emperor legend, and alteration of the timing of the Two Witnesses—have the shared purpose to increase the apocalyptic urgency for listeners. The final point deserves special attention. As Emmerson points out, and as discussed above, Adso wrote that the Two Witnesses would appear before the Antichrist's arrival to prepare the faithful to resist his lies. In the Old English sermon, however, they are specifically said to come only after the Antichrist has come to power. At first glance, this might appear to be a conservative change back to older apocalyptic commentaries that did not acknowledge human agency or apocalyptic preparation. Combined with the rhetoric throughout the sermon and the other changes,

however, Emmerson says the exact opposite sense is produced. Because the Antichrist's wickedness is emphasized (even compared to Adso's original) and there is no mention of a prophesied Last World Emperor to await, who will himself signal the Antichrist's arrival, the apocalyptic urgency is magnified. The same is true with the late arrival of the Two Witnesses. If they will not come to help the faithful until after the Antichrist has begun his oppressions, then the listeners are left with the frightful reality that he might come at any (imminent) moment. Preparation for the apocalypse is thus not removed with the delay of the Two Witnesses but instead is transferred to living humans. This includes the sermon's preacher and his audience.[85] It is a subtle but significant shift in apocalyptic thought. But the story of this sermon preached in England around the year 1000 signifies two important foundational premises: first, that apocalyptic ideas from the Continent had come into circulation among the English, and, second, that once in England, they underwent transformations to further emphasize the proselytizing aspects we have already encountered. The rest of this chapter discusses just these developments in the 10th and early 11th centuries as part of the larger innovations happening within Christian belief in apocalyptic human agency.

[85] The above discussion of the Old English version of Adso comes from Richard Kenneth Emmerson, "From 'Epistola' to 'Sermo': The Old English Version of Adso's *Libellus de Antichristo*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 82, no. 1 (January 1983): 1–10. See also Arthur Napier, ed., *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenem Homilien nebst Untersuchungen Über ihre Echtheit* (1883; repr. Dublin: Weidmann, 1967), 191–205.

Reform Connections Across the Channel, 8th to 10th Century

As discussed in the previous chapter, the British Isles already had a tradition of apocalyptic thought that included preaching (as through the handbooks of Alcuin) as well as Augustinian orthodoxy (which Bede vigorously promoted, even when suggesting the importance of preaching during the End Times). After the emigration of men like Boniface and Alcuin to the Continent, however, England entered a long-term struggle with the Scandinavians with the attack on Lindisfarne in 793. In a sense, this contest did not conclude until the Norman Conquest three centuries later. In the late 8th century, Alcuin, who himself wrote a commentary and aids for John's Apocalypse while maintaining Augustinian agnosticism regarding the End Times, had mixed feelings following the raid on St. Cuthbert's resting place. His immediate reaction was to experience the painful blow like a second Job, who suffers and encourages others to suffer with patience the mysterious but just will of God. By 796, however, Alcuin's worldview seems to have shifted. Certainly, he was no apocalyptic prophet, but his work began implicitly to view contemporary events (both disasters in England and successes under Charlemagne) as having potential prophetic significance.[86] Nevertheless, despite ample reason to see the Viking raids as the work of heathen forces empowered by prophetic wrath to punish sins committed by Christians, there was very little direct commentary on these Northmen being agents of the apocalypse. They were not identified with Gog and Magog, for example. Preaching their conversion in fulfillment of the Great Commission (especially as a Hiberno-English habit) still remained a source of some apocalyptic interest during the 9th

[86] Garrison, "The Bible and Alcuin's Interpretation of Current Events," 68–84.

century. In general, however, despite the ongoing struggles in England, even during times of invasion and otherwise apocalyptic interest in the 10th and 11th centuries, English communities held the Danes "seemingly less [apocalyptically] ominous than they might have done."[87] Thus the Vikings, while a significant part of English imaginations for what catastrophe meant, were rarely if ever seen as part of the apocalyptic drama. This anxiously dour background mood, however, must be kept in mind.

What really connected the evolution of apocalyptic thought on the Continent with England was therefore not a common external foe but rather a common internal one: impiety. But perhaps it is more appropriate to say not that this common foe united them but that it pointed to the common means of solving perceived impieties, that is, reform. Such reform had roots in the cross-cultural exchange that spanned the English Channel. In addition to the English clerics who came to the Continent as part of the Carolingian cultural renaissance, the Gorze monastery already had intellectual links with England as early as the 8th century through the spread of Chrodegang's *Regula canonicoum* back to the island, and countless other interactions across the Channel were maintained despite Viking disruptions during the 9th century. These were complemented by royal alliances: King Æthelstan (r. 924–939) sheltered Louis IV before his return from exile in 936 (earning him the moniker d'Outremer), and his sister Ædgyth (910–946) became Otto I's first wife in 930.[88] More direct links occurred in the 10th century once again, however, among the communities we have been discussing. These involved three notable English clerics: Dunstan of Canterbury, Æthelwold of Winchester, and Oswald of Worchester. All three

[87] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 178–183, 213–214, quote from 214.
[88] Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 344–348.

were important voices in the early stages of the tenth-century English Church reform.[89] A brief listing of their continental links, especially to Fleury, is in order.

Fleury was not modeled after Gorze—nor after Cluny for that matter—and is not usually considered part of its network, though it was connected to the Lotharingian monastery and exchanged personnel from the early days of the Gorzian reform.[90] Fleury did, however, maintain very close contact with monasteries in England during the 10th century. Oswald traveled to Fleury and became a monk from 950 until 958, after which he returned home, eventually becoming the bishop of Worchester and later archbishop of York. Years later, at Oswald's request, Fleury sent a monk to teach at Ramsey (also headed by a former resident of Fleury). That temporary teacher was Abbo, and for two years (985–987) he had a positive experience.[91] The *Vita S. Oswaldi*, written by Byrhtferth, a monk of Ramsey and student under Abbo, shows that Abbo was highly respected during his time in England.[92] After Abbo's return to France, he and Osward continued their relationship by exchanging correspondences.

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[89] Tracey-Anne Cooper, *Monk-Bishops and the English Benedictine Reform Movement* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2015), 7, 47–72.

[90] Anne Wagner, *Gorze au XIe Siècle*, 31. Hallinger's work viewed Gorze and Cluny as complete and distinct systems with Fleury thus its own third model. See Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*, 1–43. Nevertheless, while Cluny certainly held tighter control over its daughter monasteries, recent scholarship prefers to see permeable influence rather than complete domination from both Gorze and Fleury (and to a lesser degree from Cluny). See Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform*, 1–25, 261–264; and Patrick Wormald, "Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts: Contact, Comparison, Contrast," in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 13–42, especially at 26–31. For the present study, influence is enough to provide Gorze and its network with apocalyptic ideas without necessarily dictating all the particulars.

[91] Dachowski, *First among Abbots*, 39, 63–73.

[92] Byrhtferth's praise for his former master and the monastery of Fleury, though brief, is of the highest caliber. The *Vita S. Oswaldi* can be found in Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *The Lives of St Oswald and St. Ecgwine*, ed. and trans. Michael Lapidge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 1–203, with relevant parts on Fleury at 50–51, 54–55, 62–63, and (for the "phylosophus" Abbo) 90–95, 164–171. More will be said of Byrhtferth below.

Meanwhile, Dunstan (usually the most celebrated of the three reformers) was for a time exiled from England (956 to 957), the result of political upheavals. He found refuge on the Continent and temporarily became part of the monastery of St. Peter's in Ghent, which was part of the Gorze reform.[93] (In fact, this same monastery, and many other Flemish reform institutions, would receive royal protection—while incorporating language suggestive that they were being granted protection against unspecified but inevitable dangers—due in large part to Queen Gerberga's influence on her son.)[94] Long after his return from exile, he also met Abbo while both were in England. In the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, Byrhtferth included a poem in praise of Dunstan composed by Abbo as a compliment to both men.[95]

Æthelwold, often seen as the more radical of the three English reformers, was connected to Fleury through the capstone of his life, the *Regularis Concordia*.[96] The *Regularis Concordia* was the achievement of what had been a decades-long process of Benedictine reform (inspired largely but not entirely by continental influences) carried out by Æthelwold as well as his fellow reformers with the backing of King Edgar (r. 959–975).

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[93] Nicholas Brooks, "The Career of St. Dunstan," in *St. Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*, ed. Nigel Ramsey, Margaret Sparks, and Tim Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992), 1–23, at 1–2, 14–18; and Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*, 79–80. Brooks argues against Dunstan's stay in Ghent creating the source of Lotharingian influence in the English reform movement. For the purposes of this section, however, it is not necessary that a single one of these three reformers—Oswald, Dunstan, or Æthelwold—brought Gorzian ideas to England but that their movements (as representative of other travelers) and the diffusion of the apocalyptic concepts of Gorze and related centers make the subsequent use of Adso's work and interest in apocalyptic preaching part of a logical expansion of such ideas in the 10th century.

[94] Brigitte Meijns, "*A defense against the arrows of the disturbance to come:* royal protection and the consolidation of monastic reform under Count Arnulf I of Flanders (918–65)," *Early Medieval Europe* 26, no. 4 (November 2018): 486–517, at 488, 507–508, 516.

[95] Dachowski, *First among Abbots*, 39, 63–73; Wormald, "Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts," 30; and (for Addo's praise of Dunstan) Byrhtferth, *The Lives of St Oswald and St. Ecgwine*, 164–171.

[96] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 451. Tracey-Anne Cooper has recently argued, however, that the three reformers are best seen through their similarities rather than their differences in implementing changes to English monasteries. Cooper, *Monk-Bishops and the English Benedictine Reform Movement*, 50–51.

At the Council of Winchester in 973, a consensus was reached to draft a monastic rule, modeled after the *Rule* of St. Benedict, that would be universally applied among the English monks and nuns.[97] The subsequent *Regularis Concordia* was in large part the work of Æthelwold, with the assistance of Dunstan and monks from Fleury and Lotharingia.[98] Other liturgical models were also created and exchanged at this time through the collaboration and interaction of Lotharingian (Gorzian) monks with Æthelwold, Dunstan, and other English religious.[99]

The creation of this new monastic standard, however, was not the end of further reform developments. As Tracey-Anne Cooper put it, Oswald, Dunstan, and Æthelwold were only the first of three "generations" of English reformers, each with a separate set of goals.[100] Nevertheless, it was the establishment of the *Regularis Concordia*—inspired and written by those with connections to the continental reforms found in Fleury and Gorze—that set the pattern for future clerics. With these links to reforming monasteries came also the developing worldview that increasingly saw the world through apocalyptic eyes and that, in turn, saw the apocalypse in terms of preaching. To see how these ideas already present on the Continent manifested and mutated in England, let us now turn to those who

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[97] The *Regularis Concordia* conveniently begins with a prologue explaining in its composers' own words the background of English monasticism, the motivations of reform, and the declarations of the Council of Winchester. Thomas Symons, trans., *Regularis Concordia: The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 1–9.

[98] Wormald, "Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts," 30–31; Thomas Symons, "Introduction," in *Regularis Concordia: The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation*, trans. Thomas Symons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), xlv-lii. Chrodegang's *Regula* for canons does not appear to have played a direct influence on the monastic *Regularis Concordia*, though it would continue to have influence in England into the time of Edward the Confessor. See Wormald, "Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts," 37–38. In any case, both *Regula* and *Regularis* highlight the previous and ongoing exchange of personnel, texts, and ideas between Gorze and England.

[99] Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*, 959–983.

[100] Cooper, *Monk-Bishops and the English Benedictine Reform Movement*, 13–14, 47–49.

lived and wrote just after this "first generation" of English monastic reformers: the anonymous Blickling and Vercelli book homilists and Abbot Ælfric of Eynsham. After these have been examined for their apocalyptic advice, we will turn to perhaps the greatest apocalyptic commentator in Old English: Archbishop Wulfstan of York.

A Vernacular End: Vercelli Book, the Blickling Homilies, and Ælfric of Eynsham

There are three significant collections in Old English in the late 10th century that treat both apocalyptic concerns and the importance of preaching. The latter's prominence has long been known. According to Samantha Zacher, "The power of preaching is a theme expressed constantly in the writings that survive from the early English period."[101] For Zacher, this "power" spans the centuries from the eloquent speech given by King Edwin's pagan counselor in favor of conversion to Christianity in 627 to the vernacular homilies of the 10th and 11th centuries. The Vercelli Book, a late tenth-century compilation manuscript containing twenty-three sermons, a *vita*, and six poems in Old English by an anonymous author(s), is one of the best sources for such a claim.[102] Though its contents are not in line with the asceticism encouraged by the English reforms that came out of the Council of Winchester, the homilies do appear to come after 973 and to have been influenced by the monastic reforms. But the Vercelli Book's exhortations were certainly not limited to the monastic setting. Unlike prior Carolingian models aimed at religious, the collection's

[101] Samantha Zacher, *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), xix.
[102] For the dating of the manuscript, see ibid., 5–10.

contents seem intended for a mixed audience of secular clergy, laity, and women.[103] The so-called Blickling homilies, also dated to the late 10th century, suggest a similarly wide intended audience.[104] Unlike the Vercelli Book, which has a variety of texts, the Blicking manuscript is rather more self-consciously curated.[105] It contains eighteen homilies in Old English, each intended for feasts and holy days throughout the liturgical year.[106] While authorship cannot be determined, two scribes seem to have been involved in the copying of these texts.[107] Lastly, we have the *Catholic Homilies* of Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 955–1020), composed in the early 990s. Contained within these vernacular sermons are several eschatological works that reflect and attempt to shape apocalyptic expectations in England. A brief look at these will show a combination of traditional views and changing practice surrounding the End Times drama.

Several pieces in the Vercelli Book speak of the apocalypse and Judgment Day, though not all are relevant to this study. Vercelli Homily II begins by evoking the terror that Doomsday will bring. It moves quickly from moralizing on the false security of silver, gold, and other rich finery to the deceits of the Antichrist that will ultimately lead one into

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[103] Ibid., 32–42. For some of the debates, see also: May Clayton, "Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England," *Peritia* 4 (1985): 207–242, reprinted in *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach, 151–198, especially 172–175; Milton McC. Gatch, "Eschatology in the Anonymous Old English Homilies," *Traditio* 21 (1965): 117–165; Milton McC. Gatch, "The Unknowable Audience of the Blickling Homilies," *Anglo-Saxon England* 18 (1989): 99–115; and Elaine Treharne, "The Form and Function of the Vercelli Book," in *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Jane Roberts (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 253–266.

[104] Zacher, *Preaching the Converted*, 41–42; and Gatch, "The Unknowable Audience of the Blickling Homilies," 99–115.

[105] The late tenth-century homilies take up the majority of the manuscript, held now at the Princeton University Library. The manuscript also contains a series of Gospel passages useful in swearing oaths as well as a calendar, but these folios were produced much later (14th and 15th centuries, respectively). Richard J. Kelly, "Introduction," in *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. and trans. Richard J. Kelly (New York: Continuum, 2003), xxix, xl-xliii.

[106] Ibid., xxxi.

[107] Ibid., xxxvi-xxxviii.

hell and all the torments that implies.[108] The homilist's solution is simple: "But let us be mindful of the need of our souls, and let us work good on that day, that we carry out good deeds."[109] After listing a variety of moral imperatives which are needful to remember and embrace—avoiding crime and vice, promoting love, generosity, and mercy[110]—that will save even someone sunken into sin, the sermon concludes by stepping back from apocalyptic imminence. "Let us now, therefore, hasten to God before death seizes us since he quickly approaches."[111] Vercelli Homily IX likewise speaks of the dangers of the End. To escape them, the listener (or reader) is told, "But let us make ourselves ready now with inward prayers and with spirituality so that we may not be aslide within that fiery-full darkness that has been prepared in hell against those sinful souls."[112] Vercelli Homily XV returns more directly to the question of the Day of Judgment and the time of the Antichrist, speaking of a general collapse of ecclesiastical authority as the End Times approach.[113] In light of the violence that will accompany the Antichrist, it is necessary for many to turn to God.[114] The homilist then details seven days of signs and portents that will precede the coming of the Antichrist at an otherwise undetermined but certainly pressing date.[115] Finally, Vercelli Homily XXI (the second half of which repeats Homily II) enjoins its

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[108] Lewis E. Nicholson, ed., *The Vercelli Book Homilies: Translations from the Anglo-Saxon* (New York: University Press of America, 1991) 27–28.
[109] Ibid., 29; and D. G. Scragg, ed., *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 60: "Ac utan we beon gemyndige ussa sawla þearfe, 7 wyrcen we god on þa*m* dæge þe we ðurhteon mægen."
[110] Nicholson, *Vercelli Book Homilies*, 29–30.
[111] Ibid., 30; and Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, 62–63: "Utan we nu for þan efstan to Gode, ær þan us se deað gegripe, for oferwinnan 7 his unðeawan fæste wiðstandan."
[112] Nicholson, *Vercelli Book Homilies*, 69; and Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, 178: "Ac utan geearwian us nu ða mid innewearduⁿ gebedum 7 mid gæstedome, þæt we ne / weorðan aslidene innon þa fyrenfullan þystro þæ*t* synfullum sawlu*m* is geearwod on helle togeanes."
[113] Nicholson, *Vercelli Book Homilies*, 97–98.
[114] Ibid., 99.
[115] Ibid., 99–101.

audience to "take warning, and each of us now learn eagerly what is written" about evil-doers[116] It is necessary for Christians to clothe themselves in the right teachings and admonitions the homilist provides. This is because "all righteous men clothed [in this manner] on Doomsday…will shine before the sight of God."[117] Moral reform, an ever-present theme for apocalyptic commentary, certainly carried with it feverish urgency for the author(s) of the Vercelli Book.

The Blickling homilies contain similar exhortations. Blicking III–VI and XV all exhibit eschatological concerns, but homilies VII and XI provide the clearest prescriptions for preparing for a troubling future. Blicking VII, written for Easter Sunday, began with an allusion to the Judgment Day and proceeded to an account of Christ's triumph during the Harrowing of Hell to rescue notable people from the Old Testament, including Adam and Eve.[118] The text explains the purpose of this preamble is to encourage the audience to pursue a redeemed life when remembering Jesus's suffering and time in hell. "Therefore, we ought now to contemplate how much awe will come upon all created beings in this present time when Judgement draws near. The manifestation of that Doomsday will be very terrible to all creation."[119] Like in Vercelli Homily XV, the Blickling homilist then lays out a week's worth of signs (including the coming of the Antichrist on the sixth day) that will

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[116] Ibid., 139; and Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, 352: "7 warnige ure gehwylc hine 7 georne nu ongyte gehwylc ure hwæt be ðam earmum synfullum ys on Cristes bocu*m* awriten."
[117] Nicholson, *Vercelli Book Homilies*, 141; and Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, 354: "Of ðam beoð ymbscriddle eallra rihtwisra manna sawla on domes dæge, 7 of þam hie scinað beforan Godes gesyhðe."
[118] *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. and trans. Richard J. Kelly (New York: Continuum, 2003), 58–63.
[119] Ibid., 62–63: "Uton nu geþencean hu mycel egsa gelimpeþ eallum gesceaftum on þás ondweardan tíd þonne se dom nealæceþ. Ond seo opening þæs dæges is swiþe egesfull eallum gesceaftum."

precede the Judgment Day.[120] In all that time, however, Christians are not actors but rather witnesses to the power of God and the orders undertaken by his armies of angels. It concludes by once more reminding Christians that now is the time to repent of evil lest the Day of Judgment come before true personal reform takes place.[121] Blickling XI, whose theme is the Ascension, uses the idea of an approaching apocalyptic drama to urge moral reform. In keeping with the passage that discusses Christ's Ascension and questions regarding his return (Acts 1:6–11), the homilist denies the ability of anyone but God to know when the apocalypse will come. Nevertheless, anyone hearing this homily would be encouraged to think it was just around the corner:

> Nevertheless, we know that it is not far off because all the signs and forewarnings that our Lord previously indicated would come before Doomsday have all come to pass…apart from one, that being the accursed stranger, the Antichrist, who as yet has not come forth upon the earth. Yet the time is not far distant…the greatest portion [of the penultimate age] has already elapsed, as much as nine hundred and seventy-one years in the present year.[122]

Regarding this passage, scholars disagree whether the homilist believed the End would come in the year 1000.[123] Minimally, it is arguable (and perhaps most accurate) to say that

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[120] These derive from an apocalyptic legend originating with the Late Antique *Apocalypse of Thomas* and which was reworked in subsequent centuries. This notably included a tenth-century Irish version. The sequence of events is not discussed here as the signs focus on calamities occurring in the world through divine providence that humans can identify but cannot otherwise respond to, in keeping with the older, spiritualized model of apocalyptic preparations. See William W. Heist, *Fifteen Signs Before Doomsday* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1952).

[121] *Blickling Homilies*, 64–67.

[122] Ibid., 82–83: "We witon þonne hwepre þæt hit nis ne feor to þon, forþon þe ealle þa tacno ond þa forebeacno þa þe her ure Drihten ær toweard sægde, þæt ær Domesdæge geweorþan sceoldan, ealle þa syndon agangen…buton þæm anum, þæt se awe*r*igda Cuma Antecrist, nugét hider on middangeard *ne* com. Nis þæt þonne feor toþon þæt eac geweorþan sceal…ond þisse is þonne se mǽsta dǽl agangen, efne nigon hund wintra ond lxxi on þyss*e* geare."

[123] See Malcolm Godden, "The Millennium, Time, and History for the Anglo-Saxons," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 155–180, especially 156–158; and Prideaux-Collins, "Satan's Bonds are Extremely Loose," 294.

the author did not believe the millennial year itself must be apocalyptic but that he certainly thought that it pointed to an old world that was ready to end. That is to say, he very likely was not telling his audience that only twenty-nine years remained before Christ's return. Instead, he likely meant that, in light of the approaching reminder of the millennial anniversary of the Incarnation, the End could not possibly be far off. Blickling XI relates the fears of Doomsday back to the events following the Ascension. According to the text, the Holy Spirit was both a comfort to the apostles after Pentecost and continues to encourage tenth-century Christians as they live under the shadow of an unknown but fast-approaching Doomsday.[124] Exhortations to embrace the Holy Spirit thus take on an apocalyptic significance as the homilist attempts to prepare his audience's souls for the End, whether personally eschatological or universally apocalyptic. He writes:

> Let us earnestly meditate on this [the Ascension and Christ's return on Doomsday] while we may and are able to. Let us amend the sins that we have committed and diligently petition the Almighty Lord to protect us from those forthcoming events. Let us fix in our minds the fear and trepidation of that day.[125]

In effect, the homilist wants his audience to see embracing the Holy Spirit through a penitential, reflective life as protection from judgment after an individual's death or when the Antichrist arrives to cause universal death and devastation.

Both collections of vernacular sermons repeat the same kind of appeal for general moral reform and eschatological (rather than apocalyptic) concern that has been present in Christianity since its earliest days. For these English writers, moral reform, whether in light

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[124]*Blickling Homilies*, 82–85.

[125]Ibid., 86–87: "Ah wuton we þæt nu geornlice gemunan þat hwile þe we magon ond motan. Uton betan þa geworhtan synna ond Ælmihtigne Drihten georne biddan þæt he us gescylde wið þa toweardan. Ond uton we symle þæs dæges fyrhto ond egsan on ure mod settan."

of a distant or imminent confrontation with the Antichrist, is the primary means of defense for Christians. Otherwise, according to both Vercelli and Blickling, angels and the power of the divine are the only active forces for good during the End Times. As such, these homilies do not at first glance provide much of a connection to the developments in apocalyptic thought we have been examining in the 10th century. Noteworthy about these collections, however, is less their content and more their form. As with the **i?**Insular handbooks that pilgrims and missionaries carried with them in earlier centuries, the purpose of these homilies was to provide what their authors believed to be important information on the End Times to a wide audience. The fact that they were written in the vernacular emphasizes this point. As Richard Kelly writes:

> The precise nature and purpose of the Anglo-Saxon preaching books are very difficult and complex matters. The fact that the books were written in English is perhaps the most useful indicator we have concerning the audience and its culture. Those who provided preaching texts for the Anglo-Saxon Church clearly felt a greater need to communicate in the vernacular—or, at least, to record materials in written form in the vernacular—than did their counterparts in Europe including the Celtic Church in Ireland.[126]

This concern included lessons on the Antichrist, the signs of the apocalypse, and the Day of Judgment. Though conservative in content, the inclusion of these apocalyptic materials was innovative. To be sure, the survivals we have from the late 10th century *might* be part of a longer (now inaccessible) tradition of vernacular catechesis on matters related to the Antichrist. Such a theory, however, cannot be defended through the absence of evidence alone. The convergence of texts we do have, however, is in keeping with the general

[126] Kelly, "Introduction," xlv-xlvi. Kelly adds, however, that more cannot be easily assumed, and the audience may still have been non-literate, clerical, or both.

growing interest in reflecting and commenting on apocalyptic concerns in the context of preaching we have seen throughout the 10th century. Moreover, the Vercelli and the Blickling homilies were only the most conservative expressions of vernacular apocalyptic concerns in England around the year 1000. In the work of Ælfric of Eynsham—and later especially that of Wulfstan of York—we see further intensification of apocalyptic speculation in the late 10th and early 11th centuries. These men, however, had the same purpose as their anonymous peers: combining apocalyptic thought and preaching in order to reach a general audience.

