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Making Ends Meet: Western Eschatologies, or the Future of a Society (9th–12th Centuries). Addition of Individual Projects, or Collective Construction of a Radiant Dawn?

The religious and philosophical tradition of the West shows that eschatology provides the horizon necessary for all the promises of a better future. It sets forth more precisely the end of history. Eschatology and apocalypticism appear to be necessary, not just for social life but also at the very heart of notions of politics in medieval Christianity. But all the prophecies failed between the tenth and twelfth centuries: a “de-eschatologisation” was underway. A first generation of secular masters revolutionised the exegesis of the Apocalypse around the year 1100. Until the second third of the twelfth century, the enemy was outside. It then became interior. When the apocalyptic returned, it passed into the hands of some lonely and deviant figures.

Making Ends Meet? How to bring the world to an end? Or how to construct the end of history, before the afterlife? How can the end turn into a new beginning? Can people decide it themselves? And what levers do they have? The Christians of the Middle Ages in the West had a good point of support to lead their reflection on these inevitable subjects. Two ways were open to them. On my left here is someone who understands the text literally – the fundamentalist. He has two choices: if he is passive, patient, unworried or a pacifist, he sits at the side of the road and waits for the prophecies to unfold; if he is active, violent or has radical opinions, he takes the lead and sets fire to the present world (to usher in the world to come). The choice is simple in appearance: the status quo, or the revolution. But to my right here is the intellectual: he knows the arcana of hermeneutics, he knows that a text needs to be interpreted and that there are many ways to do this. He thus has at his disposal various strategies that are more or less delaying and more or less convincing. I have, however, only placed on the stage two individuals. What if I were to hand over the decision to an entire community? The following reflections suggest that the Western societies of the high Middle Ages made political choices.¹ I believe that they clearly rejected decision-making by individuals in favour of the collective.

¹ For a first approach to a huge subject, see Halter and Müller, eds., *Der Weltuntergang*. More important are three collections of texts: Carey, Nic Cárthaigh and Ó Dochartaigh, eds., *The End and Beyond*; Carozzi and Taviani-Carozzi, *La fin des temps*; McGinn, *Visions of the End*.

Note: I would like to thank the organisers of the “Making Ends Meet” conference for the honour of having been invited to speak there. I would also like to express my gratitude to Manu Radhakrishnan, who kindly translated my text into English.

1 A Reminder

To return to the distinction between eschatological thinking and apocalyptic thinking seems unnecessary. For the record, let us say this:

1.1 Eschatology, the Daily Bread

Should we dispense with the concept? The word “eschatology” was introduced by the Lutheran Abraham Calov in 1677, and entered the scientific literature of European universities in the period 1835–1845. A mundane definition of eschatology among Christians calls for a description of the coming times, bringing together the three destinations of the body and soul (heaven, purgatory, hell), the Second Coming of Christ (*parousia*), the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment. The concept thus carries a teleological significance, which is delineated in the future of humankind and societies. Augustine, Orosius and their readers in the high Middle Ages could not be satisfied with an eschatology confined to the future. They associated it with a construction of historical time, which was directed towards an end of universal history but rooted in the experience of past and present. This version is not only common and teleological but also existential, that is to say individual: eschatology would be the daily bread of every Christian.² But the pressure of the present too often weakens the search for the future: unbalanced, the eschatological tension is trivialised, defused, emptied of its potential. But it contains a ferment which resists suffocation. In the Western version of Christianity, eschatology could be defined as the group of doctrines and beliefs concerning the restoration of a humanity tainted by original sin, the completion of redemption, the End of Time, the destruction of all power and all domination, the complete destruction of all evil and, finally, the return to the primordial state as it had been conceived and desired by God. The religious and philosophical tradition of the West shows that eschatology provides the horizon necessary for all the promises of a better future. Since the origins of Christianity, this eschatology has shaped and framed the multiple conceptions of history that Westerners have experienced, especially during the twelfth century and possibly up until the post-Marxism of the twentieth century. And, thus, no political thought based on the articulation of a diagnosis of the present time and with a dynamic to promote, can do without it.³

² The binomial “teleological/existential” is used by the theologian Jean-Daniel Kaestli, see Kaestli, *L'eschatologie dans l'œuvre de Luc*, 10.

