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# The Final Countdown: On the Historiography of the Usage of Language in 1000 A.D.

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The Final Countdown:  
A Historiographical Analysis on Language in the Year 1000 A.D.

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In many recent years, there have been many different interpretations when it comes to people's visions on the end of the world, and just how it is going to happen. In the movie *2012* for example, it was imagined that the world would suffer from a global catastrophe, resulting in mass flooding and general destruction, and in the 2010 video-game *Darksiders*, the apocalypse was envisioned as a grand scale war between Heaven and Hell on Earth, focusing primarily on War, one of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, and his involvement in the cataclysmic aftermath of the apocalypse. These notions are not new however, as humans continually fear our end as a species, and were very apparent during and in the years leading up to the year 1000 A.D. In this essay, we will be focusing on this millenarian belief, which historians have fixated on debating as to whether or not these apocalyptic beliefs at the year 1000 were a widespread occurrence at this time, and if so to what extent.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, we will be looking at the way in which language was used by medieval historian-monks and high ranking religious officials to contribute to the increase of apocalyptic tensions, and also the way that historians have written about these religious figures.<sup>2</sup>

We must now begin to ask ourselves what led to this increase in millenarian belief that the world would end between either 1000-1033 A.D.; 1033 being the 1000<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the death of Christ. From the evidence provided in the first hand accounts of religious figures in the early eleventh century, it can be argued that this millenarian idea was not uncommon throughout Europe. We do not see many other cultures giving the turn of first millennium as

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<sup>1</sup> Millenarian – that which pertains to the millennium, does not refer specifically to a period of years

<sup>2</sup> Archbishops, Bishops, and Royal Advisors

much thought as the Europeans did, for this was a primarily Christian belief.<sup>3</sup> In his 1997 work *Questioning the Millennium: a Rationalist's Guide to a Precisely Arbitrary Countdown*, Stephen Jay Gould remarks that believers in the apocalypse “[regarded] the number 1000 as the hidden basis for both the solution of natural order and the salvation of human souls.”<sup>4</sup>

Before we are able to dig into this debate on the usage of language in the writings of medieval historian-monks however, we must familiarize ourselves with the terminology which Richard Landes presents in *Giants With Feet of Clay: On the Historiography of the Year 1000* published in 2005, as Landes is perhaps the most paramount American figure for millennial studies. In *Giants*, Landes uses two distinct phrases which we will also be using; one to refer to the historians who refute the belief that the year 1000 A.D. held any apocalyptic sentiment, the other to describe historians who accept this chiliastic belief. Landes describes these two schools of thought as anti-terrors (those who refute the idea) and pro-terrors (those who support the idea). The pro-terrors argument began in the mid nineteenth century “led by Jules Michelet, [causing] many historians [to draw] a dramatic picture of mass apocalyptic expectations climaxing in the year 1000.”<sup>5</sup> This original pro-terror argument soon met its end however, as the anti-terrors school began “shortly after the revolutionary catastrophe of the Paris Commune in 1871, [which caused] a powerful reaction [to] set in among both ecclesiastical and increasingly ‘professionalized’ (i.e., positivist) secular historians, who now categorically rejected the ‘terrors of the year 1000’ as a romantic legend.”<sup>6</sup> The Paris Commune was a trial period of government which arose during revolutionary France, based on communalistic and socialistic governmental

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<sup>3</sup> Eschatology – Christian apocalyptic thought. This would mean that this sense of urgency around 1000 A.D. would only have been felt by Christians at this time, not members of other religions, unless for unrelated reasons.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *Questioning the Millennium: A Rationalist's Guide to a Precisely Arbitrary Countdown* (New York: Harmony Books, 1997), 38.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Landes, *Giants with Feet of Clay: On the Historiography of the Year 1000* (University of Boston: Center for Millennial Studies, 2005), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Landes, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern*. (Medieval Academy of America, 2000), 98.