Though his literary output was immense, our knowledge of Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 957 – c. 1012) is limited. It was only in the modern age that he was accurately identified following confusions started in the 12th century. Ælfric was a monk and masspriest, likely from Wessex. He joined the community of monks at Winchester sometime between 964 and 970, was sent to Cerne Abbas in Dorset around 987, and finally became abbot of Eynsham c. 1005, a post he would hold until his death. His career was marked by continuation of the earlier English reform movement, masterful literary achievements (mostly in the vernacular with some Latin works), ties to powerful men (like Archbishop Wulfstan II of York), but an absence of formal standing in national politics or in the *witan*.[127] Among his works are his *Catholic Homilies*, composed in two separate volumes

[127] Joyce Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Boston: Brill, 2009), 35–65; and Cooper, *Monk-Bishops*, 77–85. The *witan* was a kind of council for pre-Norman English kings.

during his time at Cerne. These are significant works in the study of Old English.[128] They also provide us with Ælfric's views on apocalyptic matters.

Ælfric begins his first volume of *Catholic Homilies* with a preface outlining the origins of his task and his choice to write in English rather than Latin.

> Then it occurred to my mind, I trust through God's grace, that I would turn this book from the Latin language into the English tongue; not from confidence of great learning, but because I have seen and heard of much error in many English books, which unlearned men, through their simplicity, have esteemed as great wisdom: and I regretted that they knew not nor had not the evangelical doctrines who knew Latin, and those books except which [K]ing Aelfred wisely turned from Latin into English, which are to be had. For this cause I presumed, trusting in God, to undertake this task, *and also because men have need of good instruction, especially at this time, which is the ending of this world*, and there will be many calamities among mankind before the end cometh.[129]

With his insistence that the English receive proper religious instruction in their own tongue, Ælfric included his fear that such teachings would be necessary due to an imminent End Times. This explicitly included fears about the arrival of the Antichrist with his cruelties and temptations.

> *Everyone may the more easily withstand the future temptation, through God's support, if he is strengthened by book learning*, for they shall preserve who will continue in faith to the end. Many tribulations and hardships shall come on this world before its end, and those are the proclaimers of everlasting perdition to evil men, who afterwards for their

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[128] See *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, ed. Malcolm Godden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), xxi-lxii.

[129] Ælfric of Eynsham, *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part, Containing the* Sermones Catholici, *or Homilies of Ælfric*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Benjamin Thorpe, The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church (London: 1844; repr. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1971), 2–3: "Þa bearn me on mode, ic truwige þurh Godes gife, þæt ic ðas boc of Ledenum gereorde to Engliscre spræce awende; na þurh gebylde mycelre lare, ac forþan þe ic geseah and gehyrde mycel gedwyld on manegum Engliscum bocum, þe ungelærede men þurh heora bilewitnysse to micclum widsome tealdon; and me ofhreow þæt hí ne cuþon ne næfdon þa godspellican lare on heora gewritum, buton þam mannum anum ðe þæt Leden cuðon, and buton þam bocum ðe Ælfred cyning snoterlice awende of Ledene on Englisc, þa synd to hæbbenne. For þisum antimbre ic gedyrstlæhte, on Gode truwiende, þæt ic ðas gesetnysse undergann, and eac forðam þe men behofiað godre lare swiðost on þisum timan þe is geendung þyssere worulde, and beoð fela frecednyssa on mancynne ærðan þe se end becume." Emphasis mine.

> crimes suffer eternally in the swart hell. Then Antichrist shall come, who is human man and true devil, as our Saviour [sic] is truly man and God in one person.[130]

Immediately after a traditional repetition of the wickedness of the Antichrist, false miracles he performs, the temporary elevation of his followers before damnation, and the glorious martyrdom of faithful Christians, Ælfric returns to his theme of instructions. He reminds his readers that

> the cruel Antichrist [lacks] the power to send down heavenly fire, though he, through the devil's craft, may so pretend. It will now be wiser that everyone know this, and know his belief, lest anyone have to await great misery. Our Lord commanded his disciples that they should instruct and teach all people the things which he had himself taught to them; but of those there are too few who will well teach and well exemplify.[131]

Ælfric thus explains that his motivation for writing in English is to prepare his fellow country men and women to resist the Antichrist. This is necessary, he says, because of both the absence of good teachings and the presence of bad information among those not fluent in Latin. The end results—moral purity and spiritual renewal—are certainly traditional, but the method by which Ælfric expresses his goals is innovative. While the Vercelli and Blickling homilies only implicitly signaled the need for vernacular preaching in preparation for the apocalyptic drama, Ælfric declares that as the thesis for his sermon collection. The false miracles the Antichrist performs—like calling fire down from heaven—are things

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[130] Ibid., 4–5: "Gehwá mæg þe eaðelicor ða toweardan costnunge acumna, ðurh Godes fultum, gif hé bið þurh boclice lare getrymmed; forðam ðe þa beoð gehealdene þe oð ende on leafan þurhwundiað. Fela gedreccednyssa and earfoðnysse becumað on þissere worulde æ\r hire geendunge, and þa synd ða bydelas þæs ecan forwyrdes on yfelum mannum, þe for heora mándædum siððan ecelice þrowiað on ðære sweartan helle. Þonne cymð se Antecrist, se bið mennisc mann and soð deofol, swa swa ure Hælend is soðlice mann and God on anum hade." Emphasis mine.

[131] Ibid., 6–7: "Ne eac se wælhreowa Antecrist næfð þa mihte þæt he heofenlic fyr asendan mæge, ðeah þe hé þurh deofles cræft hit swa gehiwige. Bið nu wíslicor þæt gehwa ðis wite and cunne his geleafan, weald hwa ða micclan yrmðe gebidan sceole. Ure Drihten bebead his discipulum þæt hí sceoldon læran and tæcan eallum þeodum ða ðing þe he sylf him tæhte; ac þæra is nu to lyt ðe wile wel tæcan and wel bysnian."

that the English must be told about, in addition to the usual moral and spiritual instructions that are part of Christian doctrine. In previous centuries, eschatological commentaries helped express timeless ideas. But for Ælfric, simply put, apocalyptic sermons served apocalyptic needs.

The first series of his *Catholic Homilies* proceeds after this introduction to provide forty homilies for a variety of topics, significant feast days, and moments in the liturgical calendar. The first concerns the Creation story and the fall of both the devil and humanity. He follows this with Christ's Nativity as the start of humanity's redemption.[132] The juxtaposition highlights Ælfric's overall goal in doctrinal instruction. The final homily in the collection, however, returns to the same theme that preoccupied his preface: the end of the world. The passage for the homily comes from Luke 21:25, in which Jesus prophesizes that there would be signs in the sun, moon, and stars as humanity begins to panic when the world ends. Ælfric's conclusion can serve as a summary for the whole.

> My brothers, set the remembrance of this day before your eyes, and whatsoever now appears to be trouble; it shall all be mitigated on comparison with it. Correct your lives, and change your conduct, punish your evil deeds with weeping, withstand the temptations of the devil; eschew evil and do good, and ye will be by so much the more secure at the advent of the eternal Judge, as ye now with terror anticipate his severity. The prophet said, that the great day of God is very near at hand and very swift. Though there were yet another thousand years to that day, it would not be long; for whatsoever ends is short and quick, and will be as it had never been, when it is ended. But though it were long to that day, as it is not, yet will our time not be long, and at our ending it will be adjudged to us, whether we in rest or in torment shall await the common doom. Let us, therefore, profit by the time which God has given us, and merit the

[132] Ibid., 8–45.

> everlasting life with him who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.[133]

While Ælfric acknowledged his debt to Pope Gregory I for much of the content of this homily, the urgency and purpose of his vernacular works are Ælfric's.

Though he refers to the End coming a thousand years after Christ walked the earth, one should not mistake Ælfric for a millenarian, as his other works make clear. In later versions of his first series, Ælfric omitted his robust prologue discussion of apocalyptic matters.[134] In his second series of *Catholic Homilies*, rather than provide further fuel for an imminent apocalypse, Ælfric attempted to dampen expectations while clinging to Augustinian orthodoxy. He refuted those who said that recently fulfilled prophecies proved Doomsday was near by quoting Jesus's own words about the impossibility for any but God to know the timing of the End.[135] He concludes the same homily by reiterating the necessity for everyone to be watchful not only for the End Times but for each individual's death. "No man knows the ending of this world, not even his own ending. Many a man would

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[133] Ibid., 618–619: "Mine gebroðra, settað þises dæges gemynd ætforan eowrum eagum, and swa hwæt swa bið nu héfigtyme geðuht, eal hit bið on his wiðmetennysse geliðegod, Gerihtlæcað eower líf, and awendað eowre ðeawas, witniað mid wope eowre, yfelan dædam wiðstandað deofles costnungum; bugað fram yfele, and doð gód, and ge beoð swa micclum orsorgran on to-cyme þæs ecan Déman, swa micclum swag ge nu his strecnysse mid ege forhrádiað. Se witega cwæð, þæt se miccla Godes dæg is swiðe gehende, and þearle swift. Þeah ðe gyt wære oðer þusend geara to ðam dæge, nære hit langsum; forðan swa hwæt swa geendað, þæt bið sceort and hræd, and bið swilce hit næfre ne gewurde, þonne hit geendod bið. Hwæt þeah hit langsum wære to ðam dæge, swa hit nis, þeah ne bið ure tíma langsum, and on úre geendunge us bið gedémed, hwæðer we on reste oþþe on wite ðone gemænelican dóm anbidian sceolon. Uton forði brucan þæs fyrstes ðe us God forgeaf, and geearnian þæt ece líf mid him seðe leofað and rixað in ealra worulda woruld. Amen."

[134] Prideaux-Collins, "Satan's Bonds are Extremely Loose," 301, n71 (which discusses the presence or absence of Ælfric's apocalyptic prologue in the manuscripts); and Malcolm R. Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies Presented to E. G. Stanley*, ed. Malcolm Godden, Douglas Gray, and Terry Hoad (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) , 130–162, especially 132–133.

[135] Ælfric of Eynsham, *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part, Containing the* Sermones Catholici, *or Homilies of Ælfric*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Benjamin Thorpe, The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church (London: 1846; repr. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1971), 568–569.

spend the greater part of his life in his lusts, and the less part in repentance, if he knew when he should end. Our ending is hidden from us, in order that we should ever dread the last day, which we never may foresee."[136] Furthermore, in his *De temporibus anni* (a booklet about seasonal weather and conditions), Ælfric noted in passing that thunder, a wholly natural phenomenon, was not a sign of the approach of Doomsday, nor was it connected with the seven thunders John heard in his Apocalypse, which themselves should be interpreted purely metaphorically.[137] Finally, in two eschatological commentaries written after the year 1000, *De die Iudicii* and *In Octavis Pentecosten*, Ælfric provides a strictly Augustinian interpretation of apocalyptic texts. He does this without connecting any prophecies to current events and while emphasizing the unknowability of the date for the End Times.[138] Nevertheless, even here we get a glimpse of important movements in English apocalyptic thought regarding the clergy and responsibility. In this otherwise Augustinian *De die Iudicii*, Ælfric discusses the passage in the Gospels in which Jesus spoke prophetically to his apostles that only one person from each of several pairs—two men in bed, two women grinding, and two men plowing—would be "taken" during the End Times. According to Ælfric, one of those groups signified priests and bishops. Spiritually, this meant that it was their responsibility to teach their flocks to be wary of sin so as to avoid falling into error, which would be ubiquitous once Antichrist arrived. Those who taught well and frequently would be taken to heaven when judged. Those who were

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[136] Ibid., 574–575: "Nát nán man þyssere worulde geendunge, ne furðon his ágene geendunge. Menig man wolde þone máran dæl his lífes aspendan on his lustum, and ðone læssan dæl on dædbote, gif hé wiste hwænne hé geendian sceolde. Us is bedigelod ure geendung, to ði þæt we sculon symle ús ondrædan ðone endenextan dæg, þone ðe we ne magon næfre foresceawian."
[137] Ælfric of Eynsham, *De temporibus anni*, Early English Text Society 123 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 82.
[138] See Prideaux-Collins, "Satan's Bonds are Extremely Loose," 301.

negligent, however, would be left to the torments of hell.[139] As we will see, Archbishop Wulfstan II of York, with whom Ælfric corresponded, would make this his signature theme.

In any case, scholars tend to see Ælfric as having cooled his apocalyptic zeal after writing his first *Catholic Homilies* series.[140] Even if he had ever truly believed the year 1000 would prove apocalyptic, which is doubtful, disillusionment and the mental tension of knowing the well-respected Augustinian position regarding apocalyptic matters seem to have convinced Ælfric to soften his expectations as he aged. Nevertheless, the apocalypse remained a topic worth discussing, even if with notably decreased urgency. Regardless, belief in an imminent apocalyptic drama is less important for our topic than the manner in which it was believed humans could respond to it. Both in his urgency in the first series of *Catholic Homilies* and in the more measured agnosticism of his later works, Ælfric had the unified belief—shared with others during the 10th century—that to consider the apocalypse meant to think about teaching and preaching. This is most clearly seen in the original preface to his first *Catholic Homilies* series, where he linked vernacular education directly to opposition to the Antichrist. But his later, more explicitly Augustinian views held the same perspective. In his second *Catholic Homilies* series, he once more used the vernacular to clean up misinformed apocalyptic beliefs, and his short *De temporibus anni*, meant to be a convenient text for any interested in the seasonal phenomena, quickly and efficiently reiterated how John's Apocalypse should be read spiritually rather than literally. Though

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[139] Ælfric of Eynsham, "Sermo de die iudicii," in *"Sermo de die iudicii": An Ælfrician Homily*, Wallace John Swan (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1967), 46–48, 64–66.
[140] See Prideaux-Collins, "Satan's Bonds are Extremely Loose," 297–302.

his views on the imminence of the end of the world changed (or at least his self-consciousness when discussing the subject), Ælfric exhibited and perpetuated the same belief as others in the 10th century that preaching was an important part of apocalyptic preparations.

For all this, however, Ælfric was not the most outspoken of English commentators in this new tradition of apocalyptic preparation to emerge from the developments of the 10th century. Without a doubt, that place belongs to Archbishop Wulfstan II of York.

Preaching Resistance: Archbishop Wulfstan II of York

Our knowledge of the life of Archbishop Wulfstan II of York is imperfect. Like Ælfric, however, Wulfstan's unique literary style has led to the identifications of many of his works in Latin and Old English. We even have manuscripts written in his own hand, permitting scholars to analyze the development of his religious and political thoughts as he enlarged, abbreviated, and edited his sermons, treatises, and law codes.[141]

Nothing is known of Wulfstan before his becoming bishop of London in 996. It is plausible that he was a monk, just as his predecessors had been, but that hypothesis has not been confirmed. In 1002, he transferred dioceses, becoming simultaneously bishop of Worchester (until 1016) and archbishop of York (until his death in 1023).[142] During his

[141] Joyce Tally Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 10–22.

[142]Ibid., 9. Holding episcopal sees in plurality was not unheard of. Dunstan had held the same dual appointments as Wulfstan. Later medieval commentators criticized Wulfstan for this, but the practice was likely done for a useful purpose. First, dual appointments ensured that the archbishop of York (a poor see at the time) had the financial support of an additional diocese. Second, having an appointment outside of the Danelaw (Worchester) encouraged the archbishop of York to remain politically loyal to the English king in the south. See Andrew Rabin, "Introduction," in *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, ed. and trans. Andrew Rabin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 12–13.

tenure, Wulfstan took his role as archbishop seriously both in its spiritual and political dimensions. He was deeply involved with the politics of both King Æthelred II (r. 978–1013 and 1013–1016) and King Cnut (r. 1016–1035), drafting laws and giving advice to create a law-abiding society loyal to the monarch. As a prince of the church, Wulfstan believed a just, Christian society required reform at every level, starting with those of ecclesiastical rank descending to the laity. As part of the second (and third) generation of English reformers,[143] Wulfstan remained prolific in his writing, constantly working and reworking materials for a variety of audiences—other bishops, clerics, monks (including correspondence with Ælfric), the laity, the *witan*, and kings—in an effort to shape society and live out what seem to have been deeply and earnestly held spiritual beliefs. Among these beliefs was Wulfstan's conviction that the world was soon to end.

Writing on the apocalyptic work of both Ælfric and Wulfstan, Catherine Cubitt notes, "At the core of Ælfric's homilies lies a pastoral duty towards the individual Christian and his salvation. The preaching of Wulfstan, however, is rather concerned with the condition of society and calls for the spiritual reformation of the English people."[144] Wulfstan's corpus of work makes this clear. As bishop and later archbishop, he believed his responsibility was to set the agenda and standard for his subordinate clergy on how they were to guide their congregations.[145] His admonitions frequently combined the idea of bishop as shepherd with bishop as preacher, someone responsible for the care of his flock.

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[143] Though the generational labels are arbitrary, Tracey-Anne Cooper sees Wulfstan as a "bridge" between phases of religious reform through the turn of the millennium and the transition from English to Danish rule of England. See Cooper, *Monk-Bishops*, 88–89.

[144] Catherine Cubitt, "Apocalyptic and Eschatological Thought in England around the Year 1000," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25 (2015): 27–52, at 45.

[145] Rabin, "Introduction," 37–38.

Such a person was inexcusably guilty before God if his sheep fell into error without proper guidance or warning being first given to them. He writes that a bishop "must first oversee men in orders, so that each of them may know what is rightly appropriate for him to do and also what they should preach to laymen" while seeking to discover how "he might know the more truly how the flock fares which he must tend on God's behalf, so that the devil may not inflict harm too greatly thereon nor sow too much of his falseness among them."[146] Responsibility weighed heavily on Wulfstan, and he sought to evoke the same in others.

> It is the responsibility of every lord to protect his slaves as best he can, for they are loved by God as much as those who are free, and he bought us all for the same price. We are all God's own slaves, and he judges us just as we judge those over whom we hold power here on earth. Accordingly, we have an obligation to protect those compelled to serve us; then we may experience a greater protection at God's own judgment.[147]

Elsewhere, he writes, "Bishops are the messengers and teachers of God's law…and they must preach and diligently set an example for the spiritual benefit of the Christian people. Anyone who rejects that which he hears from them must settle his disputes with God

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[146] Wulfstan of York, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, ed. and trans. Andrew Rabin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 62–63 (hereafter Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, when citing the translation of Wulfstan's texts); and, in Old English, Felix Liebermann, ed. and trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1 (Halle: Scientia Aalen, 1903), 277 (hereafter Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, when citing Wulfstan's original language): "He sceall gehadode men ærest gewissian, þ*æt* heora ælc wite, hwæt him mid rihte gebyrige to donne, 7 eac hwæt hy woruldmannum agan to beodanne….A he sceal scyldan Cristenum mannu*m* wið ælc þæra þinga þe synlic bið; 7 þy he sceal on æghwæt hine þe swyðor teon, þ*æt* he þe geornor wite, hu seo heord fare, þe he Godes handa gehealdan sceall, þ*æt* deofol to swyðe þæron na sceaþige, ne his falses to fela ongemang ne gesawe."

[147] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, 64; and Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 279: "Hit bið ælces hlafordes agen þearf, þæt he his nydþeowum byrge, swa he betst mæge, for ðam þe hy syn Gode efen leofe 7 þa ðe syndon freolse, 7 us ealle he gebohte mid gelican weorðe. Ealle we syndon Godes ágene nydþeowan; 7 swa he gedemð ús, swa we her demað þam þe we on eorðan dom ofer ágan. [Þ]y we agan þearfe, þ*æt* we ðam beorgan þe us scylan hyran; þonne gebide we þe mare gebeorh æt Godes agenum dome."

himself."[148] In his *Institutes of Polity*, a treatise laying out a "Holy Society" for England, he states once more that "bishops are the messengers and teachers of God's law." [149] When their words are ignored, the bishops are absolved. If, however, "they do not make known God's law, but mumble with their mouths when they should shout, woe to them for that silence!"[150] Wulfstan goes on to stress preaching for bishops. As a shepherd, a bishop "will be judged weak" if he does not "defend the flock that he must protect—even by calling if he can do nothing else—if any corruptor of the people begins to pillage there."[151] The greatest spiritual pillager, of course, is the devil. "Therefore must those shepherds who would protect the people against the corruptor be most watchful and vigorous in their warnings" through "wise teaching."[152] When it comes to guiding Christians, therefore, Wulfstan says that the bare minimum but also the most important thing a bishop, masspriest, or other religious must do is preach and provide correct instruction. This weighed heavily on Wulfstan himself. He claimed (and it was plausibly heart-felt) that, despite his own imperfections, "for fear of God, I dare not stay wholly silent about many

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[148] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, 79–80; and Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 471–472: "Biscpas syndan bydelas 7 Godes lage…7 hy scylan bodian 7 bysnian georne godcunde ðearfe Chri*st*enre þeode. Se þe oferhogie þ*æt* he heom hlyste, hæbbe him gemæne þ*æt* wið God sylfne."

[149] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, 107; and, in Old English, Karl Jost, ed. and trans., *Die "Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical": Ein Werk Erzbischof Wulfstans von York* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959), 62 (hereafter Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, when citing Wulfstan's original language): "*And* bisceopas syndon bydelas *and* Godes lage lareowas."

[150] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, 107; and Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 63: "*And* gif bisceopas forgymað, þ*æt* hi synna ne styrað ne unriht forbeodað ne Godes riht ne cyþað, ac clumiað mid ceaflum, þær hi sceoldan clypian, wa heom þære swigean!"

[151] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, 109; and Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 69: "Forðam wace bið se hyrde funden to heorde, þe nele þa heorde, þe he healdan sceal, huru mid clypunge bewerian, butan he ells mæge, gif þær hwylc þeodsceaþian onginneþ."

[152] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, 109; and Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 70: "Þonne motan þa hydras beon swiþe wacore *and* geornlice clypiende, þe wið þone þeodsceaðan folce scylan scyldan."

of the things which wound this people."[153] The responsibility of clergy to preach is thus an important theme throughout Wulfstan's career. Naturally, this included a variety of doctrinal and moral teachings common to Christians. Significantly, however, Wulfstan repeatedly tied this prescriptive to teaching apocalyptic matters because of his belief that the world was quickly spiraling towards its final end.

Certainly, Ælfric also connected the responsibility of priests and bishops to the End Times but never as powerfully as Wulfstan. Recall Ælfric's interpretation in his *De die Iudicii* concerning Christ's prophecy in the Little Apocalypse that of two men plowing in a field one would be taken and the other left. This signified to Ælfric two bishops whose responsibility was to work the field, that is, the care of all souls on earth. The one who was a diligent teacher would be rewarded with heaven, but the other, being negligent in his instructing responsibilities, would be left to suffer in hell.[154] Wulfstan also directly treats the topics of the apocalypse in several texts using the same general passage Ælfric references in his *De die Iudicii*. Wulfstan wrote three Old English homilies discussing the texts for the Little Apocalypse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, an outline for a sermon on the Antichrist in both Latin and Old English, and a full Old English sermon on the archenemy as well.[155] Other works (notably sermons 50 and 59, according to Arthur

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[153] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York*, 108; and Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 66: "And la, leofan men, doð swa ic bidde, butan gebelge, hylstað, hwæt ic secge: Ic way swyðe georne me sylfne forworhtne words *and* dæde ealles to swyðe, ne dear þeah for Godes ege forswygian mid ealle fela þara þinga, þe dereð þisse þeode."

[154] Ælfric of Eynsham, "Sermo de die iudicii," 46–48, 64–66.

[155] Dorothy Bethurum provided important scholarly foundations for these texts in 1957, but others, most recently and effectively Joyce Tally Lionarons, have provided important corrections. See Dorothy Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957; repr. 1998), 29–30, 113–141; and Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 23–74.

Napier's compilation) include End Times concerns and instructions.[156] Finally, Wulfstan anchors his famous *Sermo lupi ad anglos*, addressed perhaps to the *witan* in 1014, with apocalyptic urgency.[157] Examining these texts will demonstrate how the tenth-century developments in apocalyptic thought culminated in an explicit program of apocalyptic preparations that went far beyond the traditional calls for spiritual improvement that focused on general eschatological preparations.