³ See the fascinating manual of the western apocalyptic tradition realised by Wieser, Zolles, Feik, Zolles, and Schlöndorff, eds., *Abendländische Apokalyptik*. Also Carozzi, *Apocalypse et salut dans le christianisme ancien et médiéval*.

1.2 Apocalypticism, or Revolution in Motion

Apocalypticism has a narrower meaning than eschatology. It sets forth more precisely the end of history. The future will be a succession of misfortunes and suffering, then vengeance followed by an outpouring of happiness. Yes, of happiness; but when? Commentators are divided on this matter, which is addressed in chapter 20 of the Apocalypse. The majority, headed by St. Augustine, claim that this final happiness will come after the vengeance and the Last Judgment. But another group claimed that there would be a period of earthly happiness lasting one thousand years before the Last Judgment.⁴

The apocalyptic discourse illuminates the aforementioned path of teleological eschatology. It helps to put the defenders of an existential eschatology in the mass of those who do not believe in the positive values of change and who deny the right of societies to change the course of history other than in individual consciousnesses. Their eschatology, which I will readily characterise as passive or realised, leads us to say with Paul Ricœur that “[f]rom being imminent, the apocalyptic model has become immanent”.⁵ We should thus distinguish between consistent (or consequent) eschatology and realised eschatology: the first trend, as characterised since Reimarus and A. Schweitzer, describes an apocalyptic short-term expectation, whereas Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and Charles H. Dodd typify the second, existential current of thought. This alternative is a fundamental one. According to the option chosen, the individual will turn either towards a moral improvement/perfection that will enable him or her to escape punishment, or else towards the establishment of a better society that will blossom in the near future, a society of peace, of justice and of equality here on earth.⁶

I return then, as a medieval historian, to the essential question, but need to change it a bit: who should be entrusted with the duty of conducting human society as quickly as possible to a perfect society? And what means should they use? Does the arrival of a virtuous society depend on individuals who have learned to manage their impulses in order to turn them towards the common good, or should this duty rather be entrusted to elite campaigners who will know how to convince all humans to rally around them? Eschatology and apocalypticism appear in this way to be necessary, not just for social life but also at the very heart of notions of politics in medieval Christianity; this applies moreso in the West than elsewhere, since a large number of Eastern Christians denied the canonical status of the Apocalypse. The

⁴ On the variants of millenarianism, see Landes, *Heaven on Earth*.

⁵ Ricœur, *Temps et récit*, 40. This quotation of Ricœur clearly covers what the theologians of the end of the nineteenth century called realised eschatology (or passive as Landes, *Heaven on Earth*, says). Cf. the reflections of the Catholic theologian Theobald, “Apocalyptique dans la théologie contemporaine.”

⁶ On all these issues, see the contributions collected in Emerson and McGinn eds., *Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, and Guglielmetti, *L'Apocalisse nel Medioevo*.

sketch that I am now going to draw comes from material in the great commentaries on this book that were written between the ninth century and the end of the twelfth century.

2 Delegated Eschatology: The Monks

Anyone is free to call dreams apocalyptic traditions, but throughout their literary history the medieval commentators operate in a terribly rational way. The clerical elite, whose prophetic function was particularly suited to the work of interpretation, was entrusted with the task of identifying and deciphering all the clues useful for the understanding of time and history. These men share methods proven since ancient times: analogical reasoning and the Christian practice of typology. Since the movement of the cosmos is subject to perfectly ordered rules, the entirety of society on earth has to conform to the admirable hierarchy of the angels. Inversely, cosmic disorders are signs of human disorders. The observations made by the masters lead them to hold peace and concord to be phenomena that are difficult to identify in history, except in the case of some short-lived past times that they idealised greatly: their accounts thus give priority to the crisis, which they submit to the grids of eschatological interpretation.