policies, which would only last for two months in spring of 1871.<sup>7</sup> Landes argues that many medieval historians since 1871 have continued to fuel this myth regarding a lack of apocalyptic tensions in the year 1000 A.D., for “despite extensive advances in scholarship since 1900, medieval historians continue to accept and repeat this revisionist position, a position that is methodologically jejune and that almost completely ignores the social dynamics of millennial beliefs.”<sup>8</sup> It would be a mix between the ignorance of social dynamics, and the judgments of the failed Paris Commune in 1871 that would cause “this radical revision of the turn of the first Christian millennium [which would become] an integral part of European and, through Burr, American historiography by the early twentieth century.”<sup>9</sup>

When reading Burr’s article it must be noted that there is a great lack of textual evidence and that through Burr’s tone and inferences within his text, we are able to see how historians such as Landes would gather from his texts that Burr did not believe in the popularity of chiliastic sentiment held in the year 1000 A.D.<sup>10</sup> In Landes’ *Giants with Feet of Clay*, he analyzes how historians have typically viewed the growth of millenarian sentiment throughout Europe, arguing that historians conformed this anti-millenarian idea due to “[lack of] evidence to support such a ludicrous and insulting picture of an entire society quaking in fear at the approach of a date few contemporaries even knew about.”<sup>11</sup> Burr would remain steadfast to the anti-terror branch of chiliastic historiography, basing his argument on the works of Francesco Forti an Italian journalist of 1840, who “doubted that the panic could have been general.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Based on the idea of communal living, not be to confused with communism

<sup>8</sup> Landes, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 97.

<sup>9</sup> Lands, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 98.

<sup>10</sup> Landes, *Giants with Feet of Clay*, 1.

Chiliastic – *chilio*, Greek for 1000. Chiliastic refers to the belief in a period of time in which Christ and his Apostles would rule for 1000 years.

<sup>11</sup> Landes, *Giants with Feet of Clay*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> George Lincoln Burr, “The Year 1000 and the Antecedents of the Crusades.” *The American Historical Review*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1901), 431-32.

In yet another book, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, Richard Landes claims that this “anti-terrors argument was made at a time when our understanding of apocalyptic dynamics was virtually nonexistent and when the kinds of data that historians sought in vain – for example, signs of apocalyptic ‘paralysis’ – were seriously misconceived.”<sup>13</sup> An example of this aforementioned misconception can be found in the work of Michael Barkun. In his article for *Theory and Society* published in 1974, titled “Millenarianism in the Modern World,” Barkun argues that the “[relationship] between this *milieu* and disaster [makes] millenarianism a predominantly rural form of unrest, ill-suited to the polyglot character of city life.”<sup>14</sup> While the aforementioned historian argued that apocalyptic tensions were not a large part of city life, we are able to see how this was not the case, as there are several Archbishops during this time who use apocalyptic language in their writings and sermons; specifically Wulfstan of York and Gauzlin of Bourges who were both Archbishops of the Christian Church in heavily urbanized areas.<sup>15</sup>

Burr brought this revisionist, anti-terrors argument to the forefront of American historiography, which allowed for historians of the mid-twentieth century to note in passing that the “myth [had] been effectively banished from serious historical writing.”<sup>16</sup> Landes strongly argues against this anti-terrors movement, which Burr reproduced in America, summing up his counter-arguments against the anti-terrors school in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, as he discusses:

“the dynamics of apocalyptic belief and their range of impact on societies where they become active, the peculiar relationship between this process and the surviving documentation,

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<sup>13</sup> Landes, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 99.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Barkun, “Millenarianism in the Modern World,” *Theory and Society*, (New York: Springer, 1974), 117. *Milieu* – a French term which Barkun uses in the place of social environment

<sup>15</sup> Wulfstan’s *Sermon of the Wolf to the English* has been recorded in several different source documents, each with the same message, yet slight variations in wording is used. This suggests that Wulfstan made this speech several times to the Christian followers who resided in his bishopric.