Wulfstan's earliest works on apocalyptic themes are quite different than his later ones, after, it seems, he came across Adso's *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*.[158] His *Secundum Matheum*, likely the earliest of his extant eschatological homilies, provides a traditional and "fairly straightforward" explanation of Matthew 24:1–42 in Old English.[159] Though Wulfstan names the Antichrist (which is not done in the text) and says his coming will be with dreadful persecutions and false teachers, he only broadly warns Christians to be prepared for the Last Judgment—which, he stresses cannot be dated.[160] He does, however, emphasize the presence of false prophets more than the biblical text does,

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[156] Napier, *Wulfstan*, 266–274 (sermon 50), 307–309 (sermon 59).
[157] See Jonathan Wilcox, "Wulfstan's Sermo Lupi ad Anglos as Political Performance: 16 February 1014 and Beyond," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 375–396. Most of the texts mentioned in this paragraph were written while Wulfstan was bishop of London, but a few were composed or edited after he became archbishop of York two years after the millennium. The timing of these texts is of great significance to the life of Wulfstan and his understanding of the political world he inhabited. For my present purposes, however, the details would obscure the coherency of Wulfstan's emphasis on preaching in his apocalyptic works. For the much-discussed dating of his homilies in general and his apocalyptic works specifically, see Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 23–42 and 43–74, respectively. The order, according to Lionarons, runs: *Secundum Matheum* (Old English), *Secundum Lucam* (Old English), *De Antichristo* (Latin), *De Antichristo* (Old English), *De temporibus Antichristi* (Old English), and *Secundum Marcum* (Old English).
[158] Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 55.
[159] Ibid., 50.
[160] Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 119–122.

demonstrating where even his early apocalyptic interests lay.[161] His *Secundum Lucam*, likewise, is a rather traditional explanation of Luke 21. Unlike Ælfric, Wulfstan does express a belief that heavenly signs can, in fact, be understood to herald the coming of the End Times. Moreover, we see Wulfstan's common complaint that the world is continually falling apart, the longer the worse (*ðy hit is on worulde a swa leng swa wyrse*).[162] According to Joyce Tally Lionarons, Wulfstan's point in this homily is to connect the idea of national sin with large-scale calamities (such as the sins of England leading to Danish invasions).[163] These first two homilies, therefore, demonstrate Wulfstan's interest in apocalyptic ideas, especially as he bemoaned sin and social upheavals, and his worries about false teachings corrupting Christians. His later writings, however, are much more urgent in tone and specific in execution. Furthermore, they show direct influence from Adso's work, which was translated into Old English around this time, possibly at the behest of Wulfstan himself.[164]

Wulfstan composed two works known as *De Antichristo*. The earlier text in Latin was followed by a shortened version in Old English. Neither are true sermons but rather drafts or notes, gathering ideas on the Antichrist from several sources (including Adso) so that he could (and would) later produce more complex and thoughtful reflections on the apocalypse.[165] Both begin with exhortations to a Christian people, explaining that anyone who does not live and teach according to proper doctrine is a kind of antichrist.[166] After

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[161] Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 50–51.
[162] Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 123.
[163] Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 52–53.
[164] Richard Kenneth Emmerson, "From 'Epistola' to 'Sermo,'" 1–10; and Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 55n41.
[165] Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 55.
[166] Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 113–118.

briefly mentioning the work of Enoch and Elijah as the Two Witnesses, Wulfstan states in the Latin version:

> Therefore each one who preaches in church *must daily warn* the people about that time, because, as it is written, the last days will be a dangerous time, so that when those dangerous days come the faithful will not be found unprepared, but will have been taught and educated against the enemy, the ancient serpent who is Satan, and *will be prepared to resist him*.…And the wise will shine like the stars, and *those who teach many* will shine like the splendor of the firmament in perpetual eternity.[167]

Wulfstan, who likely intended his words for the clergy under him,[168] concludes by making his point explicit. He writes:

> Therefore it is *necessary that each priest*, or whoever may read sacred scripture, *teach those who do not know their danger*, so that a double reward may be earned from the Lord, both for the priests and for those they teach, and no one perish through ignorance. And although many will not live to see this persecution, *still they should warn everyone in their earlier preaching*, so that when the Antichrist comes, who is the son of perdition, *he will find the Christian people, without exception, prepared to resist* him and his followers and strengthened by their faith in Christ, amen.[169]

The Old English *De Antichristo*, though simplified, conveys similar ideas.

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[167] Ibid., *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 114: "Vnusquisque igitur qui in ecclesia predicator est cotidie admonere debet plebem de temporibus illis, quia, sicut scriptum est, in nouissimis diebus instabunt tempora periculosa, ut, cum uenerint dies illi periculosi, non inueniat inparatos fideles populos, sed semper docti et eruditi contra illum inimicum antiquum serpentem et Satanan sint et parati ad resistendum.… Et docti tamquam stelle fulgebunt, et qui erudiunt plurimos tamquam splendor firmamenti in perpetuas eternitates." Translation for this and the other eschatological sermons comes from Joyce Tally Lionarons, ed. and trans., "Wulfstan's Eschatological Homilies," http://webpages.ursinus.edu/jlionarons/wulfstan/Wulfstan.html, accessed August 13, 2020 (hereafter Lionarons, "Wulfstan's Eschatological Homilies"), with each under its own subpage. Emphasis mine.

[168] The Old English version of *De Antichristo* is not only translated but simplified in detail compared to the original, which, as Lionarons argues, is for a less educated audience. Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 56.

[169] Lionarons, "Wulfstan's Eschatological Homilies"; Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 114–115: "Necesse est ergo unicuique sacerdoti, uel quicumque sacram scripturam legunt, ut oceant eos qui huius periculi ruinam nesciunt, ut et pro se et pro illis quos docent dupplicatum premium accipere mereantur a Domino, et nullus per ignorantiam pereat. Et quamuis multi hoc periculum uisuri non sunt, tamen propterea prius debent predicatores adnuntiare omnibus ut cum uenerit ille Anticristus, qui est filius perditionis, paratam inueniat plebem cristianam, qualiter contra eum et eius sectatores resistere per fidem Cristi ualeat, amen." Emphasis mine.

> And it seems to us that that time is very near at hand, for this world is from day to day always the longer the worse. Now there is gre*at need for all of God's preachers to warn God's people constantly* about the terror that is coming to mankind, *lest they be caught unawares* and be too quickly deceived by the devil. But let each priest act in his own diocese so *that the people hear it often and constantly, lest through want of instruction God's people are lost*. And although it may happen that none of us who are now alive will live then, *still we have need now earnestly to warn our sacred flocks how they may then most warily withstand the devil Antichrist himself*, when he spreads his deceitful madness most widely. And let us also now warn very earnestly against his false teachings and pray to almighty God that he protect us against that arch-criminal.[170]

The preparations Wulfstan proposes in both versions of his *De Antichristo* are specifically not for the universal Last Judgment of all souls after death. He repeatedly states that the warnings he wants priests to convey are for the benefit of those who may one day live to see the terrors and temptations brought by the Antichrist. Even though he admits (or hedges for the sake of orthodoxy) that few currently living people could expect to see the Antichrist in this world, apocalyptic warnings are necessary lest disaster come upon unprepared Christians. In short, even if the apocalypse has not come, *now* is the time to act. But how? As we have seen through his other writings, Wulfstan believed responsibility started at the top and worked down through Christian society. Thus, he addresses himself to priests and those who can (but might neglect to) teach the flocks of England about the Antichrist. As a ranking member of the Church, Wulfstan positions himself as a leader but not as the

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[170] Lionarons, "Wulfstan's Eschatological Homilies"; and Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 117–118: "7 us þincð þæt hit sy þam timan swyðe gehende, forðam þeos woruld is fram dæge to dæge a swa leng swa wyrse. Nu is mycel neod eac eallum godes bydelum þæt hy godes folc warnian gelome wið þone egesan þe mannum is towerd, þe læs þe hy unwære wurðan aredode 7 ðonne to hrædlice ðurh deofol beswicene. Ac do sacerda gehwylc on his scriftscire þæt hit man gehyre oft 7 gelome, þe læs ðe hit geweorðe þæt þurh larleste godes folc losie. 7 ðeah þæt geweorðe þæt ure ænig þe nu leofað þonne ne libbe, þeah we agan þearfe þæt we godcunde heorda warnian nu georne hu hy þam deofle Antecriste sylfan wærlicast magan þonne wiðstandan, þonne he his wodscinn widdast tobrædeð. 7 utan warnian us eac swa wið his unlara nu swyðe georne 7 god ælmihtigne georne biddan þæt he us gescylde wið þæne þeodscaðan." Emphasis mine.

solution to the Antichrist problem. Educating Christians will best be achieved, he writes, by local priests constantly keeping apocalyptic topics in the minds of their communities. Wulfstan's self-appointed task as bishop (or archbishop) is to ensure those immediately beneath him are properly guided in the ways they in turn may help those beneath them. In other words, apocalyptic preparations (like other responsibilities) differ for each person according to their station in society. The top must direct, the middle must instruct, and the lower must learn.

Wulfstan's urgency and plans are further developed in his final eschatological homilies: *De temporibus Antichristi* and *Secundum Marcum*. In *De temporibus Antichristi*, incorporating material from Adso's letter to Gerberga, the prologue from Ælfric's first series of *Catholic Homilies*, and an *exemplum* of Simon Peter confronting Simon Magus (one in a long line of false-teacher antichrists), Wulfstan lays out the future history of the Antichrist in order to provoke societal change.[171] "Beloved people," he begins, "it is greatly needful for us that we be aware of the terrifying time that is coming."[172] From there, Wulfstan describes the birth, nature, career, and powers of the Antichrist, much as Adso described him a half-century earlier, though without mention of a Last World Emperor, either Roman or Frankish. Juxtapositions between a deceitful Antichrist and a healing Christ, and between fooled sinner and stalwart Christian, are present throughout, driving

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[171] Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 58–62. Regarding the *exemplum*, the style is clearly not Wulfstan's, and it is debatable whether it was placed in the homily by Wulfstan himself or by a later scribe. I agree with Lionarons, who argues that the *exemplum* works well thematically with the rest of *De temporibus Antichristi* and that there is no reason to conclude out of hand that Wulfstan would not have added it whole cloth to his homily. See Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 62–67; Karl Jost, *Wulfstanstudien*, Swiss Studies in English 23 (Berlin: Francke, 1950), 191–192; and John C. Pope, "Review of Dorothy Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*," *Modern Language Note* 74 (1959), 338–339.
[172] Lionarons, "Wulfstan's Eschatological Homilies"; and Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 128: "Leofan men, us is mycel þearf þæt we wære beon þæs egeslican timan þe towerd is."

home the need for listeners to beware devilish influence and to seek out heavenly guidance. A lengthy digression on Simon Magus provides a historical example of a type of antichrist, a servant of the devil who fools people away from the correct teachings of Simon Peter but who will ultimately be cast down by God.[173] Wulfstan closes *De temporibus Antichristi*, a homily replete with terrors and warnings for anyone who might live during Antichrist's era, with a call to action. "We therefore have very great need to be mindful against such terror, and also to warn those who do not know what is at hand. For the time is near when ignorant people will believe. And that is seen because this world is from day to day worse and worse."[174] But the dangers are even greater than he had previously preached. Among the corrupting powers of the devil, Wulfstan adds one more:

> I also say truthfully that the devil will oppress each person's thoughts, if he may, so that he does not understand, although men tell him, what he is warned against, and *in this way most people will be deceived who are not as mindful or as well-warned in advance as they need to be*. Indeed, what living person is there who may be warned in advance well enough that he will not [be] deceived by the devil, unless almighty God protects him? But let us warn ourselves earnestly and earn from God that he protect us as his will may be.[175]

Preaching the truth about the Antichrist and the apocalypse is an inoculation against deception, but it will have little use once the devil begins to infect the world. Though

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[173] See Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 66–67.

[174] Lionarons, "Wulfstan's Eschatological Homilies"; and Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 132: "We agan þy swyðe mycle þearfe þæt we wið swylcne ege wære beon 7 eac þa warnian þe swylc nyton swylc towerd is. Forðam þe hit is nyr þam timan þonne ungelærede men gelyfan willan. 7 þæt is gesyne þy is ðeos woruld fram dæge to dæge wyrse 7 wyrse."

[175] Lionarons, "Wulfstan's Eschatological Homilies"; and Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 132–133: "Eac ic secge to soðe þæt deofol wyle ælces mannes geðanc, gyf he mæg, swyðe gelettan þæt he hit na ne understande, þeah hit him man secge, ne hine wið þæt ne warnige 7 ðurh þæt wyrð mæst manna beswicen þe hy ne beoð swa wære ne swa wel gewarnode ær swa hy beðorfton. La hwæt is se man on life buton hine god ælmihtig gehealde, 7 he ær gewarnod þe bet sy, þæt he þonne ðurh deofol beswicen ne wyrðe? Ac utan warnian us georne 7 geearnian to gode þæt he us gescylde swa his willa sy." Emphasis mine.

Wulfstan had written about the Two Witnesses combatting the Antichrist and helping the faithful during the apocalypse, humans must act *before* it starts if they are to be prepared. Wulfstan also speaks of the Two Witnesses in *Secundum Marcum*, probably the last of his eschatological homilies, where he returns to discussing the Little Apocalypse as presented in Mark 13. Unlike *Secundum Matheum* and *Secundum Lucam*, which are little more than vernacular restatements of the Latin Scriptures (with a few parts given extra emphasis), *Secundum Marcum* goes far beyond the text to paint a world both greatly fallen and poised for a yet greater collapse. According to Wulfstan, miracles will cease to flow from Christ's saints during the apocalypse as a final test of Christian commitment. The time of Antichrist will thus be so terrible, even for a world well acquainted with hardships, that Enoch and Elijah, whom God had kept safely alive for hundreds of years for this very time, would be martyred.[176] If miracles failed and the preaching of the Two Witnesses during the End Times could not fully resist the Antichrist, the solution for Wulfstan was obvious: preparation work must begin now. Previous generations of apocalyptic commentators had given God and his appointed agents sole responsibility for preparing Christians. Wulfstan, while still acknowledging God's supreme power, taught that humans must work with God to achieve divinely sanctioned protection for the elect. In these last homilies, Wulfstan rhetorically asks what good warning will do if God does not help. Nevertheless, he quickly and firmly concludes that preparations must start regardless, with humans working within, not against, the divine plan for the apocalyptic drama.

[176] Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 139–140.

Aside from these apocalyptic homilies, Wulfstan made his thoughts on the End Times known in a few other works. Wulfstan's famous *Sermo lupi ad anglos*, written c. 1013–1016 during a time of great instability and conflict in England, is laced through and through with sinfulness, disasters, calls for repentance, and a general apocalyptic tone.[177] While it is a clear example of Wulfstan's lifelong worldview, the sermon itself does not speak directly to apocalyptic preparations like those already discussed. Its form as a universal address to the English people, however, reinforces the idea that Wulfstan believed disasters (whether topical or apocalyptic) needed proper messaging in order to galvanize an entire realm to atone for misdeeds.

A better example of Wulfstan's enduring apocalyptic thought comes from another sermon written late in his career. This untitled sermon (otherwise known as Napier 50) uses some of Wulfstan's earlier works to (re)present advice for the *witan* regarding secular governance after Cnut's ascension to the throne of England in 1016.[178] For example, he echoes passages from his *Institutes of Polity*, his most elaborated vision of the structures and reforms needed in both secular and religious affairs to achieve a "Holy Society."[179] These included arguments that a Christian king had the responsibility to guide a Christian people in order to avoid divine wrath and to win heavenly rewards. It also included an early

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[177] Wulfstan of York, *Sermo lupi ad anglos*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1976), 47–67.
[178] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 143–144; and Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 71–74, 172–175.
[179] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 101–102; Patrick Wormald, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society," in *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings*, ed. David A. E. Pelteret (New York: Garland, 2000), 191–224; and Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 2–3.

version of the three orders theory of society.[180] While Wulfstan does not imagine a figure so grand as the Last World Emperor, he certainly still had the apocalypse on his mind as he composed this sermon around twenty years after the year 1000 had passed.[181] Political advice and warnings on how to avoid terrible disasters reinforce each other as Wulfstan brings the threads of his sermon to the *witan* together.[182] As he draws to a conclusion, he says that the time of the Antichrist and the end of the world is at hand, even while admitting some will not believe him.[183] After reminding his listeners that this world is full of sorrows, troubled by disasters, and not worthy of love compared to the life to come in Christ, he returns to offering advice for those who must endure calamity.

> There is a great need for us who are appointed as preachers of God to frequently warn God's people against the horror at hand for mankind, namely the archenemy Antichrist, lest they be caught unawares and then too quickly taken in by the devil. Lo, what living man is there that will not be deceived by the devil, unless God almighty preserves him and he is the better prepared beforehand?[184]

The passage continues by mentioning how Elijah and Enoch, preserved by God for the relief of Christians, fall beneath the Antichrist's persecutions.[185] Though written nearly

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[180] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop*, 103–104, 106–107, 145–146; Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 39–73; and Napier, *Wulfstan*, 266–267. The three orders as Wulfstan describes them broke society into those who prayed, those who labored, and those who fought: Rabin, *Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 106.

[181] Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 71, 174. I hold with Lionarons, who sees Wulfstan's apocalypticism transforming but not vanishing after 1000, the date itself being more meaningful for historians in retrospect than the archbishop during his lifetime. See also Milton McC. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 114; and Malcolm R. Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 154–155.

[182] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 149; and Napier, *Wulfstan*, 271.

[183] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 152; and Napier, *Wulfstan*, 272–273.

[184] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 152; and Napier, *Wulfstan*, 273: "ðy us is mycel þearf, þe to godes bydelum gesette syn, þæt we godes folc warnjan gelome wið þone egsan, þe mannum is towyrd, þæt is se þeodfeond Anticrist, þe læs þe hig unwære wurðan aredode and þonne to hrædlice þurh deofol beswicene. la hwæt, is se man on life, buton hine god ælmihtig gehealde, and he ær þe bet gewarad sy, þæt he þonne þurh deofol beswicen ne wurþe?"

[185] Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 152; and Napier, *Wulfstan*, 273.

twenty years after *Secondum Marcum*, Wulfstan here repeats his opinion that the work of the Two Witnesses cannot be relied upon to protect Christians during the apocalypse, as previous generations had argued. Instead, one must be prepared beforehand by preachers tasked specifically with training their flocks in apocalyptic topics. As perhaps Wulfstan's last word on the matter, we are left with a fairly consistent image of a vocal pastoral advocate who believed in widespread apocalyptic instruction in order to prepare Christians for the coming of the Antichrist.

Conclusion

Wulfstan's eschatological homilies, written around the year 1000 but not beholden to that date, were the culmination of a century of intellectual development among religious reformers both in England and on the Continent. Monastic reform predated Gorze, and Gorze had many similarities with other institutions in West Francia, such as Cluny and Fleury. Nevertheless, the reform movement that spread from Gorze throughout Lotharingia and into other parts of the empire after 933 carried with it personnel and texts with particular conceptions of what monks could and should do in Christian society. These beliefs included a unique emphasis on apocalyptic matters and the conviction that preaching was of special significance. These two ideas combined as early as 949–954 in Adso of Montier-en-Der's wildly popular letter to Gerberga, where the Lotharingian monk argued that the Antichrist would use false teachers. Secular powers would both prevent but also trigger the Antichrist's rise, when the Last World Emperor laid down his crown in Jerusalem. Afterwards, they, too, would fall quickly to his deceptions. The only defense

would be the preaching of the Two Witnesses who would appear *before* the Antichrist revealed himself.

Around the same time, Thietland of Einsiedeln—a monastery modeled after Gorze, just like Montier-en-Der had been—expounded upon St. Paul's prophetic second letter to the Thessalonians. In his commentary, Thietland argued that the thousand-year anniversary of Christ's Incarnation signified the approach of the End Times. Nevertheless, this was not the sole or even most important message that he believed Paul wished to convey. Paul had warned that "busybodies" would spread false beliefs in service of themselves and of the Antichrist. These false preachers, Thietland argued, were to be combatted through a campaign of counter-preaching which would replace the lies they told about the apocalypse with correct information that he had helpfully provided through his commentary.

It is impossible to know how widespread apocalyptic fears truly were in the 10th century. They do not seem to have entered Fleury, a successful monastery that had a reform tradition independent from Gorze. Nevertheless, as Abbo of Fleury's denunciations of apocalyptic beliefs emanating from Lotharingia show, apocalyptic concerns were certainly present in many places and had preachers eager to voice them. As discussed in the last chapter, when Thiota of Mainz proclaimed her prophecies that the world would end within a year of 847, she was brought before the bishop, examined, and punished after confessing her fraud.[186] In other words, apocalyptic preaching in the 9th century was quieted through judicial procedure. More than a century later, however, things had changed. Abbo supported fighting fire with fire, believing that to defeat the preaching of non-orthodox

[186] *Annales Fuldenses*, 36–37.

apocalypticism one must preach orthodoxy. In the late 10th century, one could not think of the Antichrist, even to denounced beliefs in his imminent arrival, without thinking also of preaching. Thus, even among the thoroughly Augustinian monks of Fleury, apocalypticism and preaching were intuitively inseparable.

During the 10th century, continental ideas related to monasticism, reform, education, and the apocalypse also made their way across the English Channel from both Gorzian and non-Gorzian centers. But England already had a tradition of educating Christians about the End Times, at least in part, dating back centuries and before that to Ireland. Of course, these included attempts to minimize ideas about apocalyptic imminence. Byrhtferth, writing against date setting in 1011, was following the example of Bede as much as he was his teacher Abbo. Nevertheless, though the Viking raids and invasions of the 9th century do not seem to have provoked much apocalyptic discussion in England, the end of the 10th century produced a flurry of homilies dedicated to the End Times and the Last Judgment. Most notable of all, these were largely in Old English, signifying not just an interest in apocalyptic topics but a wish to distribute that information among the non-Latinate population. Texts from the Vercelli Book, the Blickling homilies, and the prolific works of Ælfric of Eynsham and Archbishop Wulfstan II of York all speak of the pressing need for English Christians to learn about these matters in order to save their souls. Each author also wrote in Old English to help facilitate the spread of their message. And even Byrhtferth expressed his proofs against millennial urgency (while still urging moral reform in order to avoid hellfire) in the vernacular. Wulfstan, writing at the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century, expressed the shared thesis of these

various authors most powerfully, though with his own unique emphasis. He argued relentlessly throughout his life that the Antichrist was real, would come soon (even within the lives of some contemporaries), and that humans have—now—the opportunity and responsibility to prepare Christians to resist the Antichrist. Once he comes, it will be too late. Even the great Enoch and Elijah, preserved by God specifically for the Antichrist's arrival, will not be able to protect Christians.

Wulfstan's urgency is not for the edification of those who may die long before Antichrist arrives. His works describing how to structure a "Holy Society" are for those who would live near but not during the last days. Rather, he wants "proper" End Times education for the unique population of Christians who will live through the apocalyptic drama. Adso, Thietland, and other commentators discussed this chapter have the same worldview: there is a distinction to be drawn between those Christians who will die and face the Last Judgment and those who will live to see the Antichrist. This was a perspective that previous generations of apocalyptic commentators did not possess. It emerged in the 10th century with the Gorzian reform movement and spread with it, evolving as it traveled. It emerged alongside and parallel to the (relatively) more secular belief in the Last World Emperor, also popularized by Adso. After nearly a thousand years, European Christians were starting to say that there were things humans could—and should—do to prepare for the coming of the Antichrist. But aside from preaching, what did that mean?

This chapter has laid out the intellectual roots of apocalyptic preparations in Carolingian successor kingdoms and in England in the 10th century. The next and final chapter of this project will examine the first movements that emerged in the 11th century

once Christians began to believe that humans would have a degree of agency in the timing and course of the apocalyptic drama. It will begin with the desire to prepare Europe for Christ's return through the Peace of God movement and the Gregorian Reform, and it will end with the greatest attempt yet seen to force an apocalyptic event: the start of the First Crusade.