2.1 Mobilising the Learned

Apocalyptic thinking was nourished by the twin spectacles of natural disasters and the disasters of political life, and was spread by a literary production of a very high level. This literary corpus, constantly renewed, consists of copies of Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, biblical commentaries – particularly those on the books of the prophets Daniel, Isaiah and Jeremiah – and the Christian additions to the biblical corpus, especially the second epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians and the Apocalypse; this material was completed with works of computus (e.g. Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 725), of cosmography (e.g. Aethicus Ister), universal histories (e.g. Sulpicius Severus, Orosius)⁷, chronicles and annals, collections of prophecies (e.g. Tiburtine Sibylle, Pseudo-Methodius translated in Latin around 711–720, Adso of Montier-en-Dei⁸) and compendia of visions and apocalyptic poems (e.g. *Muspilli*, IX^{2/4}).⁹

⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* (c. 400), Orosius, *Historiae adversus paganos* (c. 417?): Wieser, “Die Weltchronik des Sulpicius Severus,” 676–686, and a revised English version, “Reading the Past into the Present.”

⁸ Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen*; McGinn, *Visions of the End*.

⁹ Cf. Boor, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 50–53 and 276.

The proliferation of such writings in ecclesiastical centres attests to the permanence of apocalyptic thinking; it also bears witness to the constant mobilisation of the learned, whether they remained neutral with regard to these ideas (such as the authors who followed Augustine and Jerome), whether they were promoters of such thought, or whether, on the contrary, they held it in contempt.¹⁰

2.2 Confidence or Resignation?

Should one place one's confidence in the good government of princes, in the prayers of monks/spiritual men, or in the march of history? Should one, in short, resign oneself to be dependent? Belief in determinism and the doctrine of predestination gained the upper hand in the Frankish empire in the ninth century: these two beliefs risked leading to a collective renunciation (of personal agency) when faced with the turbulence of history.

2.3 The Parade: The Monks Move to the Front

Who can correct things, who can re-establish order? Until the end of the eleventh century, the Church struggled to define itself as an institutional reality in itself. In spite of the audacity of some Roman popes whose letters have entered into the collections of the Frankish councils,¹¹ it remained a spiritual entity seated on a soft mesh of bishoprics. It could do nothing without kings. The kings could, in turn, do nothing without a religious elite: an elite consisting of monks. Not the hermits, who had been poorly regarded since Theodosius, and even more so since Justinian. They had come to be detested in the Carolingian kingdoms, and only a few of them were recognised as prophets and seers. Before Joachim of Fiore, they rarely made a mark on the eschatological tradition.¹² The cenobites offered more promise: they seemed more suitable, more certain. From the seventh century onwards, they began to specialise in apocalyptic literature (Pseudo-Methodius; Beda Venerabilis and Beatus of Liébana in the eighth century; Audradus Modicus, c. 825–845).¹³ Starting in the

10 Lobrichon, "Making Sense of the Bible;" Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*.

11 We know that the clerics of the Frankish Empire had to make the "False Decretals" to give substance to the authority of the bishops and the Roman pontiff: Fuhrmann, *Einfluß and Verbreitung der pseudoisidorischen Fälschungen*; see also, with some adjustments, Hartmann and Schmitz, eds., *Fortschritt durch Fälschungen?*

12 See *Eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII*. I would refer to my comments in "Érémisme et solitude."

13 Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, ed. Garstad; cf. Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*. Beda Venerabilis, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, ed. Gryson; Beatus of Liébana, *Tractatus de Apocalipsin*, ed. Gryson; Audradus Modicus, *Liber revelationum*, ed. Traube, and for the Italian translation see

ninth century, the monks of the Frankish empire had a mission to guard the public sphere by means of a protective barrier of monasteries, which were distributed across all the important and strategic places of each kingdom. The position of these men made them the best managers of the present and the best guarantors of the future. The monks represented themselves as pioneers, the only ones capable of calming the powers of disorder and of reconciling humanity and heaven. They were no longer just authors but also performers.

The political powers recognised their usefulness early on. Charlemagne's clerks prepared commentaries on Daniel and the Apocalypse; Hrabanus Maurus worked on Jeremiah for Louis the Pious, and on Daniel for Louis the German.¹⁴ In the tenth century, Adso of Montier-en-Der wrote on the Antichrist for his queen, Gerberga. The monks convinced their contemporaries that salvation comes from men of God, the specialists of prayer. They carry out the true combat. Rulers understood their advice and sat back. The monks managed the life-insurance policies for the Last Days; they are the ones who held the lid of the apocalyptic pot. This was a mistake. The danger had worsened with the approach of the year one thousand, and another solution was needed.