<sup>16</sup> Landes, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 100.

the millennium-long cultural process whereby the year 1000 took on its apocalyptic significance to those Christians who lived through it, the ways which the apocalyptic concern for the year 1000 appeared in documentation, and finally, the major elements of early-eleventh-century society.”<sup>17</sup>

Landes brings to attention that while evidence supports the pro-terrors argument, there are many historians that remain opposed to this belief in widespread apocalypticism, which Callum Brown, author of *Postmodernism for Historians*, would classify as the discourse of the historiographical argument. Brown classifies discourse as a “non-material entity, expressed in a language system... that conveys a meaning, in the form of duality.”<sup>18</sup> What Brown means by this, is that ‘discourse’ occurs when an argument is made that contains either contradictory information to popular belief, or is made utilizing different methods of research than previously used. The pursuit of discourse is perhaps the most important of the postmodern ideas to contribute to the pro-terrors argument, as it prompted historians to look at previously viewed sources in a new light. Millenarian historians began to apply this new postmodern pursuit of discourse to their studies, and through their research into the language used by religious figures, these historians have found outstanding support for this idea that chiliastic fears were apparent in early medieval society. We see the anti-terror side of millennial historiography almost disappear after the introduction of postmodernism into the study of history, as currently there are no true ‘modern’ anti-terror arguments as scholarship currently leans heavily towards the pro-terror school of thought. Unlike many other dialectic arguments, the historiographical discourse which has been presented here only coexisted for a brief period of no more than ten years, meaning that the pro-terrors argument was almost able to completely overtake its’ rival in terms of general

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<sup>17</sup> Landes, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 100.

<sup>18</sup> Callum Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 183.

opinion held by apocalyptic historians. However, this is not to say that the pro-terrors school truly won out, for a common assumption held by historians is that since there was no general outcry by the European laity, that there were no apocalyptic tensions.

One of the biggest difficulties that Landes encounters when determining how large the growth of chiliastic paranoia was, is lack of information we have relating to the laity of Europe at the turn of the century. Landes also encounters this problem in his article *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, as he believes that there are “virtually no accounts from any laymen, much less commoners, at this moment in history, so we have to try to answer the question indirectly.”<sup>19</sup> Landes further argues “the silence of [the] texts, while it may indicate the kind of indifference that historians have tacitly or explicitly assumed, may well indicate the opposite.”<sup>20</sup> y focusing on the way in which language was used at the turn of the first millennium, historians have begun to make a much clearer picture of the growth in church paranoia.<sup>21</sup>

One of the best representations of this postmodern take on the study of millenarian language can be found in V. Stanley Benfell’s 2011 book *The Biblical Dante*, in which he dissects Dante Alighieri’s *The Divine Comedy*. Benfell draws special attention in his work to St. Augustine’s *City of God*, who “proposed an anti-millenarian reading of the [Book of *Revelation*], seeing in it instead a guide to the constant tribulations of the church, tribulations so widespread and diffused across history that it proved impossible to pin them down to specific historical events.”<sup>22</sup> Benfell further argues that it was through this Augustinian approach to millenarianism that the Church was able to successfully undermine the apocalyptic expectations held by the people, and also prevent the “exegetical practice of turning the apocalypse into a *roman à clef* in

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<sup>19</sup> Landes, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 115

<sup>20</sup> Landes, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 116.

<sup>21</sup> Glaber, Ademar, Wulfstan, Gauzlin

<sup>22</sup> V. Stanley Benfell, *The Biblical Dante*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 145



which interpreters offer competing identifications of the details [in *Revelation*].”<sup>23</sup> In his 2005 work *Constructing Antichrist*, Kevin L. Hughes presents a different interpretation of Augustine’s work. Hughes argues that Augustine meant not to dissuade the readings of apocalyptic texts during the middle ages, but instead Hughes argues that Augustine held no ill-will towards those who studied apocalyptic texts, for while Augustine “agrees that we cannot know the ‘day or the hour’ of the Lord’s return, but we may still look for the signs of his coming and thus desire his coming all the more.”<sup>24</sup> As argued by Hughes, Augustine was one of the major supporters of studying “the realistic and historical nature of the apocalyptic prophecies found in Scripture,” meaning that while Augustine did not believe that the practice of recording apocalyptic data was helpful in everyday life, it would still be something that the people of the time should keep in their minds.<sup>25</sup> Augustine does not say that he did not think that the study of such matters was trivial, instead attributing much of what happened around him as signifiers of the apocalypse.<sup>26</sup>

When looking at Augustine’s original argument on the study of millenarian history, we must pay close attention to the time period in which he was writing. When Augustine formed his initial argument on the study on apocalyptic thought, Rome had just been ransacked by Visigoths, and the year was 410 A.D., a year with apocalyptic implications of it’s own.<sup>27</sup> By looking into the time frame which Augustine was writing, it is evident that Augustine did not openly support any kind of belief in apocalyptic thought because of the contribution he would have made to the overall tension. He was perhaps one of the most well respected authors of his time, and a Doctor of the Church; if he were to advocate an apocalyptic belief, there would have

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<sup>23</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, 145.