Addendum: Gorze's Eleventh-Century Tympanum

The town of Gorze still boasts a church, St. Stephen's, which dates back to the 11th century. On the façade is a tympanum depicting the Last Judgment. The image is small and relatively sparsely adorned but bears some interesting hints regarding the artist's thoughts and directions. Central to the piece is Christ, hands upheld, seated in judgment. To his right is a man looking up at him with reverence while arising from a grave. To Christ's left is a man being devoured by a dragon or hellmouth. This man's head is down with his arms supporting him, as if he were damned while still asleep. Above these figures are two angels, each with a trumpet, blowing to announce the great and terrible Day of the Lord. Meanwhile, along the same arch as the angels but at the bottom left and right extremes are a pair of devils. Though greatly worn through the toll of years, they are depicted with mouths open, as if in diabolical imitation of the heavenly noise coming from the angels' instruments.[187]

The general impression of the work, beyond the mere fact of judgment, is one of announcement and readiness—or the lack thereof. Both the angels and the devils, in their

[187] Wikipedia Commons, "Gorze Tympanum," (photograph): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GorzeTympanon.jp, accessed September 9, 2019.

own way, proclaim that judgment is here, though perhaps the mouths of the devils are speaking lies, in keeping with their depraved nature. The resurrected man greets the news of judgment with awe and hope, his eyes fixed on the savior he has long been promised. The damned soul, however, has ignored the deafening trumpet blasts (possibly lulled to sleep by the devils). Not only is he condemned to hell but he is blissfully (for the moment!) unaware, having ignored the warnings throughout his life that have been given to him.

While the St. Stephen tympanum did not exist during the lifetime of John of Gorze, Adso of Montier-en-Der, Thietland of Einsiedeln, Abbo of Fleury, or the other apocalyptic thinkers discussed in this chapter, it is useful not as inspiration for them but as evidence of the mindset present that preceded the commission of this piece. Most obviously, the Last Judgment remained of great interest to the monks of Gorze. Of course, such a subject matter for art is not too unusual, nor does it directly imply worries of an imminent apocalyptic event. The particulars of the piece, however, reinforce the idea that one must pay close attention to teachings designed to save one from damnation. Those who listen to the voice of the trumpet will awake from death, but if one slumbers instead of heeding the warnings, it will result in a sleep that becomes death.

Chapter 5: Work to be Done: The Centrality of Human Agency in Eleventh-Century Apocalyptic Thought

> The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphra′tes, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. And I saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three foul spirits like frogs; for they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ("Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!") And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew Armaged′don. The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"[1]

The 11th century witnessed many large-scale movements: grand outdoor councils in which peasants, clergy, secular rulers, and saints—or at least their relics—met together to establish peace; reforms that attempted to make priests resemble monks while disentangling bishops from secular domination; legal and extrajudicial attacks against religious minorities; mass movements of faithful across Europe; and the start of military campaigns to wrest control of Muslim lands in the name of Christ. Some of these were new to the 11th century while others were enlargements of trends already seen in the 10th century. Meanwhile, apocalyptic thought, having also evolved significantly in the 10th century, wound through all of these projects. As belief in human agency during the End Times became more common (though never wholly replacing established orthodoxy), it began to be felt and expressed through society in different ways. Nevertheless, as non-Augustinian opinions were largely shunned, it is not always easy to get clear, unambiguous expressions of apocalyptic anxiety in the primary sources dealing with eleventh-century

[1] Revelation 16:12–17.

social, political, and religious movements. It is the contention of this chapter, however, that belief in the apocalypse, and particularly in an apocalypse that could be shaped by human actions, was an important factor in several programs that influenced European society in the late 10th and throughout the 11th century. Only some authors were explicit in their apocalyptic concerns, but interest in reshaping society with an eye to the End Times drama that flowed out of the Gorze reform movement can still be seen.

As with the previous chapter, here I rely on the work of scholars who viewed potential apocalyptic and social transformations that straddled the year 1000 but without directly engaging with the quantitative issues they debate. Were apocalyptic anxieties greater around the years 1000 or 1033? Was there a conspiracy of silence to keep apocalyptic rumor out of the official record? Were apocalyptic sources mere islands in a sea of eschatological indifference? Richard Landes, a strong voice for the real existence of apocalyptic belief in the 10th and 11th centuries, has argued that many contemporary clergy recognized that they were surrounded by people who believed in an imminent apocalypse but quietly omitted such unacceptable views from the historical record so as to keep them from disturbing society at large. The few examples of apocalyptic language we see, therefore, are examples of the curtain being pulled back ever so slightly on a much larger reality.[2] Alternatively, Sylvain Gouguenheim, among others, has countered by accusing historians like Landes of misreading seemingly apocalyptic language out of context. There

[2] Landes, "Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled," 137–211. See also Richard Landes, "On Owls, Roosters, and Apocalyptic Time: A Historical Method for Reading a Refractory Documentation," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 49 (1995): 49–69; and, "Introduction: The *Terribles espoirs* of 1000 and the Tacit Fears of 2000," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David. C. Van Meter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3–15.

was no conspiracy because there never was widespread excitement over the years 1000 and 1033.[3] While in my opinion Gouguenheim's arguments demonstrate a misunderstanding of how apocalyptic belief manifests (as well as how historians must rely on fragmentary evidence), a tempered version of Landes's general position is expressed by James Palmer. Apocalyptic language is both forward- and backward-looking, being used to anticipate change and call for action while also recontextualizing the past to make sense of God's plan.[4] Thus apocalyptic thought could be widespread like Landes argued while not being so intense as to require a conspiracy of silence to explain the relative paucity of documentation. In fact, the evidence is not quite so uncommon as once believed, being found intermixed throughout reform rhetoric. This chapter will not directly seek to answer the quantitative question, "How common was belief in an imminent apocalypse in the 11th century?" The number of individuals concerned about the rise of the Antichrist does not necessarily affect whether or not they believed humans could have any hand in shaping apocalyptic events. And even if seemingly apocalyptic sources were merely examples of rhetorical flourishes and not reflective of social anxieties (which is highly dubious), significance changes in what was possible for such rhetoric occurred throughout the 11th century. Nevertheless, I fully agree with Palmer that apocalyptic concerns were present and by no means rare, and hopefully this analysis of changes in the quality of apocalyptic thought can help scholars better investigate its quantitative dimension.

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[3] Sylvain Gouguenheim, *Les fausses terreurs de l'an mil: Attente de la fin du monde ou approfondissement de la foi?* (Paris: Picard, 1999), 65–92. Dominique Barthélemy has similar views. See discussion of the Peace of God below.

[4] James T. Palmer, "To Be Found Prepared: Eschatology and reform rhetoric ca. 570–ca. 640," in *Apocalypse and Reform from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. Matthew Gabriele and James T. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 2019), 33–35.

To be sure, the 11th century did not overturn all that came before it, but apocalyptic thought at this time was an aspect of eleventh-century European culture that both caused and was affected by changes from the wider society. Though historians may debate the severity of change in other aspects of European life during the 11th century, this chapter will show that the transformations made to apocalyptic thought, carried over from the 10th century, were indeed powerful and permanent. Increasingly severe disasters or an "objective" worsening of social, political, or economic conditions are not necessary prerequisites in this analysis. Signs of the End are in the eye of the beholder. Efforts to foster peace, reform the Church, and spread faith before the apocalypse need not have occurred in a world full of violence, apostacy, and faithlessness. But whatever the actual state of society, apocalyptic speculation was increasingly seen in an active light, something that required unique planning and execution rather than mere rhetoric to support traditional forms of piety and conservative religious expression. It was in the 11th century that discussion of the apocalypse, so long a nebulous reminder to individuals to prepare for the Day of Judgment, transformed into a call for men and women throughout Christian society to become agents of God's will here on earth.

The Peace of God

The Peace of God councils of the late 10th and 11th centuries are the subject of wide disagreement. Geoffrey Koziol recently summed up the lack of scholarly consensus in terms reminiscent of Charles Dickens's opening to *A Tale of Two Cities*. Millennial and popular, non-millennial and elitist, a victory over the secular powers, a success for the

secular powers, headed by reformist monks, led by bishops and lords, the Peace of God "has been thought one of the most transformative events of the Middle Ages. It has been thought a sideshow."[5] A decade before that, Thomas Head referred to the Peace of God and its era as "at the center of an historiographical minefield."[6]

The older historiography stated that from 989 (or possibly as early as 975) to the 1040s a lack of overarching authority in southern France and an increase in violence by local castellans led to a popular religious backlash aimed at restoring peace and protecting those most at risk. Calls for protection primarily meant safety for the clergy, churches, and church property, but it also extended to unarmed peasant civilians and those accompanying the clergy who were not actively participating in violence. To enforce this peace—the Peace of God—bishops led large peasant populations in outdoor gatherings where nobles would swear before an array of relics to abide by the Peace on pain of excommunication. These oaths were to be repeated every five years. These Peace assemblies occurred at the end of the 10th century, stalled for a few decades, but then reemerged with vigor in the 1020s. In the 11th century, having spread and been adapted outside of southern France, the earlier Peace of God became more regularized into the Truce of God—which prohibited violence for most of the year—and later into state-sponsored law codes that relegated "legal" violence to the secular authorities.[7]

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[5] Geoffrey Koziol, *The Peace of God* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018), 1.
[6] Thomas Head, "Peace and Power in France Around the Year 1000," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 23 (2006): 1–17, at 1.
[7] 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: Cornell University Press, 1992), 1–20, at 7–9.

This vision of the Peace of God has never been fully unified even within older scholarship. Both its details and its place in larger historical developments continue to be called into question, especially the so-called socio-political French "transformation of the year 1000." Was the Peace new or simply an extension of Carolingian principles? Did clerics and peasants extract oaths from lay lords, or did the nobles orchestrate events of which ecclesiastics later claimed ownership? Was peasant participation central or periphery to these events? Did the Peace protect church lands or simply confirm that local rulers had authority over church property within their areas of control? Were Peace assemblies called because of an increase of violence brought about by political anarchy, or have portraits of a barbarous 11th century been myths historians have too readily bought into? These questions are legion, and each attempt to answer them is the source of a new round of scholarly debate. But despite these challenges and the need for more research on the Peace of God movement as a whole, as R. I. Moore writes, through the 10th and 11th centuries it "expressed and embraced a series of responses to changes as profound as their causes were mysterious," making it "the harbinger of a new age."[8]

One aspect of the Peace included within these debates has been its relationship to apocalyptic expectations and millennial enthusiasm, especially in proximity to the years 1000 and 1033. Richard Landes, who advocates for an extreme position that holds a conspiracy of silence pervaded the ecclesiastical hierarchy to hide apocalyptic belief from the official record, sees the Peace of God as prompted and shaped by widespread

[8] R. I. Moore, "Postscript: The Peace of God and the Social Revolution," in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*, ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 308–326, at 309, 326.

apocalyptic excitement.[9] Landes has come under critique, notably by Dominique Barthélemy. Barthélemy takes exception to historians who see France in the 10th and 11th centuries simply as the home of severe disruptions solved only by a feudal transformation of society. As part of his work, he names the Peace of God as another victim of over-anxious scholars seeing signs of crisis and even apocalyptic fears where there were none. Instead, he argues, references to apocalyptic imagery and antichrists surrounding the Peace were merely rhetorical embellishments.[10] Both men overstate their cases. James Palmer, while acknowledging the problems with Landes's position,[11] points out to Barthélemy in the context of the Peace of God in France, "Nevertheless, it remains that antichrist rhetoric was not common before the second half of the tenth century, so we are dealing with a real cultural change in which language of opposition has shifted to incorporate more apocalyptic motifs."[12] If rhetoric, whether superficial or sincere, is so important to this subject, from whence comes apocalyptic language into the Peace movement? Perhaps from the start with a man bearing both Gerberga's and Gorze's influence.

As Bernard Bachrach has shown, the origins of the Peace movement have their roots in northern France, or at least in a man from the north named Guy.[13] Guy came from

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[9] Richard Landes, "*Millenarismus absconditus*: l'historiographie augustinienne et le millénarisme du haut Moyen Age jusqu'à l'an Mil," *Le Moyen Age* 98 (1992): 355–377; *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes (989–1034)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 24–49, 285–327; and "Between Aristocracy and Heresy: Popular Participation in the Limousin Peace of God, 994–1033," in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*, ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 184–218. See discussion of the quantitative question in chapter introduction above.

[10] Dominique Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 245–301.

[11] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 5, 223–224.

[12] Ibid., 217.

[13] Bernard Bachrach, "The Northern Origins of the Peace Movement at Le Puy in 975," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions historiques* 14 (1987): 405–21.

a comital Angevin family and was sent south at the behest of King Lothair, Queen Gerberga's son, in 975 to become bishop of Le Puy. While it seems that Guy was not trained in a Gorzian establishment, during his early career he was lay abbot of several Benedictine reform monasteries and participated with Hincmar of Saint-Remi in Rheims (a Gorze community) in reforming other locations.[14] Not long after arriving in Le Puy,[15] Guy called for an assembly of both *rustici* and *milites* to enforce a peace both for the sake of the local church and as an expression of royal power.[16] This peace differed from the later Peace of God, as it did not include relics, the threat of excommunication, nor other staples of later years. Nevertheless, Guy participated in the second "official" Peace of God assembly at Le Puy in 994 (the first being at Charroux in 989) as well as two other lesser known attempts to restrain secular rulers and promote peace between 975 and 994.[17] We will see other connections to Gorze in the context of the Peace of God further below.

Despite the numerous Peace assemblies that took place from the late 10th to mid-11th century, information on them is hard to access. This is complicated by the forger Ademar of Chabannes's very detailed account of two assembly debates—at Bourges and at Limoges in 1031—being quite possibly fictitious themselves.[18] Thus, while we know the final version of the terms laid out in many of these gatherings—consistently focused

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[14] Ibid., 406; and Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform*, 140–141, 143–144.
[15] The dating for this event varies from 975 to as late as 980. I have chosen to go with the earliest possible date as this is the most consistently given among historians, though a later date does not negatively impact my argument.
[16] Bachrach, "Northern Origins of the Peace Movement," 409–413.
[17] Ibid., 413–421; Head, "Peace and Power in France Around the Year 1000," 4; and Christian Lauranson-Rosaz, "Peace from the Mountains: The Auvergnat Origins of the Peace of God," in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*, ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 104–134, especially 116–121, 127–129.
[18] Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, 277; and Head, "Peace and Power in France Around the Year 1000," 6.

on protection of church property, peasant property, and unarmed civilians (especially priests and monks)—what was discussed at these meetings and how decisions were reached remains hidden. Nevertheless, we do have some idea about what these Peace assemblies meant to people recording and reflecting on them after the fact. Prominent among these is Rodulfus Glaber, "the historian of the Millennium."[19]

The Burgundian monk Rodulfus Glaber (c. 980–c. 1046) chronicled both the millennial generation and the later Peace of God movement.[20] Glaber was an unusual monk with a complicated relationship with monastic authority figures. He was ejected from his first monastery (likely Saint-Germaine-d'Auxerre) due to his temperament but displayed signs of literary promise. The rest of Glaber's life saw him attaching himself to various monastic communities around Burgundy. Some of these tenures were very short, but the most significant were Saint-Bénigne at Dijon and Cluny, after which he returned once more to Saint-Germaine-d'Auxerre, where he is believed to have died.[21] Glaber is usually seen as Cluniac in outlook, though he was there only a few years. His works are certainly complimentary of Cluniac reforms, and his *Histories* is dedicated to Odilo of Cluny.[22] Nevertheless, his life was touched perhaps most by St. William (962–1031), the abbot of Saint-Bénigne, of whom Glaber wrote a *vita*. William, a reformer with his own connections to Cluny, was a northern Italian count's son. Glaber tells us the future saint had the honor after his baptism in infancy to have been held in the arms of none other than Otto I's second

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[19] See John France, "Introduction," in *Rodulfus Glaber Opera*, ed. and trans. John France, Neithard Bulst, and Paul Reynolds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), xxiii.
[20] Ibid., xix–xxxiv.
[21] As France points out, the exact dating and placement of Rodulfus Glaber is imprecise.
[22] Rodulfus Glaber, *Histories*, in *Rodulfus Glaber Opera*, ed. and trans. John France, Neithard Bulst, and Paul Reynolds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 2–3.

wife, Adelaide.[23] Despite his interest in Cluniac style reforms, William's primary monastery, Saint-Bénigne, was also part of the Gorze reform network. After having written his treatise on the Antichrist for Gerberga by 954, Adso of Montier-en-Der found appointments as abbot at multiple communities, including Saint-Bénigne for two years. Adso was thus William's predecessor. Unlike his colleague, William is not known for his apocalypticism, but he did experience eschatological dreams.[24] Moreover, based on the necrologies of both houses, the monks of Saint-Bénigne and Gorze prayed for each other's dead, the result of deep friendship that bridged (or ignored) any differences between Cluniac and Gorzian reform models.[25] William's invocation of Matthew 5:13–16 when reproving a pope, as Glaber records in two places, also mirrored the Gorzian rhetoric of worldly involvement that Phyllis Jestice has identified as emanating from that monastery in the 10th century.[26] William would redouble connections with Gorze, being its temporary abbot from 1012 to 1017 as part of a larger plan to help reforming efforts in Lotharingia and northern France.[27] Saint-Bénigne should thus not be seen as aligned merely with Cluny but as having multiple ties to reforming networks, with special links to Gorze and its extended communities. As Rodulfus Glaber spent a significant amount of time at Saint-

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[23] Rodulfus Glaber, *The Life of Saint William*, in *Rodulfus Glaber Opera*, ed. and trans. John France, Neithard Bulst, and Paul Reynolds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 256–257.
[24] Neithard Bulst, *Untersuchungen zu den Klosterreformen Wilhelms von Dijon (962–1031)* (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1973), 195.
[25] Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform*, 144–145; France, "Introduction," lxxix; Bulst, *Untersuchungen zu den Klosterreformen Wilhelms*, 31–34; and Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*, 442–448.
[26] See Phyllis Jestice, "The Gorzian Reform and the Light under the Bushel," 51–78; Glaber, *Histories*, 174–175; and Glaber, *The Life of Saint William*, 280–283.
[27] Glaber, *The Life of Saint William*, 296–297; and Bulst, *Untersuchungen zu den Klosterreformen Wilhelms*, 86–91, 106–114. Bulst acknowledges William's Cluniac connections but argues that Gorze should be acknowledged as an important center in his reforming endeavors. Bulst, *Untersuchungen zu den Klosterreformen Wilhelms*, 114: "Die Klöster, in denen Wilhelm Abt gewesen war, sollten auch fortan keine isolierte Gruppe bilden."

Bénigne and was obviously highly respectful of William as abbot, Glaber, too, should be seen as partaking in a Gorzian influence.[28] Moreover, Glaber tells us that it was at William's own prompting that he began work on his *Histories* based around the theme of the millennium,[29] a request all the more intelligible when one realizes how closely William was aligned with Gorze. This is important because perhaps no other French historian in the 11th century is as obsessed with the idea of the millennial anniversaries of Christ's Incarnation and Passion and their influence on contemporary society as Rodulfus Glaber.

Rodulfus Glaber's place as "the historian of the Millennium" is earned not just for his work chronicling the years surrounding 1000 and 1033 but also for his emphasis on apocalyptic matters affecting his society. The years 1000 and 1033 were not necessarily apocalyptic themselves. Such precise dates are sometimes more important to Augustinian theologians interested in proving the End Times cannot be at hand if they have passed without a universal cataclysm than for non-Augustinian apocalyptic believers convinced of Christ's imminent return.[30] Nevertheless, the proximity of these two years meant that time seemed short for Glaber. As John France writes, "The significance of the millennial years to Glaber was not that they presaged the end of the world, though he did believe he was living in the last age before the end, but that in them God offered men a new and

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[28] It should be remembered that Cluny attempted to have a more tightly regulated network than Gorze did. In other words, Cluny purposefully positioned itself so that its community would be mentioned as worthy of emulation while Gorze maintained more of a loose association with its sister monasteries. Thus, it is not surprising that Cluny and not Gorze would be more prominently mentioned by Rodulfus Glaber, even though he had been influenced by both networks.

[29] Glaber, *Life of Saint William*, 294–297; and Richard Landes, "Rodulphus Glaber and the Dawn of the New Millennium: Eschatology, Historiography, and the Year 1000," *Revue Mabillon* n.s. 7 [= t. 68] (1996): 55–77, especially 66, 72.

[30] See Landes, "Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled," 137–211; and chapter 4 of this dissertation, in which Abbo of Fleury confronts an apocalyptic preacher.

special opportunity for salvation, an opportunity inevitably spurned through sin."[31] In other words, Glaber believed the millennial anniversaries of Christ's birth and death, viewed with an eye toward Antichrist's fast approach, brought with them the chance for Christians to prepare for the End Times in ways previously unavailable or inappropriate. This prominently included the Peace of God movement, but as shall be seen later, Rodulfus Glaber provided commentary on many other forms of apocalyptic preparations in the early 11th century.

While the entirety of Glaber's *Histories* is riddled with prodigies, escalating tensions, and the constant reminder that it has been a thousand years since Christ was on earth, the fourth book presents a dense assortment of physical and spiritual hopes and fears. It also treats the Peace of God. The book begins by coupling the two millennial anniversaries, 1000 and 1033, as equally momentous times.

> After 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.[32]

Like Koziol's depiction of the Peace of God scholarship that mirrors the opening lines of *A Tale of Two Cities*, the picture Glaber presents of the years surrounding 1033 is full of extremes. Many saintly men perished as 1033 approached, including Emperor Henry II, Pope Benedict VII, King Robert II, Fulbert of Chartres, and William of Saint-Bénigne.[33]

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[31] France, "Introduction," lxiv.

[32] Glaber, *Histories*, 170–171: "Post multiplicia prodigiorum signa quę tam ante quam post, circa tamen annum Christi Domini millesimum in orbe terrarum contigere, plures fuisse constat sagaci mente uiros industrios, qui non his minora propinquante eiusdem dominicae passionis anno millesimo fore predixere; quod utique euidentissime contigit."

[33] Ibid., 170–171, 184–187. Some of these men died nearly a decade before 1033, but they were close enough for Glaber to imagine them as departing together.

At the same time, according to Glaber, a global famine struck, caused by violent and unending storms, that put the whole human race at risk. All of nature seemed to have been overturned due to human sin, especially among those in religious orders. The previous order that had sustained the world seemed to have come to an end, and it looked as if the same would be true for all humanity. Yet for all the divine judgment, there were few willing to repent.[34] Seeing people attempting to survive the terrible famine without proper contrition, Glaber writes with a shake of the head: "Some tried to escape death by eating the roots and the herbs of the stream, but in vain, for there is no escape from the wrath of the vengeance of God except to God himself."[35] The whole episode is reminiscent of the futility of sinners in Luke 23:30 or Revelation 6:16 to escape from God's vengeance during the End Times, even though they cry to the mountains to fall on them. Glaber ends his account of these three years of famine by lamenting how slow humans are to repent: "For there was a certain hardness of heart and stupidity of mind. For the supreme Judge and Author of all goodness gives the desire to pray, and He knows when He ought to have mercy."[36] Fortunately, God was indeed merciful.

Immediately after his vivid descriptions of hunger, sin, and death, Glaber reverses the tenor of his narrative. "At the millennium of the Lord's Passion, which followed these years of famine and disaster, by divine mercy and goodness the violent storms ended.…The whole surface of the earth was benignly verdant, portending ample produce which

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[34] Ibid., 186–193.
[35] Ibid., 188–189: "Quidam uero fecere confugium euadende mortis ad radices siluarum herbasque fluuiorum; sed nequicquam; non ergo aufugium ire ultionis Dei, nisi ad semetipsum."
[36] Ibid., 192–193: "Erat enim in hominibus quedam duricia cordis cum ebetudine mentis. Et quoniam ille summus iudex ex auctor totius bonitatis dat uelle rogare se, qui nouit quando debeat miserere."

altogether banished want."[37] Glaber links this happy news with the renewal of the Peace councils.

> It was then that the bishops and abbots and other devout men of Aquitaine first summoned great councils of the whole people, to which were borne the bodies of many saints and innumerable caskets of holy relics.…Throughout the dioceses it was decreed that in fixed places the bishops and magnates of the entire country should convene for re-establishing peace and consolidating the holy faith. When the people heard this, great, middling, and poor, they came rejoicing and ready, one and all, to obey the commands of the clergy no less than if they had been given by a voice from heaven speaking to men on earth. For all were still cowed by the recent carnage, and feared lest they might not obtain future abundance and plenty.[38]

Glaber praised the Peace councils of his day in the strongest terms. Here was a chance for law and righteousness to act for the people's good, both materially and spiritually. It was such a positive moment in human affairs that nature blessed the harvests that followed with special abundance.[39]

Unfortunately, he was forced to lament the ultimate inadequacy of the Peace to survive the sin and avarice of his era. "But alas!" Glaber writes: because of humanity's constant tendency to fall into sin, greed corrupted both the religious and lay leaders, and they returned to their crimes, followed shortly by the lower classes through the lack of moral guidance.[40] Nevertheless, though lasting peace did not follow, faithfulness—in the

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[37] Ibid., 194–195: "Anno a passione Domini millesimo, memorate cladis penurias subsequente, sedates nimborum imbribus, respect diuine bonitatis et misericordia…telluris quoque tota superficies amicabiliter uirens frugum habundantiam funditus inopiam expellendo portendere."