2.4 Apocalypticism at First Hand: The Warriors

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the idea of a restoration of the Roman Empire had been associated with the survival of not just the Christian world but also of all humanity. Thus, the restoration of the empire in Germany, the political crisis of the French kingdom in the west, the premises for the Reconquista in Spain and the Christianisation of the peoples and kingdoms in Central and Eastern Europe all gave a new impetus to apocalyptic discourses. Three urgent matters occupied minds at the time: unity (against the horror of division), reform and, finally, orthodoxy (correctness of doctrine); these were three guidelines, three preconditions for a battle that would from then on become permanent, a war that was unavoidable.¹⁵

Audrado di Sens, *Fonte della Vita*, ed. Stella; see further Mohr, "Audradus von Sens;" Dutton, *Politics of Dreaming*.

¹⁴ The Carolingian exegesis has seen renewed interest in the last ten or so years: see recently Shimahara and Heil, eds., *Études d'exégèse carolingienne*; Shimahara, *Haymon d'Auxerre*; Jong, "Empire as *ecclesia*;" Hoogeveen, "Populus Prior." About medieval prophetism, cf. Vauchez, *Saints, prophètes, visionnaires*; Vauchez, *Prophètes et prophétisme*; Riedl and Schabert, eds., *Propheten und Prophezeiungen*.

¹⁵ Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror*; it is now advisable to refer to the French translation, revised and expanded, *Guerre sainte, martyre et terreur*.

2.5 Prophylaxis First: The Eschatological Umbrella

An initial outcome was produced around the year one thousand.¹⁶ The rhetoric of the Antichrist expanded at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh centuries. In response, the Church, the *ecclesia*, presented itself as a place of protection. The area of Christian kingdoms, without large-scale coordination, had been sprinkled with bunkers – the monasteries. Between these fortresses of spiritual protection, Christian communities were organised into villages, parishes and lordships in an increasingly dense network that became more and more visible across the countryside. Peace arrangements were established that regulated the use of arms and military action, the movement of people (particularly merchants) and the practice of justice. The ties between kingdoms were tightened by meetings of kings and the living were tied together through con-fraternal agreements (*fraternitas, caritas*). More than ever, the living and the dead were associated through the celebration of masses for the dead in monasteries and in all churches, and also by rearranging graves in the adjoining cemeteries. Human settlements were concentrated from then on around the triad of the castle, the church and the cemetery, three protected sites. Through these many shields a solid umbrella was raised above all of Western Europe, but in a pattern that varied locally by region.

– *A societas christiana*

These shields placed over Western Europe allowed the shaping, during the eleventh century, of a political consciousness that expressed itself in new forms of life, both religious and lay, and in communal liturgies (the great collective excommunications, the interdict, the feast of the dead on November 2nd). This political sensibility was given a name, the “Christian society” (*societas christiana*), an expression whose use spread in the second half of the eleventh century.

– Individual morals

The perspective of the Last Judgment spurred on the development of an individual eschatology – a cluster of beliefs that is well-attested in the Latin literature of the high Middle Ages, particularly in accounts of visions. Otto III, William IV of Aquitaine, Pietro Orseolo and many others take the path of individual salvation¹⁷. I therefore suggested in 1999 that in the manuscript of the Bamberg Apocalypse and around the year 1000 the idea of particular judgment emerges, a century prior to any theological reflection on this topic: on a well-known and complex folio of the

¹⁶ Landes, Gow and Van Meter, *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*.

¹⁷ On pilgrimage in the eleventh century, see Graboïs, “Pèlerinages du XI^e siècle;” Graboïs, *Pèlerin occidental*; Whalen, *Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages*; Caby, “Faire du monde un ermitage.”

manuscript, one can namely distinguish among the group of those condemned, and identify a young emperor guided by a woman but exhorted by an archbishop.