*roman à clef* – Fr. Literally, “novel with a key,” a work based on real life, but inlaid with fiction.

<sup>24</sup> Kevin L. Hughes. *Constructing Antichrist: Paul, Biblical Commentary, and the Development of Doctrine in the Early Middle Ages*. (Catholic University of America Press: 2005), 97.

<sup>25</sup> Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 101.

<sup>26</sup> Ex. Augustine would have witnessed the fall of the Roman Empire, the greatest Christian Civilization of it’s time.

<sup>27</sup> 500 A.D. was one of the earlier apocalyptic dates, and the official Church calendar had just been reset in order to avoid an apocalyptic date, as will be explained later.

been riots in the streets, or at least a few mobs. However, it is understandable as to why Augustine did not fully condemn apocalyptic study, as Arthur Wainwright claims in *Mysterious Apocalypse* published in 1993, that the apocalypse gave each member of the Christian laity the promise of “a future in which their fortunes would be reversed and they would be the wielders of authority instead of the victims of oppression.”<sup>28</sup>

As fate would have it, historians after Augustine continued to write about the apocalypse, as there are many first-hand accounts to be found during the year 1000 A.D. As a historian, first-hand accounts are paramount as far sources are considered, for they allow us to see things from the perspective of laypeople, rather than from the perspective of a king or other sort of ruler, whose views could possibly be biased based on political implications. One such work, transcribed by Johannes Fried in the essay *Awaiting the End of Time around the Turn of the Year 1000*, focuses on a series of letters between Robert the Pious, King of the Franks and his adviser Gauzlin, Archbishop of Bourges. This is a very interesting exchange to note, as Robert was a king, providing a counter to Barkun’s idea regarding apocalyptic tensions, as evidence points to a picture of a high ranking member of society showing concern over apocalyptic ‘signs’ in his jurisdiction. The letters begin with Robert asking Gauzlin about a “rain of blood [that] had fallen for three days in Aquitaine in 1027, covering men’s heads, their clothes, and the stones themselves.”<sup>29</sup>

Robert asked of Gauzlin to look into his “histories [to] see whether anything like it has ever happened before, and [if so,] what followed it.”<sup>30</sup> Robert was unsure as to whether this was to be the start of the apocalypse, as he would not have experienced a blood rain at any time

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<sup>28</sup> Arthur Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 23.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Gow and David C. Van Meter, ed. *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*. New York: Oxford University, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Gow and Van Meter, *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 17.

before this. Gauzlin would not have had enough time to check the records of any other diocese, for Robert had called for a quick response in his letter of inquiry.<sup>31</sup> Instead of relieving the apocalyptic tensions of Robert the Pious, Gauzlin used his understanding and study of history to determine that the blood represented “the sword, civil war, and nation rising up against nation.”<sup>32</sup> However, rather than conforming to the anti-apocalyptic style of teaching that the Church recommended which states that “No one knows the day and the hour, not even the angels in the heavens,” Gauzlin was unsure of the implications of this blood rain, and as a result went against the guidance of the church, and contributed to feelings of apocalyptic tension in the early eleventh century.

As we noted earlier when discussing the views made by St. Augustine, the way in which language is used in apocalyptic text has played a large part in contributing to the early anti-terrors argument. As Burr saw it, the historian-monks in the early eleventh century were unreliable as sources, as he doubted the credibility of monks such as Rudolfus Glaber, whom Burr described as a “superstitious and garrulous old monk...[who kept his] ears wide open for every tale of prodigy, and widest for those of direful import.”<sup>33</sup> This was not the case however, as there is much evidence to support this pro-terrors argument that the language used during the early eleventh century, such as through the usage of calendrics and terminology used in the writings of historian-monks.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, we must remember that these historian-monks wrote “in an age when clerics could be burned as heretics and individual initiatives could lead to disgrace, the writing of history posed serious dangers.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Gow and Van Meter, *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 18.