[38] Ibid., 194–195: "Tunc ergo primitus cepere in Aquitanie partibus ab episcopis et abbatibus ceterisque uiris sacre religionis deuotis ex uniuersa plebe conadunari conciliorum conuentus, ad quos etiam multa delata sunt corpora sanctorum atque innumerabiles sanctarum apoforete reliquiarum…per uniuersos episcopatus indictum est qualiter certis in locis a presulibus magnatisque totius patrie de reformanda pace et sacre fidei institutione celebrarentur concilia. Quod etiam tota multitude uniuerse plebis audiens, letanter adiere maximi, mediocres ac minimi, parati cuncti obedire quicquid preceptum fuisset a pastoribus ecclesie, non minus uidelicet quam si uox emissa de celo hominibus in terra loqueretur. Terrebat enim uniuersos clades preteriti temporis, instabatque metus ne <non> adipiscerentur opulentiam future ubertatis."

[39] Ibid., 196–197.

[40] Ibid., 196–199: "Sed heu! pro dolor!"

form of a mass pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the year 1033—did.[41] Yet the Peace councils mentioned here were not the first failures to successfully change society, whether one expected such changes to be universal or merely local. As a historian, Glaber gives no indication that Peace councils had, in fact, long predated 1033. His opinion on the motivations of those involved being spurred only by the recent famine thus cannot be accepted. Nevertheless, for assessing the evolution of apocalyptic thought, Glaber's depiction of events around 1033 are quite significant. The right path was clear if only it could be followed by Christians willing to pursue it and able to impose their vision on a larger world. For Glaber, the years surrounding 1033 were certainly mixed: death, sin, famine, Peace councils, disappointment, and pilgrimage. These events, however, did not obscure the path forward—one that relied on human activity, albeit with God's help—but brought it into better focus through the lessons learned from failure and sabotage. But, as will be seen below, for a reformer, it was quite useful to be a pessimist when recounting events from the recent past, and Glaber came from a long and growing line of apocalyptically minded reformers.

Glaber's connection to Gorze and Gorzian apocalyptic thought through his idol, William of Saint-Bénigne, is therefore certainly present. His more prominent association with Cluny (which Glaber himself emphasized) does not problematize this assessment but rather reveals another aspect of non-traditional apocalyptic thought in the 11th century. It was expanding outside of Lotharingia. We have already seen this in England, where a centuries-old connection to Gorze and an interest in Adso's treatise helped inspire men like

[41] More on Jerusalem and pilgrimage below.

Ælfric and Wulfstan in the late 10th and early 11th centuries. Through Glaber, we see the same happening on the Continent. The apocalyptic speculations Abbo of Fleury thought he had routed in Paris and contained in Lotharingia had spread through the very reform efforts men like he were championing. As a "Cluniac," Glaber's interest in the actions Christians might take before Christ's return beyond traditional repentance signals a new phase in the evolution of apocalyptic speculation on the Continent. Glaber should not be seen as the first of such a transformation (Glaber's *Histories* was not terribly popular)[42] but as one of the early voices we can still hear in a process that had begun to defuse throughout European thought. These ripples from Gorze would have many other effects beyond Lotharingia and Burgundy, ones that would help reshape the Latin church.

Eleventh-Century Reform

While the precise significance for the Peace movements of the late 10th and 11th centuries remains a subject of debate, the councils were certainly only part of a much larger trend within Europe to refashion Christian society.[43] Reform had been spreading through European monasteries since the beginning of the 10th century (and possibly earlier).[44] But by the 11th century, reform had left the monastic enclosures and had begun to make

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[42] France, "Introduction," lxxxii, xcvii, cvi.

[43] See multiple essays in Thomas Head and Richard Landes, ed., *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), but especially Amy G. Remensnyder, "Pollution, Purity, and Peace: An Aspect of Social Reform between the Late Tenth Century and 1076," 280–307. See also Michael Frassetto, "Heresy, Celibacy, and Reform in the Sermons of Ademar of Chabannes," in *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 131–148. Dominique Barthélemy, of course, disagrees with the very premise, saying the Peace of God "had no capacity to change social values": *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*, 203.

[44] See Allen Cabaniss, trans., *Benedict of Aniane, the Emperor's Monk: Ardo's Life* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2008).

demands on others aspects of society. A complete history of the reform movement, climaxing with the career of Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085), is beyond the scope of the present work. Nevertheless, reform is intimately connected with apocalyptic concerns. James Palmer, speaking more generally about apocalyptic thought around the year 1000 than this study, writes that "apocalyptic traditions and rhetoric are about directing and conceptualising change."[45] Palmer is quick to qualify this statement. Reform, especially around the first millennium, was not necessarily always, or even often, millenarian. Nevertheless, there was a constant, if mostly subtle, apocalyptic tension as thinkers and leaders strove to improve their community.[46] This was especially true during Gregory VII's pontificate, when the label "antichrist" was used rhetorically for a variety of enemies and political battles, including the Investiture Controversy.[47] As the 12th century reflected on the First Crusade, reformist apocalyptic language would only increase, with the lines between rhetoric and practice narrowing.[48] Yet already for some in the 11th century, this tension between apocalyptic language and action was far closer to the surface and noticeably informed their reforming efforts. In this, they ironically broke away from older traditions while furthering a new one that increasingly expected and promoted human agency in apocalyptic matters.

Reform in the 11th century included the idea of increased religiosity among the laity who would spiritually benefit from the improvements made in the lives and actions of

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[45] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 225.
[46] Ibid., 233.
[47] Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 37–40.
[48] Ibid., 72–99.

monks and clergy. This meant that the laity increasingly sought to attach themselves to centers of reform piety. This of course had been done for centuries, but the more communities like Cluny spread, the more they were seen as worthy of even more faith (and endowments).[49] Cluny in particular emphasized eschatological elements of Christian theology, often celebrating or developing new rituals for the Office of the Dead, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day. Each of these promoted celebrants and society at large to connect with the dead under the shadow of the universal Last Judgment.[50] But were the demands of the laity to become part of these reformers' rites indicative of apocalyptic concerns or the same eschatological self-help that had existed in Christianity since the earliest years? Patricia Ranft is definitive in her answer to this question. Though Cluny developed a complex eschatology that encouraged change within society, she believes change was antithetical to apocalyptic thought. She writes, "For the eschatology that Cluny developed was not an apocalyptic eschatology, with an envisioned future discontinuous with the present, a future attained by sudden and dramatic intervention, independent of human agency."[51] The distinction Ranft makes, however, between human and divine agency regarding apocalyptic matters, which we have seen long existed in Christian theology, was actually in the process of evolving just as Cluny was promoting a framework for social transformation. Recall also Palmer's words about how apocalyptic reasoning is all about

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[49] See Barbara Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 8–12, 202–207.

[50] Patricia Ranft, "The Maintenance and Transformation of Society through Eschatology: Cluniac Monasticism," *Journal of Religious History* 14, no. 3 (1987): 246–255, at 248. The same argument Ranft makes in this article she repeats with minor additions in the context of Peter Damian's writings in *The Theology of Work: Peter Damian and the Medieval Religious Renewal Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 34–49.

[51] Ranft, "The Maintenance and Transformation," 249.

"directing and conceptualising change." Ranft may well be correct with regard to how Cluny approached a non-apocalyptic eschatology that sought to refashion society, discussed more below. Even so, as she explicitly notes, Cluny's own works-based eschatology to improve society's spiritual health was not innovative but part of a long tradition[52] (ironically, it was also part of the older apocalyptic tradition we have discussed in previous chapters).

Yet in the 11th century, this approach was not opposed to contemporary apocalypticism but was rather in step with and supportive of the ways apocalyptic thought was developing. The potential for human agency had certainly been excluded from apocalyptic thought for centuries, but this had begun to change in the 10th century through the work of Adso, the spread of apocalyptic speculation along Gorzian networks, and the sermons of men like Ælfric and Wulfstan. In the 11th century, as Cluny and others came to see social transformation as necessary for the soul of Christendom on Judgment Day, apocalyptic thinkers joined them—in fact, as with Rudolfus Glaber, they were sometimes the very same people—believing that reform was a necessary prerequisite as society prepared for the quickly approaching onslaught of the Antichrist. It is quite possible, even likely, that most people at Cluny and those who followed their lead rejected overt apocalyptic attitudes, but that does not mean that the reverse was true, that those who speculated on the apocalypse ignored the Cluniac call for a reformed society. Increasingly for such people, the End would indeed come suddenly and through divine intervention, but

[52] Ibid., 249.

leaders like the Last World Emperor, preachers like those taught by the archbishop of York, and monks and even lay allies laboring for society as a whole would pave the way.

Rodulfus Glaber had far more to discuss in his *Histories* than simply famines and the Peace of God. As a pupil of William of Saint-Bénigne and an admirer of Cluny, he was dedicated to religious reform in a society sorely in need of it.[53] While Glaber might well deserve the title "historian of the Millennium," he saw a significant portion of the events of his day as the result of sinful abuses and improper leadership among the secular and religious elites. Greed—in all its forms, not merely simony—appears frequently in the *Histories*. Great wealth is itself evidence of a corrupt nature, and its mere appearance in Glaber's narrative suggests its owner might well be morally deficient.[54] Churches could justify possessing great wealth because it could be used for charitable purposes during emergencies.[55] Otherwise, as wealth and power went together, moral problems were not of mere individual concern. Society was deteriorating around Glaber because of greed more than any other vice. But Glaber thought about both the ills afflicting the larger community and the ways God might send relief. Since the beginning of time, God has sent signs through the natural world as well as wise men (*sagacissimorum uirorum*), producing equal parts fear and hope (*tam spem quam formidolostatem*) in the population in order to reveal the divine will.[56] Such portents would continue until "this world's mass of diverse troubles" comes to an end in the seventh age.[57] For Glaber, the End Times and greed—the most

[53] France, "Introduction," lxii-lxiii.
[54] Glaber, *Histories*, 68–73, 128–129, 178–179, 182–185, 198–199, 210–213, 250–253.
[55] Ibid., 36–37, 40–41, 190–193, 214–215.
[56] Ibid., 44–45.
[57] Ibid., 46–47: "huius mundane molis diuersorum laborum."

troubling sin of his era—were closely linked. "Holy Gospel reveals as an evident fact that as the last days go by charity will be chilled and iniquity will blossom amongst men, who will face times dangerous for their souls."[58] As such, wise men like William (or Glaber himself) were needed to read the signs, call out greed, and steer Christian society toward God as the world rapidly approached its end.

Such views find parallels in Glaber's contemporaries across the English Channel, Ælfric of Eynsham and Wulfstan of York. Their works (particularly Wulfstan's) diagnosed social ills as traceable to moral failings in the elite, who should lead by example those Christians of lower status. Failure to do so would not necessarily trigger the apocalyptic drama, but neither would reform prevent divine will. Instead, the crises surrounding greed and poor leadership was evidence of the coming End. Reform was thus a final opportunity to prepare Christianity for the inevitable, an opportunity that had not been given to previous generations.

Glaber's hope for reform after Cluny's example, of course, was part of a much larger religious reform movement of the 11th century that eventually spread to the highest ecclesiastical levels under Hildebrand of Sovana, who reigned as Gregory VII from 1073 to 1085. The so-called Gregorian Reform has not often been seen as arising from apocalyptic anxieties, and there are many reasons to account for supporting reform without appeal to the End Times. Nevertheless, as has been seen, reform and apocalyptic rhetoric were not strangers in the early 11th century. Moreover, the rapidly expanding horizons of

[58] Ibid., 68–69: "Sacro igitur premonente eloquio, luce clarius conpertum habetur quoniam in processu nouissimorum dierum, frigescente in hominibus caritate ac superabundante iniquitate, instabunt periculosa animarum tempora."

reform throughout the 11th century meant that apocalyptic speculation linked to it would be transformed as well, shedding purely eschatological concerns about an individual's soul to the more societally focused problems of apocalyptic preparation and agency that we have seen gradually developing in Latinate Europe. One of Hildebrand's friends and a voice for reform, a cleric named Peter Damian, did precisely that. An examination of Damian and his writings will thus reveal the further development of apocalyptic thought in the 11th century as it increasingly came to assume an important role for contemporary Christians in the realization of the divine plan after the Gorzian model.

Peter Damian and (the Failure to) Witness

Peter Damian (c. 1007–1072) was born in Ravenna. He grew up under monastic discipline and later became cardinal bishop of Ostia, though he eventually sought and received permission to withdraw from ecclesiastic responsibilities. An unrepentant moralist, his many preserved letters testify to a lifetime dedicated to reform. In them he expressed his vigorous support for reforming ideas while having the ears of many important persons throughout Europe, including both emperors and popes (with his reforming friend Hildebrand becoming Pope Gregory VII not long after Damian's death).[59] Insistent spread of reform was not simply a strategy for Damian but was central to his theology. It was also a lifelong paradox for Damian, who preferred the cloistered life of a monk to the worldly responsibilities of a cardinal bishop. In reform, however, he sought to "change the temporal

[59] Patricia Ranft, *The Theology of Peter Damian: "Let Your Life Always Serve as a Witness"* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 15–29.

world to ready it for the world of eternity."[60] With such a view of eschatological preparations from a highly placed authority who had the attention of many in power, both among the clergy and in secular officers, Damian's thoughts on the apocalypse are worthy of inspection.

Though he did express belief in an imminent apocalypse,[61] Peter Damian was not the apocalyptic radical that Rudolfus Glaber had been. In Damian we see a more Augustinian yet nevertheless human-oriented vision of the apocalypse. This is because, like Glaber, apocalyptic events were intimately connected to human depravity as well as human reforming efforts. Patricia Ranft has characterized Damian's approach to religious reform—indeed, his whole life[62]—as based around the concept of "witness," which "mandates a relationship between the individual and the community. It is a demanding relationship of communication and interdependence: to be saved, one must save others. Moreover, it involves the whole person and all society, for witness is comprehensive, not selective."[63] Damian was personally inclined more towards eremitism than communal monasticism, as evidenced by a *vita* he wrote in praise of St. Romuald (c. 951–c. 1025/1027).[64] As Ranft notes, the monastic reforms radiating from both Gorze and Cluny were powerful, but contact with the world was at odds with the ideals of holy isolation,

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[60] Ibid., 8.
[61] For example, Peter Damian, Letter 96, in *Peter Damian: Letters 91–120*, vol. 5, trans. Owen J. Blum (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of American Press, 1989), 65 (hereafter Blum, *Damian Letters V*); and *Opere di Pier Damiani: Lettere (91–112)*, vol. 5, ed. N. D'Acunto and L. Saraceno, Italian trans. A. Dindelli, C. Somigli, and L. Saraceno (Rome: Città Nuova, 2011), 108: "Et quid aliud inter haec tot flagitiorum mala perpendimus, nisi quia venturo citius antichristo via iam sternitur, per quam inoffensis nequitatiae suae vestigiis gradiatur?"
[62] Ranft, *Theology of Peter Damian*, 36.
[63] Ibid., 11.
[64] Ibid., 30, 34–36; and Peter Damian, *Vita s. Romualdi*, in PL 144, col. 953–1008.

which dated back to St. Anthony in the 4th century. Yet "the search for personal salvation is a grievous sin" that Damian wished to avoid.[65] That is, a hermit must lovingly seek the salvation of others or risk his own damnation. Damian thus believed the proper course, paradoxically, was to bring spiritual purity to the world so that it might more closely resemble the monastic ideal. To do this, the power of personal witness would be paramount in the reforming movement he hoped to spread.[66]

At the same time, Peter Damian was also responsible for articulating a "theology of work," that is, an understanding of how human actions and labor might be seen as integrated with the rest of the divine will. Moreover, work was not an isolated activity but one that could, and should, unify society as humans helped and inspired each other. Damian thus contributed to elevating workers and highlighting the virtues that human labor brought that helped change the trajectory that had existed in Christianity for a millennium.[67] Among the facets of Damian's theology of work, witness was once again a key aspect to his approach, as was eschatology. According to Ranft, eschatology was a call to action, urging humans to strive for personal and, by example as witnesses, communal betterment. It used a vision of the future to motivate change in the present, which was at the heart of the reforming movement. She identifies Cluny in particular in the 11th century as promoting and inspiring Damian in this regard.[68] For Damian, eschatological expectations and the importance of witnessing for the sake of others reinforced each other to promote the value

[65] Ranft, *Theology of Peter Damian*, 29–34, quote at 34.
[66] Ibid., 36–42.
[67] Ranft, *Theology of Work*, 191–192.
[68] Ibid., 34–49.

of human labor in the eyes of God and thus society as a whole, especially in reform matters.[69]

Ranft, however, draws too strong a distinction between eschatology and apocalypticism. The former, she says, has unfairly been thought to imply passivity and a belief in the meaninglessness of this present life. It is, she insists, a "call to action."[70] In contrast to the power of Cluniac eschatology to impart creative impetus for social transformation, however, Ranft declares that not all eschatologies are created equally and do not always motivate humans towards positive change. Recall what she wrote about "apocalyptic eschatology," which, she says, "envisions a future discontinuous with the present, a future attained by sudden and dramatic divine intervention, *independent of human agency*….This was not Cluny's type of eschatology."[71] Ranft's statements regarding eschatology and apocalypticism are not based upon scholarship from within the past forty years. Moreover, as this and earlier chapters of this dissertation have demonstrated, it was precisely during the time of Cluny's expanding reforms in the 10th and 11th centuries, alongside those of Gorze, when apocalyptic ideas began to integrate human agency with the divine plan. Ranft certainly and expertly examines many aspects of Peter Damian's reform theology. Rather than conclude, however, that Damian's efforts were opposed to apocalyptic ideas, they should be seen as parallel to and reinforcing evolving attitudes towards the apocalypse.

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[69] Ibid., 63–66.
[70] Ibid., 35. Her ideas on eschatology are informed by Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 1005–1006; and Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050–1200* (London: SPCK, 1972), 145.
[71] Ranft, *Theology of Work*, 39. Emphasis mine.

A prime example of this comes from Damian's collected correspondences in Letter 165, composed in 1069. This long letter was written after a discouraging series of synods at Rome left him bitter and contemptuous of the world outside the monastery.[72] The greed, vanity, familiarity toward excommunicants, and wanderlust of monks were far too rampant for a truly righteous society (all complaints Glaber would have seconded, save for the last). The escalation of vices (as Damian saw it), meant only one thing: the end was indeed approaching. To be sure, Damian, as a monk writing to monks, stresses personal reform, just as writers had done for the last thousand years, writing:

> Therefore, since the world rushes headlong to its fall, and already gives every sign that the end of its course is imminent, and men too are daily snatched away prematurely by death, what remains to be done but, in this brief moment when we are living, to despise this life that is collapsing about us as if it had already come to an end, and strive with all the fervor of our soul to hasten toward that life which remains forever?[73]

This certainly has all the hallmarks of the older, passive, inwardly focused apocalyptic tradition we have seen. Elsewhere, Damian devotes entire letters to enjoining others to think about the Last Judgment and conform their lives in anticipation of that final trial.[74] The above quotation, therefore, would at first glance seem to reflect Ranft's understanding of apocalyptic eschatology, that it was ineffectual towards larger issues and tended to

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[72] William D. McCready, *Odiosa Sanctitas: St Peter Damian, Simony, and Reform* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2011), 194–195.

[73] Peter Damian, Letter 165; and *Peter Damian: Letters 151–180*, vol. 7, trans. Owen J. Blum and Irven M. Resnick (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of American Press, 2005), 225 (hereafter Blum, *Damian Letters VII*). I have been unable to access this source in Latin.

[74] See Peter Damian, Letters 21 and 22; *Peter Damian: Letters 1–30*, vol. 1, trans. Owen J. Blum (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of American Press, 1989), 197–215 (hereafter Blum, *Damian Letters I*); *Opere di Pier Damiani: Lettere (1–21)*, vol. 1, ed. G. I. Gargano and N. D'Acunto, Italian trans. A. Dindelli, C. Somigli, and L. Saraceno (Rome: Città Nuova, 2000), 374–387 (hereafter D'Acunto, *Damiani Lettere I*); and *Opere di Pier Damiani: Lettere (22–40)*, vol. 2, ed. G. I. Gargano and N. D'Acunto, Italian trans. A. Dindelli, C. Somigli, and L. Saraceno (Rome: Città Nuova, 2001), 50–59.

default to personal change for individual salvation. Nevertheless, Damian's advice for monks to turn inward is not simply a repetition of ancient wisdom but rather the last available option after society's failure to properly oppose the Antichrist. Earlier in the letter when giving similar advice for monks to remain in their communities and shun any contact with the outside world, he more directly explains why this is the only viable course of action:

> The world daily becomes more and more polluted by the contamination of numberless crimes, so that every soul is besmirched only by calling it to mind. And while new ways of acting are always added to the old, what else is this but surely preparing for the advent of Antichrist, so that now toward the end of time as he comes into the world, he may freely enter with no impediment in his path? And since his entry is undoubtedly prepared by our sins, for this very reason we must curb our way of life which would assure him that he can freely come into our midst.[75]

The old tradition is obviously present, but it is informed by more recent developments in apocalyptic theory. The Antichrist's rise to power is dependent upon the spiritual state of society. As a lifelong reformer, Damian's efforts had been in part an attempt to forestall his coming. But the world had not listened. He wrote these words after several decades of disappointment and disillusionment. By advising monks to cloister themselves and default back to inward preparations, Damian was not saying this is the only thing a Christian could do or that humans are incapable of affecting apocalyptic events. Rather, he was admitting that his first plan to oppose the Antichrist had been a failure. But this was not a preordained failure, though all things remain under divine providence.

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[75] Peter Damian, Letter 165; and Blum, *Damian Letters VII*, 222. I have been unable to access this source in Latin.

Earlier in his career, Damian had been far more positive when speaking of the End Times because he believed largescale reform was still possible. In 1046, he wrote to Emperor Henry III, praising him for removing an inadequate bishop from his post: "'Let the heavens therefore be glad, let the earth rejoice' that Christ is recognized as truly reigning through his king and that the golden age of David is restored just as the world is coming to an end."[76] By removing a plundering bishop, Henry had acted on behalf of Christ, who, Damian reminds him, chased the moneychangers out of the Temple.[77] This certainly had signaled that society was moving in the right direction. Time, however, would prove to Damian that the opportunity, once so bright, had been squandered.

In 1057, however, Damian was still optimistic. That year, not long after having risen to become cardinal bishop of Ostia (which was never as pleasing to him as it would have been to others), he wrote an open letter to his fellow electors regarding his vision for spiritual renewal.[78] In it, he compares himself and the other cardinal bishops to guardians of Christ's strongholds who should ever be on lookout for danger. Their work is especially important since the growing sins of the world threaten to plunge all into a final, destructive end. "But let me not appear the stilted actor proclaiming a tragedy," he writes.[79] Indeed, though prophecy predicts a turbulent final age, Damian at this point still believed there was

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[76] Peter Damian, Letter 20; Blum, *Damian Letters I*, 195; and D'Acunto, *Damiani Lettere I*, 370: "*Laetentur ergo caeli, exulted terra*, quia in rege suo vere Christus regnare cognoscitur, et sub ipso iam saeculi fine aureum David saeculum renovatur."
[77] Peter Damian, Letter 20; Blum, *Damian Letters I*, 195; and D'Acunto, *Damiani Lettere I*, 370.
[78] Peter Damian, Letter 48; *Peter Damian: Letters 31–60*, vol. 2, trans. Owen J. Blum (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of American Press, 1990), 263–271 (hereafter Blum, *Damian Letters II*); and *Opere di Pier Damiani: Lettere (41–67)*, vol. 3, ed. G. I. Gargano and N. D'Acunto, Italian trans. A. Dindelli, C. Somigli, and L. Saraceno (Rome: Città Nuova, 2002), 110–121 (hereafter D'Acunto, *Damiani Lettere III*).
[79] Peter Damian, Letter 48; Blum, *Damian Letters II*, 264; and D'Acunto, *Damiani Lettere III*, 110: "Sed ne tamquam coturnati tragoediam videamur attollere."

hope through the institutional Church, of which the seven cardinal bishops and the pope had the stewardship. They were in a unique position to be lights for the world.