The Last Judgment seems here to give way to a final repentance and a final pardon before the ultimate sentence.¹⁸

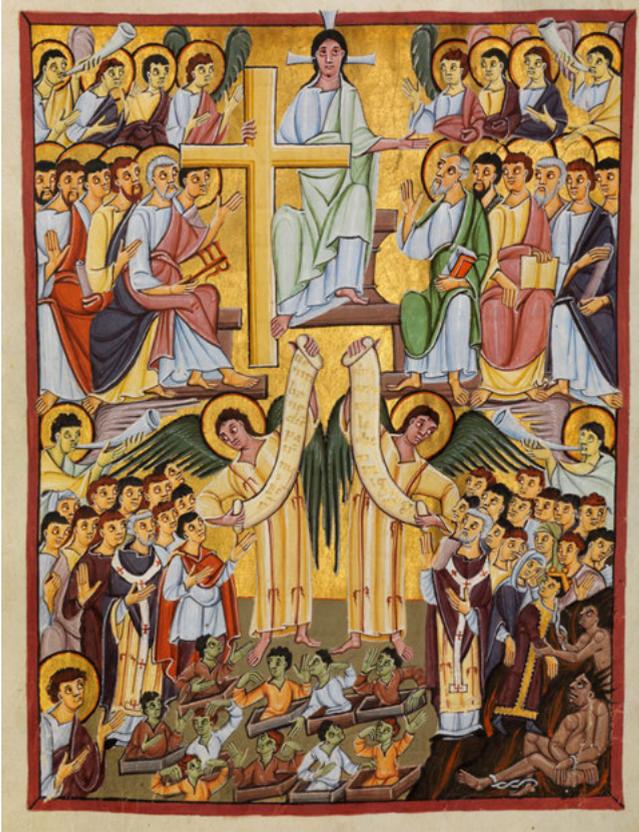


Fig. 1: “Bamberger Apokalypse”, Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Msc.Bibl.140, fol. 53r (Reichenau, c. 1000–1005?; photo: Gerald Raab)

But the prophecies on the millennium did not come to pass. God granted humanity a respite. The empire survived and the Church undertook a review of its aims during what one calls the “Gregorian Reform”. Christians had to move on to another stage.

¹⁸ Bamberger Apokalypse, fol. 53r. Compare the description of this folio by Suckale-Redlefsen (Gude Suckale-Redlefsen and Bernhard Schemmel, *Buch mit 7 Siegeln*, 71–72) to that of Lobrichon, “Jugement sur la terre comme au ciel.”

2.6 Then the Offensive: The Weapon of Communal Apocalypticism

Recent work by Philippe Buc, Jean Flori, Jay Rubenstein, Jehangir Malegam and, most recently, Thomas Lecaque has cast new light on the apocalyptic staging developed by Raymond of Aguilers, one of the first chroniclers of the First Crusade.¹⁹ The 1099 capture of Jerusalem ended in bloodshed. Raymond presented the massacre as a ritual purification and a necessary prelude to the descent of the New Jerusalem on earth. The two most powerful leaders of the First Crusade, Count Raymond IV of Toulouse and Saint-Gilles, and the duke of Lorraine, Godfrey of Bouillon, each refused in turn to take up the royal crown of Jerusalem, as if they feared it would accelerate Christ's return, preferring, like Otto III, the emperor of the year 1000, "to follow naked, with all his soul, Christ".

3 The Triumph of History: Eschatology Realised, Community and Domination

The world did not end in 1099, so the prophecies had yet again failed. I highlight two very simple facts:

- Towards 1111, twelve years after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, an artist painted an initial in the Apocalypse in the Bible of Stephen Harding, the abbot of Cîteaux. He abandoned the iconographic traditions of the Apocalypse for this initial: most unusually, he painted St. Michael's victory over the dragon (Apoc. 12:7).²⁰
- Also exceptional was the manner in which a commentator on the Apocalypse around 1115–1120 cut its text into some hundred and thirty units, ending with the refrain "and you too voluntarily suffer tribulation for Christ," just as Christ suffered "for you".²¹ One might think that the painter and the exegete illustrate the experience of apocalyptic army of 1099, but this must remain a supposition.

19 Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror*, particularly 261–283; Flori, *Pierre l'Ermitte et la première croisade*; Flori, *L'Islam et la Fin des temps*; Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*; Malegam, *The Sleep of Behemoth*; Lecaque, "The Count of Saint-Gilles and the Saints of the Apocalypse."