<sup>32</sup> Gow and Van Meter, *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 17-18.

<sup>33</sup> Burr, *The American Historical Review*, 433.

<sup>34</sup> *Calendrics*: The terminology which we use to represent the passage of years. Ex. Annus Domini is the current system which we use.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Lands, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989-1034*, 142.

Historically, the anti-terrors school has misrepresented the writings of Ademar of Chabannes, writing him off the in the discussion on apocalyptic discourse because of his activities during the ‘Cult of Saints’ period, as Ademar wrote many forgeries of high ranking officials, such as kings and even the Pope himself, in an attempt to get Saint Martial, a third century bishop who successfully brought Christianity to the Limoges district of France, recognized as an Apostle. In yet work written by Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, Landes gives a much needed contextual background on Ademar, providing great discourse to the historians who have claimed that Ademar’s writings provide no support to any terror movement in 1000 A.D.<sup>36</sup> One of the main arguments which is presented against Ademar, is his frequent avoidance of the *anus domini* system, instead favoring the outdated *annus mundi* chronological scale ‘A.M II’, which was a revision of the original *annus mundi* system. The *annus mundi* scale is based off of the supposed date of the biblical creation of the earth. The *annus mundi* system had become outdated when it began drawing close to 6000 A.M..<sup>37</sup> This change was brought upon about by paranoid clergy men who were afraid that 6000 A.M. would bring about the end of the world. This shift in chronology supports the argument for a fully aware clerical body around apocalyptical times. Ademar uses the A.M. II scale instead of the A.D. scale to note the dates of historical events, “never [mentioning] 1000, not even in his lengthy narrative of Otto III’s discovery of Charlemagne’s body on Pentecost of 1000.”<sup>38</sup> Instead of using the term ‘1000 A.D.’ in his histories, Ademar instead chose to write using

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<sup>36</sup> As Ademar was not only responsible for many forgeries, but also because Ademar did not use the same calendrical scale as other historians at this time.

<sup>37</sup> Or 500 A.D.

<sup>38</sup> Landes, *Relics*, 145.

phrases like “around the time of” or “it was during this time” yet he does not make actual reference to the year itself which the clerical body assumed to be the date of the apocalypse.<sup>39</sup>

Landes further brings to light that while Ademar was indeed responsible for many forgeries, he was not the estranged monk on the edge of society as other historians have made him out to be; there is in fact much evidence supporting the opposite, as Landes explains throughout *Relics* that Ademar was actually well respected in his community for his personal library, as well as his ability as a scribe, for while none of his copied books were meant for publication, they “exemplify [Ademar’s] rapid, clear, informal hand, his facility at using whatever parchment was available, his eye for a variety of useful texts,” all of which Landes helped contributed to Ademar’s personal reserve of texts.. From Ademar’s usage of language, it is evident that he was aware of the thin line he walked as a historian-monk, as at this time that historian-monks were quickly labeled as heretics for not including the ‘correct’ information in their histories. Ademar was not commissioned by a higher authority when he began to write his histories, meaning that he could avoid using the *annus domini* system, as he had no superior to force the usage of *annus domini*, distancing his histories from the eschatological nature of 1000 A.D. Furthermore, Ademar was not trying to write a history about any one particular place, instead he created “a narrative for his community that built on tales they already told themselves, such as Charles the Bald’s coronation at Limoges in 855.”<sup>40</sup> It would be this striking use of narrative that would create distinction between Glaber and Ademar’s works, as Glaber “started his narrative in 900 and moved rapidly into current events before the end of [Glaber’s first volume of histories], Ademar’s *Historia* spent the vast majority of its time copying and

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<sup>39</sup>6000 A.M. was roughly 500 A.D.