> Now we, my brothers, if I may dare to include myself in your number, we, I say, who are like seven eyes in the stone, who bear the likeness of stars, who share the dignity of angels in our office of proclamation, let us observe, brilliantly reflect, and announce the words of life to the people, not only with our lips but also by our deeds. The tongue, indeed, proclaims the words of the preacher, but his life commends it. Moreover, since various people from all the world come together at the Lateran palace, it is imperative that there, above all other places, one should always find the proper kind of life, that there a strict discipline of high morals should be observed.[80]

Here we see Damian attempting to bring church reform to the highest levels. Just like Wulfstan before him, Damian thought those in positions of authority had the most responsibility both to preach to and be examples for all under their care—that, in the Gorzian tradition, they were lights, even "stars," to others. Also like the archbishop of York, the cardinal bishop of Ostia framed the importance of these changes in light of *potential* apocalyptic disaster. "Now amid these profound hazards that *might* shipwreck an *endangered* world, amid such yawning depths *threatening* damnation for the human race, the one and only harbor is obviously the Roman church," that is, of course, if it can be reformed.[81] Contingency, therefore, was part of Peter Damian's reforming apocalyptic eschatology. Though subtler and more diffused throughout society than Glaber's

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[80] Peter Damian, Letter 48; Blum, *Damian Letters II*, 267; and D'Acunto, *Damiani Lettere III*, 114: "Nos itaque, fratres mei, ut me vobis audenter interferam, nos, inquam, qui tamquam s*eptem sumus oculi super lapidem unum*, qui stellarum portamus imaginem, qui angelorum tenemus per annuntiationis officium dignitatem, videamus, splendeamus, et verba vitae populis non solum vocibus sed et moribus nuntiemus. Sermonem siquidem praedicantium lingua quidem nuntiat, sed vita commendat. Porro quia ad Lateranense palatium a diversis populis de toto terrarum orbe confluitur, necesse est, ut ibi prae caeteris uspiam locis, recta semper vivendi sit forma, districta teneatur assidue sub honestis moribus disciplina."

[81] Peter Damian, Letter 48; Blum, *Damian Letters II*, 265; and D'Acunto, *Damiani Lettere III*, 112: "Inter haec ergo tam profunda periclitantis mundi naufragosa discrimina, inter tot immane patentes perditionis humanae voragines unicus et singularis portus Romana patet aecclesia." Emphasis mine.

miraculous stories or (as we shall see below) the crusading movement, Damian believed human actions had direct sway over apocalyptic events. If only society could reform according to his eremitic vision, they would hold off the Antichrist. Only if society failed should monks give up seeking the communal good—witnessing through example—and instead prepare themselves quietly in their own cells for Judgment Day.

Unfortunately, Damian believed the Antichrist's cause had in fact been left unhindered and permitted to grow for a long time, despite his best efforts. Throughout his letters, he accuses several opponents of being servants and apostles of the Antichrist, especially the antipope Honorius II.[82] In a letter from 1066 to Pope Alexander II, Damian discusses the problem—indeed, heresy—of simony by way of lay investiture. More particularly, he holds the bishops most to blame and in need of removal. Therefore, lest the growing poison from hell spiritually kill the innocent, he urges Alexander, "venerable father, armed with the sword of heavenly wisdom, confront these preachers of Satan [the defenders of simony] and apostles of Antichrist, and like another Joshua, use the unsheathed blade of canonical power to overthrow the Amalekites fighting against Israel."[83] Yet by this point, the stresses of being a public figure for a man eremitic by disposition were certainly weighing heavily. In 1067, he resigned as bishop. Though in his remaining years he still traveled in service to the papacy, Damian ended his days disillusioned and pessimistic about substantive reform, even as a cardinal bishop.[84] How

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[82] See, for example, Peter Damian, Letters 154, 157, and 162; and in Blum, *Damian Letters VII*, 73, 87, 149.
[83] Peter Damian, Letter 140; and *Peter Damian: Letters 121–150*, vol. 6, trans. Owen J. Blum (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of American Press, 2004), 111. I have been unable to access this source in Latin. The biblical reference is from Exodus 17:10.
[84] Ranft, *Theology of Peter Damian*, 170; and McCready, *Odiosa Sanctitas*, 180–195.

could one fix the many problems with the Church if the bishops themselves, those who held so much responsibility and could enact so much good through their example, were themselves heretics, the age-old servants of the Antichrist?

Fighting Heresy with Hellfire

Reform, of course, is a rhetorically empty concept without a proper foil for comparison, one that provoked the necessary fear and revulsion to catalyze the movement. The chief enemy of Christian reform was therefore not merely sin but heresy. The links between heresy and reform have long been known and examined. Herbert Grundmann's influential 1935 *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter* began by declaring, "All religious movements of the Middle Ages achieved realization either in religious orders or in heretical sects."[85] Two generations of further investigation later, Malcolm Lambert, who self-consciously situated his study of medieval heresy between the Gregorian Reform and the Protestant Reformation, declared, "Reform and heresy were twins," as both originated from similar impulses and led to social transformations.[86] Yet in trying to determine how perceived inadequacies in society could be rectified, those who proved unsuccessful in their attempts became heretics and, as motivated opponents with plans to reshape the social order, became targets for those reformers in power. As R. I. Moore put it, medieval persecution of heretics and others "began as a weapon in the competition for political

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[85] Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 1.

[86] Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1998), 390.

influence, and was turned by the victors into an instrument for consolidating their power over society at large."[87] To promote itself, reform needs an opponent—real or imagined—that is not simply imperfect but actively harmful to society. This was especially the case within apocalyptic thought. "Heresy," Palmer notes, "was perhaps the greatest apocalyptic concern" since the beginning of Christianity but especially in the 11th century.[88] The rider on a pale horse from Revelation 6 had long been associated with heretics.[89] Such interpretations nevertheless remained Augustinian in approach, seeing humans as spectators rather than participants in God's organizing of apocalyptic events. As the 10th and 11th centuries gradually made the idea of human agency acceptable within apocalyptic speculations, however, heretics stopped being inevitable evils that would harass the faithful and became targets that circumspect Christians should take tangible steps to eradicate for the good of society, lest the Antichrist triumph unopposed.

Rudolfus Glaber once again provides us with, if not a typical example, at least one source that demonstrates the changing direction of eleventh-century apocalyptic speculations. Glaber makes note of several instances of heresy in his *Histories*, including the famous burning of a dozen heretics in Orléans in 1022. The first significant case took place late in the year 1000. According to Glaber, a man name Leutard, "an envoy of Satan" (*Satane legatus*), became plagued by pains and terrible visions until he fell into the madness of heresy. Due to what the man claimed was divine revelation, Leutard dismissed his wife, broke a crucifix, preached that tithes need not be paid, and attempted to convince the local

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[87] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 2nd ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 138.
[88] Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 232.
[89] See, for example, Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, 143–144.

peasants of many other unspecified but thoroughly unorthodox beliefs. But when word reached the local bishop, Gebuin—whom Glaber compliments on his aged learning—all Leutard's rhetorical power disintegrated under examination. Gebuin skillfully led the madman's would-be followers away from heresy and back to a strong faith in catholic principles. Leutard, overcome by shame and fear for having lost the support of the community, committed suicide by jumping down a well.[90] While this story is about a heretic, its hero is Gebuin, a man fully a match for Glaber's high standards for ecclesiastical leadership.

Immediately after Leutard's story, Glaber closes book 2 of his *Histories* with an account of an outbreak of heresy in Ravenna from about the same time. This time a grammarian named Vilgardus received a vision from demons in the guises of Vergil, Horace, and Juvenal. Preying on his obsession with his learning, they flattered his skills and named him their herald, which resulted in him speaking out against his Christian faith.[91] Vilgardus was eventually condemned as a heretic by his local bishop. Glaber laments, however, how Italy and especially Sardinia were prone to heresies rooted in intellectual pride, though these were violently suppressed.[92] Once again, a bishop was able to settle the matter. Yet even these relatively minor instances of heresy that Glaber reports were indicative of something far more sinister. He concludes this entry and book 2 writing, "All this accords with the prophecy of St John, who said that the Devil would be free after

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[90] Glaber, *Histories*, 88–91.
[91] Quite different than Dante's interaction with Vergil!
[92] Ibid., 92–93. Glaber's account of Vilgardus's heresy has no corroborating support, and there is no reason to believe there was mass violence against heretics as he reports prior to 1022. See ibid., 92n1.

a thousand years; but we shall treat of this at greater length in our third book."[93] Heresy was thus an indication of the growing power of Satan as promised through prophesy. Here Glaber refers also to the events of Orléans in 1022, an affair that he recognized was of great significance and worthy of foreshadowing for his reader, for he deals with the event in far more detail than either the Leutard or Vilgardus affairs.

The story of the "discovery" and execution of around a dozen heretics (sources differ on the number) at Orléans in 1022 has long been of interest to historians. I set aside for now the important but, for this study, irrelevant questions concerning the reality of heresy accusations in this matter.[94] Whether dualistic heretics were rooted out or whether political enemies were suppressed, the simple fact is that Glaber believed the enemies of God had been found and punished. As we are dealing with his understanding of apocalyptic events and signs as seen through his version of the Orléans affair, I will treat those executed in 1022 as real heretics.

Though the Leutard and Vilgardus affairs were treated briefly, Glaber devotes a significant amount of book 3 to the heretics that appeared in Orléans at the end of 1022.[95] Once more, Glaber places the events there in the context of the year 1000: "In the third year from the twentieth after the millennium."[96] After explaining the errors they were accused of believing, Glaber uses the opportunity to provide his own corrections. But more than a simple listing of orthodox tenants, Glaber expounds upon the place of heretics in

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[93] Ibid., 92–93: "Quod presagium Iohannis prophetic congruity, quia dixit Sathanam soluendum, expletis mille annis, de quibus in tercio iam libello prolixius tractabimus."
[94] See R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 285–289.
[95] Glaber, *Histories*, 138–151.
[96] Ibid., 138–139: "Tertio de uicesimo infra iamdictum millesimum anno."

Christian history and theology. While the presence of heretics is assuredly a satanic attack, he assures his readers nevertheless that it is also the fulfillment of an apostolic prophecy that heresies were necessary to test the faithful.[97] When they overcome these tests, humans rise above their created state to become like the angels in blessedness. When they fail, they prove themselves the most wicked of all beings. Knowing that humans are far too inclined toward the latter, like the heretics of Orléans, God sends portents when the time is right to aid them.[98] As we have seen, portents are very important to Glaber in determining God's will. The heretics of Orléans likewise received repeated warnings, according to Glaber, with the king erecting an enormous fire in their sight in the hopes that it would induce them to repent since reason had not. But alas, they went willingly to be burned for their errors. Yet in Glaber's version, as the fire touched them, the heretics began to confess their mistake and fear of hellfire. Those who looked on tried to snatch them away from the fires but could not reach them, a physical manifestation of the preceding attempts to convert them from their errors. With that, the heresy died, as those who had supported it were soon all destroyed. Glaber concludes the episode saying, "The holy catholic faith has flourished more brilliantly everywhere on earth since the folly of these wicked madmen was rooted out."[99] With this, Glaber gives his approval to these executions, casting them as part of the larger reform of society tasked with safeguarding Christians from sin. The heretics were part of Satan's attacks that came after a thousand years of his being bound by the power of Christ's earthly mission mentioned at the end of book 2. Apocalyptic preparations had

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[97] Ibid., 142.
[98] Ibid., 144.
[99] Ibid., 150–151: "Preterea uenerabilis catholicę fidei cultus, exstirpata insanientium pessimorum uesania, ubique terrarum clarior emicuit."

come to mean for Glaber the physical destruction of these most wicked of enemies for the sake of the greater community. The events of 1022 were in fact a microcosm of the apocalyptic drama.[100] It was, for him, a natural logic. The appearance of heretics was expected by prophesy, a sign that revealed the reality of Satan's escape after a thousand years, and an opportunity for Christians to impress God before Judgment Day or expose themselves as servants of evil. They offered moral clarity for reformers, becoming targets for their activity.[101] Though there is no corroborating evidence for the claim, Glaber says that heretics who had not been present at Orléans and others in Italy, Sardinia, and Spain were hunted and eradicated, resulting in a flowering of the true faith.[102] What more could a reformer want on the edge of the apocalypse?

Glaber was not alone in seeing the burning of heretics at Orléans as full of eschatological significance. As Michael Barbezat has pointed out, the eleventh-century chroniclers who left record of the 1022 executions shared the view that the burning of Orléans's heretics prefigured eschatological truths. To be sure, none were as overtly apocalyptic as Rudolfus Glaber. Nevertheless, hell and the hellfire they all saw consuming the heretics "offered a paradigm of exclusion, based upon righteous punishment and segregation, which could be brought to bear on human events in the current world" by means of "a fire that visibly enacted the punishments promised at the hands of God."[103] In other words, the execution of heretics provided eleventh-century Christians the ability to

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[100] Michael D. Barbezat, "The Fires of Hell and the Burning of Heretics in the Accounts of the Executions at Orleans in 1022," *Journal of Medieval History* 40, no. 4 (2014): 399–420, at 413.
[101] Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 26–32.
[102] Glaber, *Histories*, 92–93, 150–151.
[103] Barbezat, "Fires of Hell," 419.

be partakers in the Last Judgment here on earth through the violent removal of factious members who threatened to harm their spiritual society. Reform meant identifying and eliminating harmful groups, and none were more harmful than heretics, for they anticipated the Antichrist himself. Their removal, even when not seen apocalyptically (though it was at times), meant the radical assumption of ultimate divine authority by ordinary, human agents. If mortals could stage the Last Judgment now, what other scenes from the apocalyptic drama might they direct?

One other chronicler of the Orléans burnings, Ademar of Chabannes (c. 989–1034), directly linked the heretical victims to the person of the Antichrist. Ademar spent most of his life in the Limousin region of southern France as a monk at Saint-Cybard and Saint-Martial. He was a reformer and prolific author, having left historians more autographs of his handwriting than any other scribe from the same period. He wrote on topics as diverse as history, musicology, hagiography, and Scriptural commentary.[104] He also gained infamy in the 20th century (albeit slowly at first) when it was learned that late in his career he produced forgeries and intentionally inserted fictitious events into the historical record.[105] For this and other reasons, Ademar's place in the history of eleventh-century apocalypticism is a debated one. Ademar's *Chronicon* certainly omits the kind of wild excitement around the millennium that Rodulfus Glaber includes throughout his *Histories*. Due to his silence on many presumably apocalyptic events and muted treatment when he does mention overt apocalyptic elements, like the Antichrist, Ademar has long been seen as thoroughly conforming to Augustinian orthodoxy. Landes, however, has interpreted

[104] Landes, *Relics*, 7–14.
[105] Ibid., 3–7.

Ademar's place as a chronicler of the "millennial generation" (1000–1033, though without hard cut-off years) quite differently. According to Landes, Ademar's Augustinian writings were in response to apocalyptic excitement in his day rather than further evidence of chroniclers calmly passing through the millennium without comment.[106] Whether he was fully Augustinian in outlook or not (and I am convinced he strayed from strict orthodoxy), Ademar's *Chronicon* contains anxieties regarding apocalyptic challenges as well as hints at what contemporaries should do about them. Even as a forger, his writings cannot be dismissed, for they capture the concerns of his generation, even if some of the particular acts are suspect. And Ademar was very much focused on the problem of heretics and viewed their presence as worthy of apocalyptic concern.

For example, when speaking of a group of alleged Manicheans troubling the Aquitaine region around 1018, Ademar names such heretics as messengers of the Antichrist (*nuncii Antichristi*).[107] Later, when he treats the events of 1022, Manicheans or the "nuntii Antichristi" are once again the source of the spiritual harm to the community.[108] His treatment of the Orléans case is abbreviated compared to Glaber's, yet it agrees with him regarding the belief that the heretics were justly executed as corruptors of men and women.[109] According to Ademar, however, the extreme measures undertaken at Orléans were not enough. In 1028, he claims that a Peace council at Charroux set exterminating heretics (*extinguendas haereses*) from the land as part of its business.[110] Ademar's

[106] Ibid., 16–19, 285–332.
[107] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, CCCM 129, ed. R. Landes and G. Pon (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 170; and Landes, *Relics*, 37–39.
[108] Ademar, *Chronicon*, 180.
[109] Ibid., 180.
[110] Ibid., 189.

reliability on Peace councils is highly suspect. Nevertheless, it is doubtful he would add in a measure that was otherwise unthinkable (even if radical) to his contemporaries. The Orléans heretics thus warranted death in 1022 because of their connection to the Antichrist, as did all those of a similar persuasion for the exact same reason. Moreover, the entry in his *Chronicon* calling for the wholesale slaughter of heretics was among the last statements Ademar left for historians. It was his final word on the subject before embarking on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, from which he would not return. Therefore, Manichean heretics, Richard Landes correctly points out, "remained one of Ademar's obsessions to his dying day."[111]

Peter Damain provides one final angle from which to view heretic persecution in the 11th century as a pre-apocalyptic responsibility. In a letter written to Henry IV in 1065 or 1066, Damian wished to give advice to the young sovereign as he came of age. Foremost among the challenges Damian wished Henry to resolve was the issue of Cadalus, the antipope Honorius II, who as the "prince of the heretics" had left the church in absolute disorder by resisting the sovereignty of Pope Alexander II and his reforming efforts.[112] Division was the danger Cadalus signified more than anything else. Henry must not see the weakening of Roman authority as a benefit to the empire, for division was a threat to all who serve Christ.[113] As Damian explains, clerics and the crown are united by their mutual duty to the Christian people, each aiding the other in this task in their own unique way, the one exhorting, the other punishing. As such, citing St. Paul in Romans 13, Damian enjoins

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[111] Landes, *Relics*, 37.
[112] Damian, Letter 120; and Blum, *Damian Letters V*, 387–388. I have been unable to access this source in Latin.
[113] Peter Damian, Letter 120; and Blum, *Damian Letters V*, 388–392.

Henry to use his God-given right to violence in defense of Christians.[114] His language vividly reflects his intense hatred for Cadalus as well as the steps he thinks necessary to resolve the problem.

> And so, if you are *God's agent*, why do you not defend God's Church? Why put on arms if you are not prepared to fight? Why gird yourself with the sword if you are not ready to resist those who are arrayed for battle?...This too can truthfully be said, *you carry a sword in vain unless you are going to thrust it through the throats of those who resist God*….Let your experienced hand grasp the hilt of your sword, and *with David attack the Amalekites in a lightning stroke*, and as he subdued the brigands, so you too should pierce the enemies of the Church with the unsheathed sword of justice.[115]

Damian occasionally used the Amalekites symbolically to denote the Antichrist and his servants, but he does not leave Henry on his own here to parse Scriptural allegory. Instead, he declares exactly how the young king should view the antipope. "Let that ancient dragon, Cadalus, take note," Damian writes. "Let this disturber of the Church, this destroyer of apostolic discipline, this enemy of man's salvation understand. Let him beware, I say, this root of all sin, this herald of the devil, this apostle of Antichrist."[116] Did Peter Damian truly think Cadalus was a servant of the Antichrist? Perhaps, but such a question ignores the forest for the trees. The language might be hyperbolic, incendiary, and polemic, but Damian's request is quite concrete: he seeks violence against an enemy of both Church reform and Pope Alexander II. Whether or not Damian thought Cadalus in league with the Antichrist (and he might well have), the antipope was harming the spiritual community and

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[114] Peter Damian, Letter 120; and Blum, *Damian Letters V*, 392–393.
[115] Peter Damian, Letter 120; and Blum, *Damian: Letters V*, 393. Emphasis mine.
[116] Peter Damian, Letter 120; and Blum, *Damian Letters V*, 393.

required a secular response. As a living agent of God, Henry stood to reap benefits if he fulfilled his responsibilities.

> But if, like another Constantine in the case of Arius, you quickly destroy Cadalus and strive to restore peace to the Church for which Christ died, may God shortly cause you to progress from kingship to the sublimity of empire, and gain a singular victory over all your enemies. But if you should still compromise, if you should refuse to abolish the scandal *endangering the world*, even though you can…I hold my breath, and leave the consequences to the imagination of my readers. Amen.[117]

Again, hyperbole done for the sake of polemic can easily account for such rhetoric. Nevertheless, that language is rather consistent, not just within Damian's letters but among other eleventh-century reformers concerned about the threat heretics posed to the world order they hoped to achieve.

Contrary to Ranft's views on apocalyptic eschatology, it should be no surprise that those who hoped to spread the reforms of Cluny to the wider Christian community did so through appeal to fear of heretics as servants of the Antichrist. As Dominique Iogna-Prat has shown, Cluny, the chief force for reform in the 11th century, inherently modeled its restructuring of Christian society around exclusion, which included purging Christendom in the service of apocalyptic ends.[118] Rudolfus Glaber, Ademar of Chabannes, and Peter Damian all reflect this to a greater or lesser degree when discussing heretics. While heretics were long thought to be associated with the Antichrist, these men believed something tangible and gruesome could and should be done about them in the present. If heresy was allowed to grow, it could be the sign of something worse still to come. By suppressing

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[117] Peter Damian, Letter 120; and Blum, *Damian Letters V*, 396. Emphasis mine.
[118] Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom Face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000–1150)*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 104–108.

heresy, however, Antichrist was foiled, the virtuous were defended, and the social order (with both clerics and the laity participating in their proper functions) was maintained. But not all eyes in Europe were inwardly focused. Places and events outside of Latinate Christianity would draw many to travel far from their homes for religious and even apocalyptic purposes. Greatest of these destinations was the Holy City, Jerusalem.

Pilgrimage and Jerusalem

From the days of Paul to those of Jerome to the penitential travels of Irish monks and beyond, pilgrimage had long been not only a part of Christian religiosity in general but a means by which apocalyptic ideas spread. During the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, local shrines retained (and fought for) coveted levels of popular esteem. Such respect could be translated into moral authority, wealth, political power, offers of peace and protection (as during the Peace movement), and other social capital.[119] Claims by monasteries and churches to have the protection and favor of universally recognized saints were useful for some institutions, especially Rome and Cluny, both of which held Sts. Peter and Paul as patrons.[120] Nevertheless, Jerusalem and other locations in the Holy Land could not be duplicated elsewhere, despite many attempts throughout the centuries to bring the spiritual rewards inherent in Palestine to distant lands.[121] As the home of Jesus's earthly ministry and the site of the Passion and Resurrection, Jerusalem was the pilgrimage destination par

[119] Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Theft of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 15–22.
[120] Ibid., 26; and Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion*, 78–82.
[121] Colin Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West: From the Beginning to 1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 58–89, 117–119, 156, 162.

excellence, with the church of the Holy Sepulcher at the spiritual center of the earth.[122] Though travel from Europe to the Near East had been curtailed during the early Middle Ages, the situation had begun to change by the year 1000. Adso of Montier-en-Der, for example, took the pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 992 and never returned.[123] His journey late in life and shortly before the millennium might well have been undertaken with the apocalypse in mind, though such a conclusion must remain only speculation.[124] Yet the flow of pilgrims to Jerusalem in general around 1000 was "on the way to becoming a flood," possibly due to fear of the Last Days.[125] Glaber tells us that at this time nearly everyone (*pene uniuersi*) from Italy and Gaul wanted to go to Jerusalem to visit the Holy Sepulcher.[126] Whatever the case, travel to Jerusalem was significantly redefined throughout the 11th century, and this was done in parallel with ideas of societal reform, suppression of heresy, denigration of the "other," and reconceptualization of the apocalypse.

Even assuming Adso's reasons for going to Jerusalem in 992 lacked apocalyptic motivations, the situation soon changed for those traveling after 1009 when the meaning of pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the 11th century started to become charged with apocalyptic violence. Like the attacks on heretics, this violence was committed both against and by Christians, and minority groups were the victims. While heretics were long known to be the Antichrist's agents, and thus their execution at Orléans in 1022 could be partially

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[122] Ibid., 59.
[123] Landes, *Relics*, 280.
[124] The year 992 was one in which the Annunciation and Good Friday fell on the same date, which was sometimes seen as an apocalyptic conjunction. Verhelst, "Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000," 84.
[125] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 10–11.
[126] Glaber, *Histories*, 96.

justified, Jews were also targeted with apocalyptic fervor, especially after the destruction of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem in 1009. This was an event that sent shockwaves through Christian Europe and elicited fears that the End Times were approaching.