20 Bible of Etienne Harding, fol. 125r, cf. Zaluska, *L'enluminure et le scriptorium de Cîteaux au XIIIe siècle*, 196.

21 *Liber Floridus*, fols. 3v–31v. This copy of Lambert de Saint-Omer's *Liber Floridus* contains an anonymous *Expositio* on the Apocalypse, which was recorded by Stegmüller, *Repertorium biblicum medii aevi*, no. 1364–1365. There is nothing to justify an attribution to Lambert of Saint-Omer, but its author is obviously contemporary and belongs to the circle of Anselm of Laon: Rubenstein, "Lambert of Saint-Omer and the apocalyptic First Crusade."



Fig. 2: Initial of Apocalypse, “Bible of Stephen Harding”, Bibliothèque municipale de Dijon, BM 15 (c. 1111; Cîteaux Abbey, France), fol. 125ra.

3.1 New History, New Exegesis: *Enteschatologisierung*

A “de-eschatologisation” was underway. A first generation of secular masters – in the cathedral schools that were the seedbeds of future universities – revolutionised the exegesis of the Apocalypse around the year 1100. They cut it up into visions: the three central ones (the second, third and fourth visions: Apoc. 4–14) are “recapitulations” – i.e. paths superimposing the history of the Church and world history onto the eschatological framework (*aetates mundi*, *IV regna*, etc.), while the rest only discuss the Last Judgment and the paradise to come, maybe long after the First Crusade.²² Thus, re-read in light of the apocalypse, present history acquires thickness and consistency. This generation therefore exalted the duty to act in a Christian communion. The path of Jerusalem, paved with the sufferings of war, led the combatants to the climax of passion: to the point of carrying the cross of Christ and sacrificing themselves.

²² See my paper, “Les commentaires de l’Apocalypse, du prétendu ‘siècle obscur’ jusque vers 1100.”

Less than a generation later, the first “intellectuals” – in the sense that Jacques Le Goff used the word²³ – transformed the way of the crusade by spiritualising it and turning it into a penitential journey. These masters had thus, on the one hand, weakened, swallowed up, delegitimised and standardised apocalypticism and, on the other, shattered eschatological unanimity: those who walked to Jerusalem no longer formed the battalions of the End Times, but rather became an endless cohort of pilgrims.

3.2 The Revenge of a Realised Eschatology

It is no coincidence that, starting around 1100, sculptors chose to represent the Last Judgment on the main doors of Romanesque churches:²⁴ the porch becomes a place of passage for individual penance, indeed a ticket-booth to Purgatory. Around 1140–1145, other sculptors began depicting the Pentecost – to welcome all the *gentes* – in the central tympanum of the narthex of the abbey-church at Vézelay. This twelfth-century Pentecost scene shows dog-heads and monsters from the North and the East, like in the bestiaries, coming from the ends of the world to demonstrate a newly found unity, the sense of a new creation.²⁵

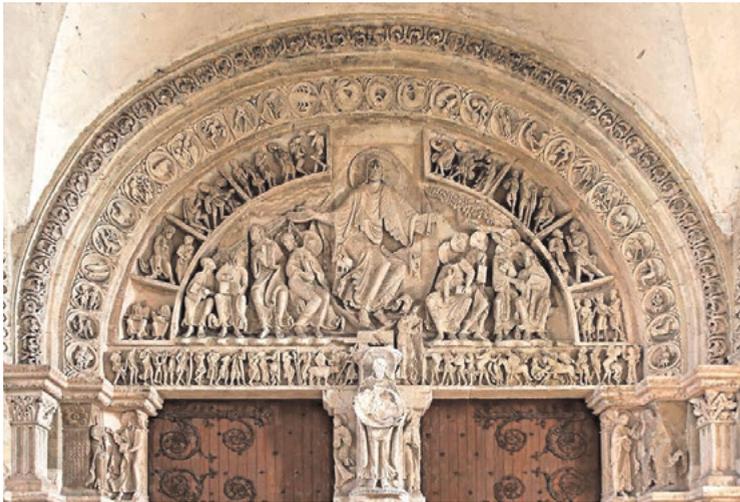


Fig. 3: Vézelay (France), central tympanum of the narthex (ca. 1140–1145), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Tympanums_of_Vézelay#/media/File:Basilique_Ste_Madeleine_narthex_tympan_central.jpg [last accessed, 1 March, 2020]

²³ Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*.