<sup>40</sup> Landes, *Relics*, 135.

reworking annals from the past.”<sup>41</sup> Ademar was able to successfully weave a narrative which would allow him to escape the scrutiny and ridicule other historian-monks encountered, for in the process of writing history, the author “ran the risk of transgressing—as did Rudolfus Glaber—Augustine’s taboo on interpreting current events as part of the apocalyptic drama.”<sup>42</sup>

The works of Rudolfus Glaber, edited by C.G. Coulton in 1910, gives us a very good insight into the eschatological conclusions presented by the church body on events of ‘biblical’ proportion that were occurring in the early eleventh century. Glaber, a monk who settled in Cluny in 1044 AD describes the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1036 A.D., as it “belched forth a multitude of vast stones mingled with sulphurous flames which fell even to a distance of three miles around.”<sup>43</sup> This eruption at Mount Vesuvius that Glaber describes is also the first time that lava was recorded coming from the volcano itself, the fires from which spread into the Roman capital. It was during the fire in Rome that St. Peter’s church caught flame burning to the ground as the Romans were unable to prevent the spread of the flames. It would be cataclysmic events such as Vesuvius, that Glaber would record in his histories at “the behest of his abbot, William of Volpiano.”<sup>44</sup> Unlike Ademar, Glaber was commissioned by Gerard of Cambrai to write a history for Gerard’s diocese. This is very important to note, as Gerard of Cambrai was a high ranking bishop, who had formerly been a religious advisor to the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry II. This commission further illustrates the position of the pro-terrors school, as the evidence which has been provided demonstrates that the chiliastic tensions of 1000 A.D. were held not only by monks, but also by high ranking religious officials as well..

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<sup>41</sup> Landes, *Relics*, 140.

*Historia* was the name of Ademar’s history.

<sup>42</sup> Landes, *Relics*, 145

<sup>43</sup> C.G. Coulton, ed, *Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 4.

<sup>44</sup> Landes, *Relics*, 127-129

As we noted in reviewing Ademar and Glaber's work, contemporary historians at this point paid very close attention to the language which they used in writing about these apocalyptic years. In his essay *Apocalyptic Discourse and Strategies of Goodness*, Wayne A. Meeks argues that "apocalyptic discourse is dualistic temporally, spatially, and socially."<sup>45</sup> Meeks has four main subjects of study in his essay, as he further argues that "apocalyptic language is used (1) to redress an asymmetrical relationship of power, (2) to make way for innovation, (3) to revitalize or transform traditional norms, and (4) to relativize human judgments."<sup>46</sup> In *Apocalyptic Discourse*, Meeks uses letters from John the Apostle in his work, but we must find out if these same principles can be applied to other chiliastic texts as well. While Meeks uses these points to analyze the works of Paul and Augustine, we will instead be using them to break down the apocalyptic language used in *The Sermon of the Wolf to the English*, written by Archbishop Wulfstan of York.<sup>47</sup>

Wulfstan redresses an asymmetrical relationship of power with his *Sermon of the Wolf to the English*, drawing attention to specific instances of 'great disloyalties' in matters of Church and State, as he believed that it was "the greatest of all treachery in the world that a man betray his lord's soul; and a full great treachery it is also in the world that a man should betray his lord to death, or drive him in his lifetime from the land; and both have happened in this country."<sup>48</sup> There is more to this passage than meets the eye however, as Wulfstan "composed much of the legislation of the reigns of Ethelred and Cnut."<sup>49</sup> This is important to note, for although Ethelred was of English nobility, Cnut was a Scandinavian, and the first Scandinavian to successfully rule

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<sup>45</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *Apocalyptic Discourse and Strategies of Goodness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 463.

<sup>46</sup> Meeks, *Apocalyptic Discourse*, 463

<sup>47</sup> King Ethelred had just been deposed, allowing for Cnut, a man of Scandinavian origin, to become King of England.

<sup>48</sup> Wulfstan, "Sermon of the Wolf to the English," in *English Historical Documents*, edited by Dorothy Whitelock. (London: Rutledge, 1955), 856-57

<sup>49</sup> Wulfstan, *Sermon of the Wolf to the English*, 854.