Since the 10th century, the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt ruled over Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulcher. Christian pilgrims were an accepted part of the society, bringing in wealth through religious tourism. However, under the volatile personality of the sixth Fatimid caliph, al-Hākim, long-established policies of tolerance towards Christians came to an end. The pinnacle of suppression came in 1009, when al-Hākim ordered the Holy Sepulcher to be demolished, leaving barely anything but the foundations. The immediate results were the stifling of pilgrim traffic for a time to the Holy Land and the persecution of Jews back in Europe.[127]

The account of al-Hākim's attack on the Holy Sepulcher is recorded by both Ademar of Chabannes and Rudolfus Glaber. In both cases, the Christian authors attribute the caliph's actions not just to "Saracen" intolerance for the true God but to collusion with European Jews. Ademar's *Chronicon* (the earlier account) relates[128] that al-Hākim, the ruler of Babylon (Cairo), had received reports from both western Jew and Saracens in Spain that the Franks were about to make a military attack in that region. Al-Hākim responded to these letters by preemptively ordering the Christians in his lands to convert to Islam or face the loss of their property or even their lives. Most of the persecuted Christians quickly

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[127] Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 10–12; and Daniel F. Callahan, "Al-Hākim, Charlemagne, and the Destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem in the Writings of Ademar of Chabannes," in *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages: Power, Faith, and Crusade*, ed. Matthew Gabriele and Jace Stuckey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 41–57.
[128] Ademar, *Chronicon*, 166–167.

became Muslims at this time, according to Ademar, save for Jerusalem's patriarch and two Egyptian brothers, who accepted crowns as martyrs. It was in the context of these persecutions that a number of churches in Fatimid lands were destroyed. "And because our sins merited it," the church of the Holy Sepulcher was among them.[129] Though al-Hākim was the final authority, Ademar spreads the blame among both Jews and Muslims: "On this year the tomb of the Lord in Jerusalem was broken by the Jews and the Saracens."[130] The reader is led to believe that the reason for this plot by western Jews was retaliation for the forced conversion or expulsion of Jews from Limoges in 1009 by Bishop Hilduin, an episode which Ademar places immediately before mention of the Holy Sepulcher.[131] Ademar has no more to say of the Jews' alleged part in this affair. He finishes his account by praising the shrine originally established by St. Helena, Constantine's mother, and describing the (fanciful) death of al-Hākim at the hands of his own people, despite the caliph's belated regret in ordering the sepulcher's destruction.[132]

Glaber's version of the events in book 3 of his *Histories*, however, places far more emphasis on suspected Jewish involvement.[133] Even the title of the section, "The destruction of the temple at Jerusalem and the massacre of the Jews,"[134] links the two inseparably. Like Ademar, Glaber says that the razing of the Holy Sepulcher was done at the command of al-Hākim. The reasons for this move, however, are more explicitly demonic. Glaber tells us that the site brought in so many pilgrims to Jerusalem that the

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[129] Ibid., 167: "et peccatis notris promerentibus." My translation.
[130] Ibid., 166: "Ipso anno sepulchrum Domini Hierosolimis confractum est a Judeis et Sarracenis."
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., 167; and Callahan, "Al-Hākim, Charlemagne, and the Destruction of the Holy Sepulcher," 44.
[133] Glaber, *Histories*, 132–137.
[134] Ibid., 132–133: "De euersione temple Iherosolimorum et cede Iudeorum."

devil, full of envy, sought to mar the source of so much faith through his accustomed agents, the Jews (*per assuentam Iudaeorum*).[135] Glaber says there were a large number in Orléans at that time who were particularly arrogant. They plotted to send letters written in Hebrew via a false pilgrim to the prince of Babylon (Cairo), warning him that if he did not act against the Christians in his lands, then those without would conquer him. Thus, al-Hākim ordered the Holy Sepulcher and other churches be torn down. But while Ademar focuses on events in the Near East involving Muslims, Glaber returns to follow the conspirators' fate. He writes, "A little while after the Temple had been destroyed it became quite clear that the wickedness of the Jews had brought about this great disaster. Once they knew this all the Christians throughout the whole world decided unanimously to drive the Jews from their lands and cities."[136] Glaber does not lament the harm done to the Jewish population in Christian Europe but rather writes that the pain and misery brought against them was a fitting revenge.[137]

For Glaber, the apocalyptic connection between an alleged Jewish plot against the Holy Sepulcher and other attacks by servants of the Antichrist is clear, as the Jews were believed to be both long-time and future antichristian servants. Moreover, Glaber's account of the terrible events in 1009 is followed *immediately* by his version of the discovery of heretics at Orléans in 1022. In fact, after the pogroms, Glaber tells us that Orléans (the home of the original alleged Jewish conspirators) was one of the few places where a small

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[135] Ibid., 132–134.
[136] Ibid., 134–135: "Enerso igitur, ut diximus, templo, post paululum manifeste claruit quoniam Iudęorum nequitia tantum sit nefas patratum. Vtque diuulgatum est, per orbem uniuersum communi omnium Christianorum consensus decretum es tut omnes Iudęi ab illorum terries uel ciuitatibus funditus pellerentur."
[137] Ibid., 134, "ita scilicet ut digna de eis ultione peracta uix pauci illorum in orbe reperirentur Romano."

number of fearful Jews could still be found. As the years passed, however, more Jews began to come out of hiding and appear in the cities.[138] A few lines latter, Glaber writes that the Orléans heresy had also "long sprouted in secret" until 1022.[139] Moreover, he links the renewed Jewish population to apocalyptic times: "For it was proper, although ultimately to their confusion, that some of them should survive for the future to serve as witnesses of their own perfidy, or testimony to the blood of Christ which they had shed. This is why, we believe, thanks to the disposition of divine providence, the fury of the Christian people against them was for a moment cooled."[140] Glaber here alludes to a centuries-old belief—one Augustine even championed, as well as Adso in his letter to Gerberga—that God permitted Jews to exist unconverted because they would play a special part as witnesses to the Crucifixion until the End Times, at which point they would accept Christ or Antichrist.[141] In a later part of his *Histories*, Glaber also writes that the Jew "will return to [belief in Jesus] towards the end of the world."[142] Thus he portrays both Jews and heretics as apocalyptic agents that Christians should take steps in opposing for the sake of the apocalyptic drama.

But in all things, Glaber believed God left signs for the faithful to use properly because "almost everything is a symbol" to Christians.[143] In the case of the events of 1009, the evil schemes of Jew and Saracen alike were temporary, providing an opportunity for

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[138] Ibid., 136–137.
[139] Ibid., 138–139: "quę scilicet diutius occulte germinate in perditionis."
[140] Ibid., 136–137: "Et quoniam oportet, quamius ad illorum confusionem, ut ex illis aliqui in futurum supersint, uel ad confirmandum proprium nefas seu ad testimonium fusi sanguinis Christi, idcirco uero credimus Christianorum animositatem, diuina dispensante prouidentia, in eis ad tempus mansueuisse."
[141] Adso, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, 27.
[142] Glaber, *Histories*, 230–231: "sed recipient illum circa finem seculi."
[143] Ibid., 228–229: "pene omnia in figura contingunt."

greater faithfulness as the world approached its end. Following the Holy Sepulcher's destruction, the mother of al-Hākim, a Christian named Maria, began to rebuild Christ's temple. "Then an incredible multitude of men from all over the world came exultantly to Jerusalem bearing countless gifts for the restoration of the house of God."[144] The destruction of the Holy Sepulcher had been devastating—apocalyptic in its own way—but prophecy had not failed. The Holy Sepulcher had fallen, but because of renewed piety, it would be built again. Those who traveled to Jerusalem and gave gifts for the rebuilding of the "house of God" were ensuring that the apocalypse would have an appropriate setting.

Though Ademar and Glaber focused on the events of 1009 from different angles, their versions are ultimately in agreement on the key points they chose to relate: western Jews conspired with al-Hākim to destroy the Holy Sepulcher at a time of anti-Jewish discrimination. Ademar placed this discrimination before the razing of the church and only around Limoges while Glaber said it was a result of that event and (quite dubiously) involved all of Christendom, but both insisted European Jews were subject to persecution around 1009. (Other contemporary records also mention anti-Jewish enactments around the same time. Notably, the *Annals of Quedlinburg* describes the expulsion of Jews from Mainz in 1012 linked with suppression of heretics.[145]) Though Glaber may have been more overtly apocalyptic than his colleague, both used and perpetuated apocalyptic tropes involving Jews, conspiracies, and Jerusalem in the context of a society undergoing

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[144] Ibid., 136–137: "Tunc quoque de uniuerso terrarum orbe incredibilis honinum multitude, exultanter Iherosolimam pergentes, domui Dei restaurandę plurima detulerunt munera."

[145] *Annals of Quedlinburg*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH SS* 3 (Hanover: 1839), 81; and David A. Warner, "Introduction: Thietmar, bishop and chronicler," in *Ottonian Germany: The* Chronicon *of Thietmar of Merseberg*, trans. David A. Warner (New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 42.

reform—reform designed, in part, to prepare Christians for an eschatological or even apocalyptic conclusion. Both also promised their readers that the Holy Sepulcher was undergoing reconstruction. Thus, though its destruction had sent apocalyptic ripples through Christendom (which even Ademar's account is witness to, albeit obliquely[146]), the Holy Sepulcher would be remade in Jerusalem. Pilgrimage could (and would) continue—as well as prophecies concerning the Holy City.

In the early 11th century, excitement generated by the Peace of God councils helped encourage interest in pilgrimages.[147] They also helped to transform the concept. Since the great Irish peregrinations in the 6th century, pilgrimages had mostly (though not solely) been wanderings, travels being based more on penitential exile than destination. In the 7th and 8th centuries, however, changes began to occur. Goal-oriented pilgrimages gradually began to emerge.[148] Saint's relics and shrines became sources of spiritual and physical healing, which led to both increased pilgrimage and increased relic fraud starting in the Carolingian era. Thanks in part to the importance of relics during the Peace of God, such local pilgrimage destinations peaked in the 11th century, just before the start of the crusades, after which more universal patrons and religious sites began to predominate. By the 11th century, therefore, "pilgrimage" irrevocably changed from being about penitential wandering to being about traveling to a specific holy location for its own sake.[149] This, of course, was especially true for the Holy City. Ademar himself is testament to this renewed interest in pilgrimage to Jerusalem, both as author and as participant.

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[146] Landes, *Relics*, 297, 304–305.
[147] Ibid., 154.
[148] Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Religion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 98–102.
[149] Ibid., 22; Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 26–27; and Landes, *Relics*, 155–156.

Jerusalem, as center of the Christian world and home to the (newly rebuilt) Holy Sepulcher, naturally became the most sought-after pilgrimage destination. It had already drawn a fearful (to al-Hākim) number of pilgrimages before 1009. Repair work had started almost immediately, with a full restoration accomplished several decades later following an agreement between the Fatimid and Byzantine rulers.[150] Even before a complete restoration, however, travel to Jerusalem for European Christians had resumed. Ademar writes about how his fellow Aquitanian Count William of Angoulême, Abbot Richard of Saint-Vanne, numerous other nobles and high religious, many monks, and both men and women of all ages from throughout the region totaling in the hundreds set out for Jerusalem to see the Holy Sepulcher in October of 1026.[151] Ademar did not participate in this pilgrimage, but it must have left a significant impression on him. In 1033, a full millennium after the supposed date of the Crucifixion, Ademar joined himself to another flood of pilgrims seeking the Holy City that year. He would not return from his travels.[152] According to Richard Landes, Ademar's final journey was a culmination of personal shame and apocalyptic anxiety as the monk hoped to find peace and possibly witness the beginning of the End in person.[153] Daniel Callahan seconds this interpretation, seeing in Ademar's departure the actions of a man in a "state of mental turmoil" searching for the physical and spiritual center of Christ's apocalyptic return in Jerusalem, a search he had already pursued in his native home.[154]

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[150] Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ*, 134–135.
[151] Ademar, *Chronicon*, 184–185; and Landes, *Relics*, 156–158.
[152] See Leiden, Universiteitsbibliothek, Vossianus Octova 15, fol. 141v; Landes, *Relics*, 279–281 (especially n39), 358 fig. 9; and Daniel F. Callahan, *Jerusalem and the Cross in the Life and Writings of Ademar of Chabannes* (Boston: Brill, 2016), 159.
[153] Landes, *Relics*, 320–327.
[154] Callahan, *Jerusalem and the Cross*, 160.

Rudolfus Glaber did not know Ademar, but he was aware of the torrent of pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem in 1033. According to his *Histories*, Glaber was not alone in attributing apocalyptic motivations to the pilgrims and the symbolism of their journey. He writes that around the time of the 1033 Peace councils "an innumerable multitude of people from the whole world, greater than any man before could have hoped to see, began to travel to the Sepulcher of the Saviour at Jerusalem."[155] As with the group Ademar describes traveling in 1026, the pilgrims in 1033 came from every social class and both sexes, which Glaber thought remarkable. He also says that, like Ademar, many pilgrims planned to finish their lives in Jerusalem rather than return home. He admits, however, that some only made the trip out of vanity (*uanitate*).[156] But the events of 1033 begged for explanation, which Glaber was happy to provide. He writes:

> When some consulted the more watchful of the age as to what was meant by so many people, in numbers unheard-of in earlier ages to Jerusalem, some replied cautiously enough that it could portend nothing other than the advent of the accursed Antichrist who, according to divine testimony, is expected to appear at the end of the world. Then a way would be opened for all peoples to the east where he would appear…In fact then will be fulfilled that prophecy of the Lord, that even the elect will, if it is possible, fall into temptation. We will speak no further of this matter, but we do not deny that the pious labours of the faithful will be then rewarded and paid for by the Just Judge.[157]

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[155] Glaber, *Histories*, 198–199: "Per idem tempus ex uniuerso orbe tam innumerabilis multitude cepit ad sepulchrum Saluatoris Iherosolimis quantam nullus hominum prius sperare poterat."

[156] Ibid., 198–201.

[157] Ibid., 204–205: "Preterea, dum quidam de sollititioribus, qui eo tempore habebantur, consulti a pluribus fuissent quid tantus populorum concursus ad Iherosolimam designaret, olim seculi inauditus preteriti, responsum est a quibusdam satis caute non aliud portendere quam aduentum illius perditi Antichristi, qui circa finem seculi istius, diuina testante auctoritate, prestolatur affuturus. Tuncque gentibus uniuersis uia orientis plage, unde uenturus est, patefacta, *obuiam illi cuncte nations incunctanter sint processure*, reuera ut illud dominicum adimpleatur presagium, quoniam tunc in temptationem incident, si fieri potest, etiam electi. Huius hic meta uerbi, ceterum non negamus deuotum laborem fidelium exinde premium seu mercedem percipere a iusto Iudice." Landes disagrees with France's translation of the part above in ellipses, italicized in this footnote, which the latter renders as "and then all nations would march against him without delay." Landes argues (correctly, I believe) that a better translation would be "march towards him" with the intention

This is what Glaber considered a cautious explanation! Such an interpretation was certainly not what his superiors would have wanted, but Glaber had made a career out of rubbing religious authorities just enough to retain his independence but not enough to incur significant criticism that would shackle his views long-term.[158] Thus we hear an expression not simply of one more sign of apocalyptic prophecy but of apocalyptic agency. Those traveling to Jerusalem—rich, poor, religious, lay, male, female—were performing an early act in the apocalyptic drama. The masses of people moving to Jerusalem were not going merely to see the Antichrist but were by their very human actions and simple presence helping to bring about his emergence. Those who died while on pilgrimage, therefore, could well believe their deaths brought them closer to God's judgment,[159] for they had come to Jerusalem as witnesses (i.e. both as spectators and to provide testimony before a judge).

Though Glaber never met Ademar, he would have respected him not merely as a pilgrim but as a fellow Christian attempting to fulfill apocalyptic prophecy, whether Ademar had fully intended that or not. And as the decades passed, Jerusalem would only continue to develop as the focal point of apocalyptic pilgrimages. A generation later, another mass pilgrimage occurred. This surge of pilgrims in 1064 left Germany and France for the Holy Land with the belief that Easter Day would fall on the same calendar date in

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of joining the Antichrist. Landes, "Rodolfus Glaber and the Dawn of the New Millennium," 76n87. While the crusades would eventually lead to a belief that Christians should take the fight to the Antichrist in the Holy Land, it does not seem like Glaber is making that assertion here. Rather, he seems to be contrasting non-Christian gullibility with Christian faithfulness.

[158] Landes, "Rodolfus Glaber and the Dawn of the New Millennium," 62, 72–73.

[159] Glaber, *Histories*, 200–201.

1065 as had Christ's Resurrection in 33, which they took to be of special significance.[160] The expedition met with great hardships along the way, but it eventually found its way to Jerusalem, albeit after Easter had passed.[161] It was yet another attempt at living out apocalyptic expectations through devotional travel to the Holy Sepulcher. But the greatest of all apocalyptic pilgrimages would come at the end of the century with Pope Urban II's call for armies of Europe to march on Jerusalem in what would later become known as the First Crusade.

The First Crusade

After years of ignoring the best sources from which to explore such ideas, scholars have only recently begun focusing their attention on the apocalyptic contours of the buildup to, motivations for, and course of the First Crusade.[162] Indeed, one of the sources for Urban II's instigating speech at Clermont in November 1095 practically begs for such investigations. Several early histories of the First Crusade exist, and among them there is much disagreement on what Urban II said that began the crusading movement, but by far the most overtly apocalyptic contemporary account comes from a French monk named Guibert.

Guibert of Nogent[163] (c. 1060–1124) came from an undistinguished aristocratic family in northern France. As a monk, Guibert's natural intellectual gifts were further

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[160] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 12.
[161] *Annales Altahenses Maiores*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH SSRG* 20 (Hanover: 1868), 815–817.
[162] Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), xiii.
[163] For a biography of Guibert that sheds the troublesome and anachronistic attempts by twentieth-century historians to psychoanalyze him, see Jay Rubenstein, *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

cultivated by a prosperous association with both Anselm of Bec and Anselm of Laon. Though he became abbot of Nogent, Guibert's career was unremarkable outside of this small community during his lifetime. He is remembered today, however, for his psychologically insightful (if difficult) autobiographical *Monodies* and his account of the First Crusade, *Dei Gesta per Francos*, composed about 1106–1109. The latter was sadly unknown to his contemporaries. Nevertheless, in recounting this history, though Guibert may not have directly influenced the wider world around him, he left a record of how the First Crusade could readily be interpreted as an apocalyptic event. Whether and to what degree his version of events of 1095–1099 is to be relied upon need not trouble this present discussion, as his *interpretation* of "the deeds of God through the Franks" (not the deeds themselves) testifies to the way belief in human agency in apocalyptic affairs had become a concrete idea by the start of the 12th century.

The premise of Guibert's history was a celebration of God's working through the Franks to accomplish tasks far more praiseworthy than any previous conquests performed by humans. Attributing human action to divine favor was, of course, a common place for medieval writers. Moreover, at first glance, it might suggest a retrograde from ideas of human agency that we have been examining thus far. For Guibert, however, attaching the Franks to the work of God did not subordinate them (at least, no more than was proper for God's honor and authority). Rather, the intertwining of human and divine wills elevated the former, along with the entire contemporary world. Guibert writes at the start of his history:

> Sometimes, but not always incorrectly, certain mortals have developed the foul habit of praising previous times and attacking what modern men do.

> Indeed the ancients should be praised for the way in which they balanced good fortune with restraint, as well as for the way in which thoughtfulness controlled their use of energy. However, no discerning individual could prefer in any way the temporal prosperity of the ancients to any of the strength of our own day.[164]

This is a remarkable assertion, as it goes against the well-established medieval tradition of viewing the world as in constant decay and therefore of reduced moral value.[165] Guibert does admit the 11th century's material inferiority compared to the great empires of the past, yet he makes such a concession in order to better compliment his own contemporaries in an explicitly apocalyptic context. He explains:

> Although pure strength was pre-eminent among the ancients, yet among us, *though the end of time has come upon us*, the gifts of nature have not entirely rotted away. Things done in early times may rightly be praised because done for the first time, but far more justly are those things worth celebrating which are *usefully done by uncultivated men in a world slipping into old age*.[166]

Guibert here subtly begins his history of the First Crusade with what are, in fact, ideas quite revolutionary in apocalyptic speculation. While the Last World Emperor was a fixture in apocalyptic thought by this time, Guibert does not look to the past for a great military leader. In fact, he immediately follows the above statement with a listing of historical conquerors—most notably Alexander the Great—but dismisses them as successful

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[164] Guibert de Nogent, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, trans. Robert Levine (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 27; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, CCCM 127A, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994), 85: "Quorundam mortalium vitiose aliquotiens, sed non semper, moribus constat inolitum ut modernorum facta vituperent, preterita secla sustollant. Et quidem laudanda fuit veterum modestia contemperata Felicitas et retractatione consilii moderata vivacitas, sed nemini discrete qualicumque virtutis nostrae secularis eorum fuit ullo modo anteferenda prosperitas."

[165] See discussion of Ælfric and Wulfstan's Old English vernacular texts in the previous chapter.

[166] Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 27; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 85: "Etsi enim in antiquis virtus defecate preminuit, tamen in nobis, in quos licet seculorum finis devenerit, dos naturae nequaquam prorsus extabuit. Predicantur merito pro hominum novitiate priscis acta temporibus, sed multo iustius efferri Digna sunt quae mundo prolabente in senium peraguntur utiliter a rudibus." Emphasis mine.

generals who killed many for inferior motivations.[167] The Franks, however, fought for godly reasons. "God ordained holy wars in our time, so that the knightly order and the erring mob, who, like ancient pagan models, were engaged in mutual slaughter, might find a new way of earning salvation."[168] What would become the crusade, moreover, was not led by a single great man, not even one ordained by God (i.e. the Last World Emperor). Instead:

> No priest in church had to urge people to this task, but one man urged another, both by speech and by example, proclaiming his determination, both at home and in the streets, to go on the expedition….You would have seen Solomon's words clearly put into action, 'the locusts have no king, yet they march together in bands.'…The locust had no king, because each faithful soul had no leader but God alone; certain that He is his companion in arms, he has no doubt that God goes before him.[169]

Thus, from the start of his account, Guibert places contemporary crusading activity as morally superior to and more commendable than all previous conquests, even that of Alexander, who shut up Gog and Magog. He says it was undertaken with divine prompting for each individual without the need for any prophesied or preordained leader. Yet he nevertheless situates the march to Jerusalem at the end of time, a last triumphant victory for an old but still vigorous world. Though even non-Augustinian speculators would say

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[167] Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 27–28; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 85–87.

[168] Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 28; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 87: "instituit nostro tempore prelia sancta deus, ut ordo equestris et vulgus oberrans, qui vetustae paganitatis exemplo in mutuas versabantur cedes, novum repperirent salutis promerendae genus."

[169] Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 29; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 88: "Non erat aecclesiasticae cuiquam personae necessarium ut ad excitandos pro hoc ipso populous in aecclesiis declamaret, cum alter alteri non minus monitis quam exemplo domi forisque profectionis vota clamaret….Videres dictum Salomonis evidenter illud impleri: *regem locusta non habet et egreditur universa per turmas suas*….Ipsa 'regem non habuit,' quia quaeque fidelis anima omni ducatu preter solius dei caruit, dum illius se contubernalem estimate eumque previum sibi esse non dubitat." The reference to Solomon is drawn from Proverbs 30:27. The pope's influence is not mentioned here either. Leadership (or the lack thereof) in this context refers to the drive people had to take up the cross after the initial call to arms had been proposed by Urban II.

God controlled the timing of the apocalypse, Guibert believed that the crusade to Jerusalem, as part of the apocalyptic drama, required the participation of common, even leaderless, Franks. To be sure, Guibert admits the Franks were not the only ones to go East—a source of heresies since even when the Roman Empire was strong—yet his fellow countrymen were those specially called to this task.[170] This summons, too, was of an explicitly apocalyptic character.

In his account of Urban's speech at Clermont on November 27, 1095, Guibert quotes the pope as calling for an armed expedition to the Holy Land under the full light of apocalyptic history. This, however, presupposed social reform. That is, an improved Christian society was both a reason for and a goal of sending an army to Jerusalem. Guibert's Urban tells his audience:

> If you think you must seek with such effort the thresholds of the apostles and of others, then why do you hesitate to go to see and to snatch up the cross, the blood, and to devote your precious souls to rescuing them? Until now you have waged wrongful wars, often hurling insane spears at each other, driven only by greed and pride, for which you have deserved only eternal death and damnation. Now we propose for you battles which offer the gift of glorious martyrdom, for which you will earn present and future praise.[171]

The critical language, respect for important relic sites, and desire for unity and social harmony come from both the older Peace of God and reform movements.[172] If Christian

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[170] Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 29–30; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 88–90.

[171] Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 43; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 113: "si limina etiam sanctorum apostolorum vel quorumlibet aliorum tanto sudore petenda putatis, quid crucem, quid sanguinem, quid monumentum eruere, quid visitare, quid pro his eruendis animarum precia impendere detrectatis? Indebita hactenus bella gessistis, in mutuas cedes vesana aliquotiens tela solius cupiditatis aut superbiae causa torsistis, ex quo perpetuos interitus et certa dampnationis exitia meruistis: nunc vobis bella proponimus, quae in se habent gloriosum martirii munus, quibus restat presentis et aeternae laudis titulus."