²⁴ Christe, *Les grands portails romans*; Christe, *Jugements derniers*.

²⁵ Le Gallic, “Tympan de Vézelay;” Dodds, “Remembering the Crusades;” Angheben “Apocalypse XXI–XXII et l’iconographie du portail central de la nef de Vézelay;” Salet, “Grand tympan de Vézelay;” Katzenellenbogen, “The Central Tympanum at Vézelay.”

The monks had lost control of apocalypticism. The example of the Cistercians shows this clearly (Cîteaux was founded in 1098, during the First Crusade). In the Bible of Stephen Harding, abbot of Cîteaux, it is not the monks, but rather St. Michael and the army of angels who – starting with Christ’s Incarnation – crush the demons. Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux excludes the idea of the coming of the Antichrist in the near future;²⁶ he leaves the fight to conquer the Holy Land to warriors and regrets his own involvement in the Second Crusade; along with the monks of his abbey, he instead occupied himself with the daily fight against demons of all sorts and heretics.



Fig. 4: Initial of Apocalypse, “Bible of Saint-Bénigne”, Bibliothèque municipale de Dijon, BM 2 (c. 1125/1130, Burgundy), fol. 470vb.

26 Goetz, “Bernard et Norbert,” 524.

At the time when Bernard of Clairvaux wrote his treatise *In Praise of the New Knighthood* on the Templars, this trend was confirmed by the Benedictines of the abbey of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon. The illuminated initial of the Apocalypse in their “giant Bible” (*Riesenbibel*) is a true monument of visual exegesis: it invites the reader to meditate on the sacrifice of the Eucharist, and no longer on a sacrificial war. Yolanta Załuska sees here “a synthetic representation of several elements of the vision: Christ, the waters, the stars, the angels of the seven churches in bust under arches, the seven candlesticks, the fainted and naked John, the right hand of the Lord resting on him, and the same John, clothed, looking at the vision. These elements are joined to the motifs of a commentary (table set up with bread-wafers, bowls and knife under the candelabra, two young heads with nimbus and two prophets(?) within a ‘reduced model’ architecture).”²⁷ I would suggest that the scene should be read differently, however. In the lower left, the Apostle John, in traditional pose, witnesses the vision; on the right, the six angels – not seven – are the first six ages of the world or the first six states of the Church since the Incarnation (*status ecclesiae*); in a central column on three registers, Christ the Judge (top) extends his hand to an elect individual at the resurrection of the bodies (below) and takes him to the Eucharistic feast of the Kingdom finally completed, in New Jerusalem, the Church perfect. But an extraordinary innovation occurs in the lower register. The two saints, who point to the altar and the dead man, present a model church to the Christ. This could be the Temple of Jerusalem reconquered in 1099 by the sacrifice of the crusaders, but the construction of the image closes the way to the expected descent of the New Jerusalem (“consequent eschatology”). The offering to Christ, carried by the patriarchs, the prophets, the saints and the dead of all history, leads to the eternal feast of a triumphant Church.

3.3 The Marginalisation of Apocalypticism

Throughout the twelfth century and up to Joachim of Fiore, commentators on the Apocalypse considered the debate to be over: the eschatological battle is played out in the here and now. By this time, prophecy about the End Times had deserted its traditional seedbed in male monasteries. Joachim of Fiore had had to leave the Cistercian order to exercise his prophetic ministry,²⁸ while the prophets of the Apocalypse now lived in distant hermitages or in female convents (Hildegard of Bingen, Elisabeth of Schönau): thus marginalised, they no longer played a part in the organisation of the future.

²⁷ Załuska, *Manuscrits enluminés de Dijon*, 132–136.

²⁸ Cf. Orioli, “Gioacchino da Fiore;” Potestà, *Il tempo dell’Apocalisse*; Potestà, “Prophetie als Wissenschaft.”

4 Conclusions?

Does the union of some followers of a monotheistic religion offer the safest way to achieve the millenarian dream, that of an era of peace? Just before 1100, a small group of men in the heart of medieval Christendom believed it could lead the history of the world to its appointed end: to establish a reign of peace on earth and open the doors for the return of a Christ who was no longer humble but triumphant. The leaders of the First Crusade, in front of Jerusalem, thought they were acting under the banner of Christ alone, since kings and emperors had been excluded from the expedition and since the pope had given them *carte blanche*.