over England. Wulfstan attempts to promote innovation by discussing many of what he believed to be the faults with English society. Wulfstan points to how many English were guilty of selling their relatives into slavery, saying “we know well where that miserable deed has occurred that a father has sold his son for a price, and a son his mother, and one brother has sold another, into the power of strangers.”<sup>50</sup> The kind of imagery that Wulfstan calls upon here is similar to the biblical story of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers, a story which many of his listeners would have been familiar with. Wulfstan is angered at the actions of the Viking raiding parties, as he berates the English in his sermon, proclaiming that “one dare not among heathen peoples curtail within the sanctuary or outside any of the things which are brought to the false gods and delivered for sacrifices, and we have entirely despoiled God’s houses inside and out.”<sup>51</sup> What Wulfstan is referring to in this passage is the actions of the Vikings at this time, which ransacked many religious centers which would have housed numerous holy relics. Wulfstan believed that if the Church were better protected, they would be able to uphold Church history better. Wulfstan further calls for direct innovation by the listeners of his *Sermon* asking to “let us do as is necessary for us, turn to the right and in some measure leave wrong doing, and atone very zealously for what we have done amiss.”<sup>52</sup>

In Wulfstan’s sermon, the Archbishop seeks to revitalize more traditional values, as he believes that the invasion of outside forces had led to corruption in England, constantly making references to the Scandinavians who had invaded his homeland of England. Wulfstan calls for the transformation of traditional values to those commonly held before the Viking conquest, or rather, before the Vikings were demanding tribute from the English locality. Finally, Wulfstan exhibits Meeks’ last point *The Sermon’s* last sentence, asking of those attending to “often

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<sup>50</sup> Wulfstan, *Sermon of the Wolf to the English*, 857.

<sup>51</sup> Wulfstan, *Sermon of the Wolf to the English* 855.

<sup>52</sup> Wulfstan, *Sermon of the Wolf to the English*, 859.



consider the great Judgment to which we all must come, and save ourselves from the surging fire of hell torment, and earn for ourselves the glories and the joys which God has prepared for those who do his will in the world.”<sup>53</sup> Wulfstan reminds those who would have heard his Sermon that neither those listening or Wulfstan himself were the ultimate judge at the end of the world, as Wulfstan makes it clear that God is the ‘ultimate’ judge.

As is evident in Wulfstan’s *Sermon*, language played a very strange role in millenarian writings, as it had several feelings generally attributed to it. For some, these words would inspire images of fear, but to others, these writings would inspire hope, for as Landes points out in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, “Doomsday may be a ‘day of wrath’ feared by some who prayed for its delay, but to others it was a longed-for ‘day of pleasure.’”<sup>54</sup> This means that for those Christians who were unafraid of being judged by good, the return of Christ would fulfill their hopes as Wainwright advocated in *Mysterious Apocalypse*, the apocalypse “promised [these Christians] a future in which their fortunes would be reversed and they would be the wielders of authority instead of the victims of oppression. In his essay *Apocalyptic Discourse and Strategies of Goodness*, Meeks structures his argument primarily on how apocalyptic language gave the people alive during the eleventh century a sense of hope as well, for “it becomes apparent that they are passionately concerned, even obsessed, with the possibility of goodness.”<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, this duality presented in the language can be seen in the writings of St. Augustine, for as Hughes mentions, “Augustine says that the narrative of salvation history should begin with the story of Creation and end with ‘the present times of the Church.’”<sup>56</sup> From this passage it is

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<sup>53</sup> Wulfstan, *Sermon of the Wolf to the English*, 859.

<sup>54</sup> Landes, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 116.

<sup>55</sup> <sup>55</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *Apocalyptic Discourse and Strategies of Goodness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 462.

<sup>56</sup> Kevin Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist: Paul, Biblical Commentary, and the Development of Doctrine in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 97.

evident to note that Augustine believed that the Church would never collapse, and would survive until the final judgment.

However, apocalyptic language was not always used to inspire confidence in the Christians of Europe. As was revealed in *The Sermon of the Wolf to the English*, Wulfstan had a deep rooted resentment concerning the Scandinavians who now held power in England. In the early ninth century there was a sharp rise in Viking activity in most areas along the coastal region of Europe. The Vikings were not like the Christian Europeans of the time, instead believing in their own Scandinavian cosmology, as these Vikings would not convert to Christianity the earlier half of the ninth century. Because of this difference in religious belief upon the Vikings initial arrival, the Vikings saw monasteries and abbeys as treasure troves, as church structures were often used at this time as depositories for the localities valuables, which meant a centralized location for the loot that the Vikings wished to acquire.