[172] Marcus Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970–c. 1130* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 21–69; Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion*, 324; and

soldiers could direct their energies away from fighting in mutually destructive ways, Urban promised not only a constructive use for their skills but a prophetic one as well.

> And you should also consider with the utmost care *whether God is working through your efforts* to restore the church that is the mother of churches; he might wish to restore the faith in some of the eastern lands, *in spite of the nearness of the time of the Antichrist*. For it is clear that the Antichrist makes war neither against Jews, nor against pagans, but, according to the etymology of his name, he will move against Christians. *And if the Antichrist comes upon no Christians there*, as today there is scarcely any, *there will be no one to resist him*, or any whom he might justly move among.[173]

To be sure, just like earlier precedents, Guibert's Urban speaks of a prophecy that the Antichrist will fight and overcome leading Christian kings (of Egypt, Africa, and Ethiopia) at Jerusalem. His emphasis, however, is not on these rulers but on the common Christian arms-bearers he hopes to rally. "This [Antichrist's defeat of the kings] cannot happen at all, *unless* Christianity is established where paganism now rules….Thus through you the name of Catholicism will be propagated, and it will defeat the perfidy of the Antichrist and of the Antichristians."[174] Contingency, usually absent in earlier medieval apocalypticism,[175] anchors Urban's prophetic exhortation. Indeed, according to Urban, the

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Whalen, *Dominion of God*, 49–56. Bull does not believe the Peace of God accounts for the motivations within the laity participating in the First Crusade, but it was nevertheless a critical part of Urban II agenda.

[173] Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 43; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 113–114: "Et est vobis preterea summa deliberation pensandum, si ipsam matrem aecclesiarum, vobis elaborantibus, ad Christianitatis cultum reflorere, deo per vos agente, contigerit, ne forte contra propinqua Antichristi tempora ad fidem partes Orientis aliquas restitui velit. Perspicuum namque est Antichristum non contra Iudeos, non contra gentiles bella facturum, sed iuxta ethimologiam sui nominis Christianos pervasurum, et si Antichristus ibidem christianum neminem, sicuti hodie vix aliquis habetur, inveniat, non erit qui sibi refragetur aut quem iure pervadat." Emphasis mine.

[174] Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 44; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 114: "Quod quidem nullatenus fieri poterit, nisi ubi nunc paganismus est Christianitas fiat….ut per vos nomen catholicum propagetur quod Antichristi antichristianorumque perfidiae refragetur." Emphasis mine.

[175] Matthew Gabriele, "From Prophecy to Apocalypse: the Verb Tenses of Jerusalem in Robert the Monk's *Historia* of the First Crusade," *Journal of Medieval History* 42, no. 3 (2016): 304–316, at 306; and R. W. Southern, "Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: 3. History as Prophecy," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 22 (1972): 159–180.

entire apocalyptic drama, usually portrayed as fixed and unchanging, might appear radically different depending on the actions his fellow Christians take at this very moment in time.

> These times, dearest brothers, perhaps will now be fulfilled, when with the aid of God, the power of the pagans will be pushed back by you, and, with the end of the world already near, even if the nations do not turn to the Lord, because, as the Apostle says, "there must be a falling away from faith." Nevertheless, first according to the prophecies, it is necessary, before the coming of the Antichrist in those parts, either through you or through whomever God wills, that the empire of Christianity be renewed, so that the leader of all evil, who will have his throne there, may find some nourishment of faith against which he may fight. Consider, then, that Almighty providence may have destined you for the task of rescuing Jerusalem from such abasement. I ask you to think how your hearts can conceive of the joy of seeing the holy city revived by your efforts, and the oracles, the divine prophecies fulfilled in our own times.[176]

The minor qualification that the prophecy will be fulfilled "either through you or through whomever God wills," while admitting divine supremacy in this matter, nevertheless still retains a note of contingency. Human beings, albeit acting in accordance with providence, will be responsible for preparing the way for the Antichrist. Guibert's Urban certainly felt the Franks were well-positioned as God's agents, yet even if they were not, some people would be.

Such enthusiastic exhortations for Frankish arms-bearers to be responsible for the start of the apocalyptic drama stands in stark contrast to earlier forms of pious preparations

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[176] Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 44; and *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 115: "Haec tempora, frates karissimi, modo forsitan implebuntur dum per vos, deo cooperante, paganorum potentiae repellentur, et fine seculi iam propinquo etsi gentes desinent converti ad dominum, quia iuxta apostolum oportet fieri a fide discessionem primum, tamen necesse est iuxta prophetias ante adventum Antichristi in illis partibus aut per vos aut per quos deo placuerit renovari Christianitatis imperium, ut omnium malorum caput, qui ibidem thronum regni habiturus est, fidei aliquod contra quod pugnet repperiat nutrimentum. Cogitate itaque quod vos ad hoc Omnipotens fortasse provideat, quatinus Iherusalem per vos a tanta conculcatione restituat. Rogo perpendite quibus cordibus gaudia illa poterunt concipi, cum sanctam civitatem vestro adminiculo viderimus suscitari et prophetica nostris temporibus, immo oracular divina compleri."

for the End Times. The sinful violence the Franks had committed against each other prior to the First Crusade certainly required expiation. Yet for Urban, this did not mean quiet, individualized repentance as many before him had preached, their eyes more on the Last Judgment than the Battle of Armageddon. According to Guibert, spiritual reform was not a prerequisite for apocalyptic action. Rather, apocalyptic action *was* spiritual reform. As such, it was also self-justifying. In other words, not angels, saints, biblical prophets kept in stasis, nor even legendary kings with special divine favor were the ones who could and would signal the beginning of the End. Instead, normal sinners seeking salvation would be responsible for preparing the way for the Antichrist by knowingly making themselves bait for his armies and cruelties. As the end of the world approached, God was surely working through the Franks—but if not them, certainly people like them—to accomplish the necessary preparations.

To be sure, all things in heaven and earth were done through God's will. Nevertheless, Urban assured the Franks that God had chosen to fulfill prophecy through coordination with normal, flawed, contemporary human agents. The apocalypse was inevitable, but contingent antecedents were necessary for the inevitable to become actualized. At the end of the 6th century, Pope Gregory I had posited in his *Dialogues* that the eternally predestined heavenly reward of salvation nevertheless depended upon human participation.[177] Thomas Aquinas would articulate the same idea in the 13th century regarding petitionary prayer, arguing that human actions do not change the divine plan but

[177] Gregory the Great, *Dialogues of Pope St. Gregory the Great*, trans. J. Funk (London: 1911), 32–33 (Dial. i, 8).

rather align with God's foreknowledge of how the divine plan will be executed.[178] Or, as C. S. Lewis would drolly remark in the 20th century, even if someone were to believe fully in divine determinism in all things, that person will still find it necessary to ask their dining partner to pass them the salt.[179] Guibert and those who saw the 1095 call to crusade as part of the apocalyptic drama were fully integrated in a long intellectual history that attempted in general terms to marry human agency and divine providence. The specifically apocalyptic aspects of their belief, however, came from a relatively new tradition dating back less than two hundred years. Nevertheless, by the start of the 12th century, once the crusaders had finished their march, returned to Europe with their tales, and provided fuel for contemporary chroniclers, there could be no doubt that Latin Christians believed that humans—with God's ever-present guidance—might well hold the fate of the world in their own hands.

Over and above the work of Guibert, modern scholars have increasingly identified apocalyptic attitudes among those who took up the cross from 1095 to 1099. More than half a century ago, Norman Cohn was one of the first voices to seriously pursue the connections between apocalyptic belief and social transformation. In treating the era of the First Crusade, Cohn believed Urban had unwittingly released a tsunami of popular millennial zeal among the poor that washed over both Europe and the Middle East.[180] Though he may have greatly overstated the situation, Cohn remains an inspirational starting

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[178] Thomas Aquinas, *Secunda Secundae Partis*, Question 83 (*ST* 2–2.83.2c.).
[179] C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm Chiefly on Prayer: Reflections on the Intimate Dialogue Between Man and God* (New York: Harcourt, 1992), 37.
[180] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 61–70.

point. More recently, Jean Flori and Robert Chazan have argued that within a diverse range of crusading motivations, many of those participating in anti-Jewish violence against Rhineland Jews in 1096 were driven by millennial thinking. Working primarily with Hebrew sources, Chazan believes the Jewish historians of these events provide strong independent testimony for apocalyptic beliefs among both crusaders and non-crusaders at this time. In wanting "to clear a way" to Jerusalem by killing Jews in Europe, in some cases calling for a total eradication of the population, Chazan sees some European Christians as motivated by millennial excitement.[181] In other words, while greed remained an important factor, some of the attacks on Rhineland Jews were seen by contemporaries (both Christian and Jewish) as enacted by humans motivated to fulfill divine providence.

But perhaps the strongest voice for viewing the First Crusade and the generation that followed it through an apocalyptic lens is Jay Rubenstein. In two recent monographs Rubenstein explores how those who originally took up the cross and those who were later influenced by returning crusaders both harbored and perpetuated belief in their own role as apocalyptic agents. In *Armies of Heaven*, Rubenstein tracks the course of the First Crusade, from inception to completion, in light of apocalyptic prophecies. This includes discussion of beliefs about the Last World Emperor, acts of inhuman barbarism, and the proliferation of miracle stories during the campaign. Though in my opinion Rubenstein relies at times too much on circumstantial and implicit associations to establish widespread apocalyptic belief among crusaders, his work provides a solid and much welcomed realignment of the

[181] Jean Flori, *La Première croisade: L'Occident chrétien contre l'islam* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1997), 40–54; and Robert Chazan, "'Let Not a Remnant or a Residue Escape': Millenarian Enthusiasm in the First Crusade," *Speculum* 84, no. 2 (April 2009): 289–313.

importance of apocalyptic ideas among those who captured Jerusalem in 1099, and how it created a never-ending apocalyptic scenario.[182]

In *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*, a sequel to *Armies of Heaven*, Rubenstein explores how the apocalyptic contours of the First Crusade affected perceptions back in Europe throughout the 12th century and beyond. Men like the crusader Bohemond of Taranto (d. 1111), whose exploits won him the city of Antioch, brought back not only personal recollections for people like Guibert to chronicle but also apocalyptic stories of God moving through humans to enact his will on earth. The receptivity of apocalyptic speculation to human agency after the 11th century helped make this possible. As Rubenstein notes, "In the twelfth century, it [an embrace of the apocalyptic] indicated a wish to understand history and a belief that humanity still had an important role to play in God's plan for salvation. It was a call to arms, allegorically and literally."[183] Rubenstein's work does not dwell, as this dissertation has, on the transformations that occurred in apocalyptic thought prior to the First Crusade, yet his conclusions about what came after confirm that, by the 12th century, the change had become both permanent and popular, even if not dominant. It permitted medieval Europeans to see human activity anew, whether the End Times began now or later. "Not only was history ongoing, but it seemed to extend beyond what had once looked like Armageddon into a new age of peace, with yet another fiery battle to be fought against armies called from all the earth's corners, a statue looming above it all on unsteady feet, ready to fall, but its ultimate meaning still sealed."[184] In other

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[182] Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*, 313–325.
[183] Jay Rubenstein, *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: The Crusades, Apocalyptic Prophecy, and the End of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 214.
[184] Ibid., 219.

words, humans had work to do if they were to discover what their responsibilities were in the ever-approaching yet still distant apocalyptic drama and make the appropriate final preparations.

A New Beginning for the End

At the start of his treatment on the apocalyptic aspects of the First Crusade, Jay Rubenstein describes how contemporary chroniclers knew almost at once that something significant in human history had occurred with the capture of Jerusalem by a European Christian army in 1099. "It was a new phase in God's plan," he writes, speaking for the chroniclers. "At the very least, the armies had set in motion events prophesied for centuries. The work begun with Christ's crucifixion a millennium earlier might now be drawing to a close, *the apocalyptic clock started due to the actions of modern man*."[185] Rubenstein's statement is astute and fully justified, though he is unaware exactly how the apocalyptic human agency embodied in the crusading movement was part of older developments. Brett Whalen's work on the century after Urban II's speech confirms the connection between human agency in history and apocalyptic precautions that developed in the 12th century.[186] The First Crusade did indeed popularize in bold, exciting fashion the idea of humans participating in and being responsible for the start and course of the apocalyptic drama. It brought together as no other movement had done before: the role of preachers rallying the faithful, the establishment of peace at home, an enormous group of pilgrims marching to the Holy Land, the fighting of non-Christians servants of the Antichrist (unbaptized Jews,

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[185] Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*, xi. Emphasis mine.
[186] Whalen, *Dominion of God*, 72–99.

Eastern heretics, and Saracen pagans), the securing of Jerusalem for the Last World Emperor, the proliferation of miracles, and, above all, ordinary humans as the central characters in the fulfillment of prophecy. None of these ideas were wholly new to the events surrounding 1095–1099, yet they captured contemporary and subsequent imaginations. After 1099, the number and diversity of apocalyptic ideas that included human agents responsible for starting, delaying, or altering the course of the End Times would proliferate as never before in European history. Doubtless, the hierarchical Church still maintained Augustine's view that interest in individual eschatology should trump apocalyptic speculation. Nevertheless, the types of apocalyptic scenarios—increasingly and self-consciously beholden to human activity—would only increase.

A full exploration of speculation regarding human agency in apocalyptic scenarios after the First Crusade is worthy of a complete analysis on its own and thus cannot be accomplished in this work. Nevertheless, even a short glimpse at the many ways Latin Christian Europe after 1100 imagined humans affecting apocalyptic events reveals a stark change from the earlier, more passive tradition. In them, one can also espy hints at future areas of study for scholars interested in humanity's perceptions of its own role in the apocalypse. For example, Adso's letter to Gerberga did not remain in the confines of monastic libraries for long. It had become the inspiration for a play in Latin by around 1160, but theatrical adaptations of Adso's *De ortu et tempore Antichristi* would crop up in Europe in vernacular languages throughout the second half of the Middle Ages, reinforcing

the basic framework for the Antichrist's rise to power.[187] Also in the 12th century, like the eleventh-century reformers before her, Hildegard of Bingen saw in her published visions that the threat of an impending apocalypse necessitated improvements in Church administration.[188] At the end of the century, Joachim of Fiore based his revolutionary approach to apocalyptic interpretation on a democratization of divine authority throughout society, that is, an authority that was carried by all believers without regard to clerical status, if any.[189] In the 13th century, Joachim's prophecies were thought by many Franciscans to be fulfilled by Sts. Francis and Dominic. This conviction in turn imparted to the so-called Spiritual Franciscans the responsibility to act in order to fulfill their divinely mandated apocalyptic responsibilities.[190] In the 14th century, the cleric, alchemist, and papal prisoner John of Rupescissa pondered the practical question of how best to oppose the Antichrist once he arrived. His proposed solution (never realized) was to invent a healing elixir for priests so that they might be revived even from death in order to continue preaching against the Antichrist.[191] During these centuries, as with the Spiritual Franciscans and John of Rupescissa, many who fell out of favor with the hierarchical

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[187] See Wright, *The Play of Antichrist*; Emmerson and Hult, *Antichrist and Judgment Day*; and *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 396–463.

[188] Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. Mother Columba Hart and Jane Bishop (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 493–511 (Book 3, Vision 11).

[189] Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore & the Prophetic Future: A Medieval Study in Historical Thinking* (Stoud: Sutton Publishing, 1999, rev. ed.), 5–6, 29–58.

[190] Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study of Joachimism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993); and David Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 81–86, 279–304.

[191] Leah DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy, and the End of Time: John of Rupescissa in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), especially 32–51. See also Zachary A. Matus, *Franciscans and the Elixir of Life: Religion and Science in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), especially 62–68, 92–98.

Church saw themselves as partakers in pre-apocalyptic or even apocalyptic events. Though the truth of their beliefs may have been obscured, the so-called Cathars could be viewed as an apocalyptic splinter group, convinced of their own importance as they separated themselves from a sinful world in preparation for the End Times. Bernard Gui, for example, wrote about how various sects believed themselves to be living in the Last Days.[192] The northern Italian Dolcinians, or Order of Apostles, also embraced a millenarian worldview that, for both ideological and practical reasons, required them to isolate themselves in order to prepare for the apocalyptic drama.[193] Moreover, as the Middle Ages passed through the disasters of the 14th century, social critique took on aspects of apocalyptic agency, as seen in William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, the visions of Julian of Norwich, the warnings preached by Vincent Ferrer, locally circulated prophecies in German, and the increasingly popular belief in the two popes, one angelic and the other demonic.[194] Thus, by the time of the Protestant Reformation—when many apocalyptically minded groups formed, broke apart, and formed again[195]—Christianity had long embraced the idea that humans, under divine providence, would have a significant role in determining if, when, and how the End Times played out.

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[192] Bernard Gui, *The Inquisitor's Guide: A Medieval Manual on Heretics*, trans. Janet Shirley (Ravenhall Books, 2006), 91–137. See also Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294–1324*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 318–320.
[193] Jerry B. Pierce, *Poverty, Heresy, and the Apocalypse: The Order of Apostles and Social Change in Medieval Italy 1260–1307* (New York: Continuum Books, 2012).
[194] See Frances Courtney Kneupper, *The Empire at the End of Time: Identity and Reform in Late Medieval German Prophecy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Justin M. Byron-Davies, *Revelation and the Apocalypse in Late Medieval Literature: the Writings of Julian of Norwich and William Langland* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020); and Philip Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer, His World and Life: Religion and Society in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), especially 137–159.
[195] Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 223–280.

These examples must suffice, for there is no end to instances that could be given of humans believing in their own apocalyptic agency between the 16th and 21st centuries. Some have involved single individuals expecting their actions could stop apocalyptic events, while others have preoccupied millions from around the world, such as fears over nuclear war and climate change.[196] Along these lines, Matthew Gabriele has explored the parallels between early crusaders and recent trends among politically minded American Evangelicals who claim for themselves the mantle of God's "Chosen People." Ultimately, one sought and the other seeks actionable ways to fight non-members, whom they see as deserving victims of God's wrath.[197] As for modern fiction, the list of works on apocalyptic topics is endless. But no matter how different the possible actions described, all these examples share with the 11th century the same assumption that humans have the potential to prevent, delay, accelerate, complete, or shape our final doom. Thus, even when only a small minority of people believed the apocalypse was imminent, through the work of tenth- and eleventh-century apocalyptic speculators, the common assumption was that humans might bear some responsibility for it, whenever it did happen.

Conclusions

What did the 11th century mean for apocalyptic thought regarding human agency? Ultimately, the answer to that question has been the purpose of this examination. To answer

[196] See O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 134–193, 225–228.
[197] Matthew Gabriele, "The Chosen People of the Eleventh and Twenty-First Centuries," *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 2, no. 2 (2012): 281–290.

it is to speak of the sea change that occurred in the medieval Latin world's understanding of humanity's role in the End Times.

At the start of the 11th century, apocalyptic human agency had not entered the mainstream. To be sure, during the 10th century it was increasingly circulating among the very elite (especially the Ottonians) and the monastic reformers (mostly emanating from Gorzian communities). People like Abbo of Fleury felt compelled (and rather annoyed) to dispute Lotharingian prophets in the streets. Meanwhile, across the English Channel, a vernacular sermon tradition had started to prioritize apocalyptic thought. Ælfric of Eynsham and Wulftstan of York perpetuated and enhanced this vernacular tradition. Wulfstan went so far as to task his subordinate clergy—first as bishop of Worchester and later archbishop of York—to preach to the English expressly in order to oppose the Antichrist. Nevertheless, increased circulation of apocalyptic ideas does not necessarily imply transformation of those ideas. The longevity of Augustinian "orthodoxy" that spiritualized apocalyptic passages of scripture is testament enough for that. What happened in the 11th century, however, was not simply a popularizing of apocalyptic ideas but a democratization of apocalyptic roles.

Through the Peace of God movement, church reform, persecution of heretics and Jews, increased pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and finally the launching of the First Crusade, we have seen an acceleration of ways in which humans could forestall, prepare for, or initiate the apocalyptic drama. A century earlier, even among those authors who were particularly receptive to apocalyptic innovation, few would have been so explicitly and consistently insistent upon humanity's power to shape End Time events. In the 11th century, however,

not only did authors suggest a variety of ways humans could participate in the buildup to the apocalypse but each of these were mutually supportive, culminating in the launch of the First Crusade. Urban II's speech at Clermont, as seen by men like Guibert (but doubtlessly others of his generation, too), encapsulated all of the developments in apocalyptic speculation of the previous century. To bring about peace in Christian lands, the soldiers of France were asked to internalize the spiritual admonitions of reformers and make a grand pilgrimage to Jerusalem where, purified, they would convert heathens and maintain a forward outpost against the Antichrist's inevitable assault. Such was the 11th century's effect on apocalyptic speculation.

Yet another question that might be ask: did apocalyptic thought shape the events that we have examined in the 11th century? Motivations are especially difficult to establish, even when we have access to seemingly explicit statements from contemporaries. In this regard, our sources are quite limited. The apocalyptic voices we have examined were small compared to the chorus (or perhaps silence) of Augustinian authors, but they were a part of, not apart from, their society. Therefore, the answer is probably: yes, some, but not primarily. But this study has not focused on linking apocalyptic thought to changes in society but rather events in society to changes in apocalyptic thought. Naturally, of course, both are reciprocal, and this is the relationship we see in the 11th century. Cross-fertilization of apocalyptic traditions created in the Gorzian network of the 10th century the innovative belief that humans could have some role to play in the start of the apocalyptic drama, be it in the person of the Last World Emperor or through preaching as a way to prepare for the Antichrist's assaults. Starting before but continuing after the year 1000, Gorze and similar

networks began pushing society toward general religious reform outside of the purely monastic context. Belief in apocalyptic agency also spread. When significant religious activities happened in the 11th century—the Peace of God, reform, persecution of alleged heretics, pilgrimage, and the start of the crusading movement—apocalyptic ideas emerged as well.

Still, causal relationships between these movements and apocalyptic thought are inconsistent. Nevertheless, the *types* of apocalyptic thought now present were different than those of previous centuries, for they held that the activities Christians were engaged in as a society were important prologues to the coming of the Antichrist and the End Times. Did people in Aquitaine gather in fields to proclaim *pax* because they thought the Final Judgment was about to come? Did the Gregorian Reform spread because people literally thought its completion would be Christ's Second Coming? Did people march to Jerusalem in order to be present when the Antichrist arrived following the Last World Emperor's abdication on the Mount of Olives? As stated above, the answer to all these questions is probably "no" for most Christians, but such questions were now permanently on the table. Even if the hierarchical Church remained Augustinian in its approach to eschatology, eschatology itself was now wider, more dynamic in its potential manifestations. One could wait for the Final Judgment as Christians in centuries past had by praying, confessing, doing good works, and relying on divine agents to sort out the details of the earth's last days. Or one could choose from an increasingly numerous variety of activities to delay, inaugurate, or otherwise prepare for the apocalypse: reform the Church and society, preach "correct" apocalyptic warnings, fight the forces of Satan at home and abroad, escape from

society altogether with likeminded confederates, fulfill the Great Commission to convert distant nations, search for weapons against the Antichrist through science, or seek lost Christian allies in far off lands. Thus, while it is difficult to answer the question, "Was apocalyptic thought responsible for major events in the 11th century?" such a question was finally conceivable, in stark contrast to what had come before.

Certainly, the Augustinian tradition did not evaporate at the start of the 12th century. To this day, it remains standard within the Catholic Church.[198] Similarly, the possibilities for humans preventing, delaying, accelerating, triggering, or shaping the end of the world were not exhausted at this time either. Yet the imagined futures that circulated during the later Middle Ages and that pervade the modern world that revolve around human responsibility would have been unthinkable without the changes in apocalyptic thought that happened throughout the 10th and especially the 11th centuries.

The purpose of this examination has therefore been to highlight this moment—or rather series of moments—that unveiled a new horizon for an important dimension in human intellectual, cultural, and social history. Today, without resorting to religious prophecies, humans know that our survival is contingent upon many variables. Nuclear wars, deadly pandemics, climate change, meteoric impacts, and countless other events could reduce us to a minor species on this planet if not annihilate us from existence. In every case, modern humans believe we have the capacity to save ourselves from catastrophe or be responsible for our own demise. Technological and scientific improvements as well as increased secularism have played important roles since at least

[198] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), n. 668–679.

the 19th century in leading us to this collective conclusion. Nevertheless, the roots of belief in human agency for even a wholly secular apocalypse reach unquestionably back to the 10th and 11th centuries. As such, by understanding the emergence of human agency as a factor in apocalyptic speculation, scholars of all varieties—premodern and modern historians, specialists in the apocalypse and those far removed from it—will have a firmer grasp on how we have come to view ourselves as participants in a universally shared and ever evolving history that has (we hope) yet to reach its end.

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