Was the kingdom of Jerusalem (1000–1291) not actually programmed for failure? Westerners quickly deprived it of the apocalyptic weapon in order to graft all of Christian space on to the tree of the Roman Church. This “pacified” eschatology had the advantage of opening the door to the (hypothetical) fusion of exogenous sciences and philosophies with Christian truth, and it allowed the shaping of canon law and of all civil laws. It naturally led to the canonisation of unity and to the denigration, ostracisation and exclusion of difference. A lucid observer, John of Salisbury thought around 1155 that the men of his time, perched on the shoulders of giants, approached the inaccessible truth, one and indivisible, better than ever. He says

that knowledge should come as close as possible to the inaccessible [...] His previously established pragmatism, his curiosity about predicting the immediate historical future has a metahistorical foundation: historical knowledge is partial disclosure of the secrets of Providence, gained by analysis of recurrences, analogies and other similarities within historical time.²⁹

The mastery of the future came, in short, with the deciphering of a providential order. This method has the name *historia* (history). As is clear from the *Chronica* and *Gesta Friderici* of the bishop-chronicler Otto of Freising, it absorbs and naturalises the prophetic and apocalyptic discourses and confirms the new political rationality of the kingdoms.³⁰ We should thus hold the Calabrian monk Joachim de Fiore not as a new star in the heaven of ideas, but as the heir of this path, which he synthesises and sublimates in his *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, where he inaugurates an original development in historical writing.³¹ Until the second third of the twelfth century, the enemy was outside. It then became interior. The little foxes were now in the

²⁹ See Moos, “The Use of *exempla* in the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury,” 253, quoting John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* 2.22.1.

³⁰ Otto von Freising, *Chronik oder die Geschichte der zwei Staaten*, ed. Lammers; Otto von Freising, *Gesta Friderici*, ed. Schmale. See Mégier, *Christliche Weltgeschichte im 12. Jahrhundert*.

³¹ This is the conclusion I draw from recent work, notably by Rainini, *Disegni dei tempi*; McGinn, “Image as Insight in Joachim of Fiore’s *Figurae*,” and recently by Wannemacher, “The Spiny Path of Salvation;” Wannemacher, “Ein Wandel in der Auslegung der Apokalypse.”

vineyard;³² the masters and exegetes had been saying it for a long time, but they were not heard until the noisy intervention of Bernard of Clairvaux.³³ When the apocalyptic returned, it passed into the hands of some lonely and deviant figures, all in the wake of Joachim de Fiore; these included the Franciscan Spirituals of the thirteenth century and Jean de Roquetaillade or Rupescissa (his *Liber secretorum eventuum* was written in 1349 and his *Liber Ostensor* in 1356³⁴). This remained the case at least until the beginning of the fifteenth century, when Vincent Ferrier (1350–1419) used and perhaps abused it at the time of the Schism. Is consecutive eschatology, in other words the apocalyptic, not at the same time the fragile point, the touchstone of all monotheism and the unavowable acme of political reason? Can doctrinal rigour both accommodate and denounce it?

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Abbreviations

- CCCM Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis. Turnhout: Brepols, 1966–.
 CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–.
 CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1866–.
 PL Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols., Paris, 1844–1855, 1862–1865.
 SC Sources Chrétiennes. Paris: Éd. du Cerf, 1941–.

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 Liber Floridus. Ms. lat. 8865, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

³² *Cantica Canticorum*, 2.15: *Capite nobis uulpes paruulas quæ demoliuntur uineas. Nam uinea nostra floruit* (“Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards”).

³³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons*, 63–66 on the *Cantica Canticorum* (*Sancti Bernardi Opera*, eds. Leclercq, Talbot and Rochais). Cf. Brunn, *Des contestataires aux “cathares,”* 125–178. I have not been able to consult the book of Pegg, *A Most Holy War*.

³⁴ Jean de Roquetaillade, *Liber Ostensor*, eds. Vauchez, Thévenaz Modestin and Morerod-Fattebert; John of Rupescissa, *Liber secretorum eventuum*, eds. Lerner and Morerod-Fattebert.

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