The Vikings were not the only group to pillage Europe however, and in James Reston, Jr.'s work, *The Last Apocalypse: Europe at the Year 1000* published in 1998, he argues that the Magyars were also influential in apocalyptic text. In the winter of 899-900 A.D. the Magyar people of the modern day nation of Hungary were on the offensive, entering into northern Italy, "defeating the forces of King Berengar I, slaughtering twenty thousand Italians."<sup>57</sup> These Hungarians, unlike the Vikings that had come to England in raid groups, came to central Europe for the sole intention of warfare, as they "burned castles, destroyed churches, massacred and even drank the blood of their victims" it would be easy to see why a Christian would relate the presence of the Hungarian people as a sign of the apocalypse; as a wave of smoldering rubble

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<sup>57</sup> James Reston, Jr. *The Last Apocalypse: Europe at the Year 1000*. (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 166.

was left in their wake.<sup>58</sup> The Christians of Europe had never seen forces this size before, as the Hungarians numbered well over forty-thousand cavalry units strong.

The Hungarians rampaged and pillaged Europe fifty times in the next seventy five years, and would not face their first their first defeat until 933 A.D. in which it was reported that Henry the Fowler, King of Germany, led his forces into battle, and was able to kill 36,000 of the Hungarian raiders, thus putting an end to the tyranny of the Hungarians. It would be the Germans once again who would attempt to fight off the forty-thousand horsemen of the apocalypse in 955 A.D., as Hungarian raids once again began again in Augsburg. The leader of Germany at the time, Otto I, believed it to be his duty to fight off the enemies of God, such as the invading forces of ‘Gog and Magog.’ The armies of Gog and Magog were supposed be the harbingers of the Antichrist, who is a primary figure in the *Revelation*. It would be during this time that Europe would constantly live “in fear of imprisonment, torture, and death. The apocalypse brought them a promise of deliverance and ultimate security.”<sup>59</sup> In *The Fear of an Apocalyptic 1000*, Richard Landes provides evidence which supports this idea that these invading forces were frequently compared to be the armies of Gog and Magog. Landes provides us with a letter from the Bishop of Auxerre to the Bishop of Verdun, as they “deplored the chiliastic response of the masses, who saw in the invading Northmen and the Magyars the forces of Gog and Magog.”<sup>60</sup> This letter provides evidence that this idea of Gog and Magog influenced millenarian culture, for not only is this letter between two high ranking church officials, but it also shows that these apocalyptic tensions were common amongst the general populous.

Starting in Europe in the late nineteenth century, the anti-terrors school of thought became one of the most popularly supported arguments when discussing the presence of an

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<sup>58</sup> Reston, *The Last Apocalypse*, 166, 168.

<sup>59</sup> Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 22.

<sup>60</sup> Landes , *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 118.

apocalyptic sentiment during the year 1000 A.D.. However, this idea did not arrive in America until George Lincoln Burr's article *The Year 1000 and the Antecedents of the Crusades* was printed in *The American Historical Review*, in 1901. In analyzing the language used in primary sources by medieval historian-monks in the early eleventh century, we are able confirm that the apocalyptic tensions were indeed a widespread occurrence in 1000 A.D.. While the more commonly accepted belief was the anti-terrors side of millennial discourse, we have been able to show that the general opinion by historians today has changed greatly in the past half-century due to the influences of postmodernism into history, and by extent, historiography as well. Through the present examination of the pro-terrors side of apocalyptic discourse and primary source evidence, we have been able to correct many statements which had been made falsely constructed by the anti-terrors argument regarding the rise of apocalyptic tensions.

We have shown that this chiliastic belief was not simply a rural matter as Barkun claimed, nor just the rantings of presumably insane monks as Burr was keen to argue. Instead, we have seen archbishops deliver sermons warning of the coming Antichrist, we have seen historian monks avoid specific wording in their arguments, so as not to fall victim to the terror of theological scrutiny, and we have seen men's careers destroyed by these writings. Furthermore, the evidence which has been provided examines a letter between the King of Germany and his theological advisor, who was also a bishop, as well as evidence of two bishops discussing how the general masses believed the Northmen and Magyars to be the harbingers of the Antichrist. It is because of the overwhelming evidence to support the pro-terrors school that historians have begun to distance themselves from the teachings of Burr and the Paris Commune of 1871, once again discovering a very dynamic and diverse social environment in 1000 A.D.

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